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Young Adults' Spirituality: How Church Leaders Are Addressing Spiritual Needs of Young Adults in Small Rural Churches

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YOUNG ADULTS' SPIRITUALITY: HOW CHURCH LEADERS ARE ADDRESSING

SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG ADULTS IN SMALL RURAL CHURCHES

Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Young Adults' Spirituality: How Church Leaders Are Addressing Spiritual Needs of
Young Adults in Small Rural Churches

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Many main stream religious denominations are alarmed about the constant decreasing of membership in their congregations. Small rural churches are experiencing a shift in attendance in which the members of the congregation are getting older and no new members are being received. Strategies to reach out to a younger generation seem to fail and discerning the strategies to be used to accomplish the goal is a complex paradigm.

The purpose of this study was to identify the attributes that contribute to the lack of young adults' participation in small churches in rural areas in Pennsylvania. The developments of strategies to reach young adults depend on the way leaders view the concepts of spirituality and religiosity. Church leaders are developing programs and strategies based on the necessity to fulfill the spiritual needs of young adults. The spiritual needs are being defined by older adults without the input of the young ones. The failure of outreach efforts is reflecting the call for an understanding of the young adults' spirituality.

There is one church that is having a successful young adult ministry. The leadership, pastor and group attendants were interviewed in order to identify the components of their success. Also, church leaders of two other churches and non-church young adults were interviewed to explore the correlation in their concepts of spirituality and religiosity. Through interviews I was able to gain a better understanding of the differences and similarities between church leaders and young adults in the meanings of being spiritual and being religious. The

findings indicated that it is hard to clearly define the two concepts by individuals. The spiritual needs of young adults are more individualistic but at the same time relational. They also want to be active in holding events that can benefit others.

The research revealed that the young adults are being spiritual but not in the same way that the older generation defines "being spiritual." The majority of the young adults interviewed recognize the difference between being spiritual and being religious. This understanding of the two concepts leads the young adults to be somewhat clear in their spiritual needs and what they need to do to fulfill those needs.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family for their support, especially my husband Ramon for being patient when I was not able to be with him or sit on the front porch just to look at the people that pass by. We are getting old, you know. I am so grateful that my congregation understood my time and efforts with all the challenges of being a new pastor in a merger setting.

Also, I would like to thank the invaluable support of my dissertation committee: Dr. Anderson, Dr. Gunter, and Dr. Denison. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the chair of my committee, Dr. Anderson. There were many times that I was ready to give up but he kept encouraging me, saying "you can do it". Gracias.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Spirituality and religiosity are concepts that are changing quickly today. Religious organizations are coping with challenges that organizations 10, 20 or 30 years ago considered science fiction but now are realities. Globalization, new thoughts and principles, technology, gender issues, and institutionalization are some points where individuals might differ in terms of viewing the role of religion in society. The young generation is emerging with new paradigms and the older generations are not coping with these new patterns. In the process of dealing with change small church leaders have to handle shifts in communication, behaviors, values, and practices. Small churches of major denominations in rural areas are losing members without gaining new ones. Some of these small churches do not even have young adults among their membership.

Despite some efforts made the leadership is not able to address the spiritual needs of young people in order to encourage them to attend church or activities. The purpose of this research was to investigate how the concept of being spiritual or religious varied among young adults and leadership in small rural areas. The existence of differences or similarities affects the decision making process of the leadership in attracting to, gaining and keeping young adults in church-related activities. The interest in this topic arose out of personal experience trying to find answers for the lack of participation among the young adults in a small Christian church located in rural Pennsylvania.

Concepts Definition

For the purpose of this paper there are some words that are being used with a particular definition in the mind of the researcher.

- *Spirituality* – personal practices that enhance the mind and thoughts of an individual taking into consideration a higher power or powers (not necessarily a being such as God for Jews and Christians). These practices could be exercised collectively or individually. Some familiar examples of these practices are praying, meditating, fasting, and reading (Bible, Torah, sacred texts in Buddhism, Taoism, etcetera). Various religious groups named these practices as disciplines.

- *Religiosity* – expressions in rituals or practices as a result of believing in a higher power, usually expressed collectively. Some recognizable expressions of religiosity are baptism, refusal of eating certain food (Seven Day Adventist, Jewish and Muslims do not eat pork), attending temple or church on a regular basis, and the use of veil (in Mennonites is on women's head and in some Muslim women are worn covering the face).

- *Young adults* – individuals whose age is between 18 and 29 years old.

- *Generation* – people of similar age born and raised during the same time spam

    There are also some concepts that are being used with a particular sociological definition in the mind of the researcher.

- *Religion* – a social organization that offers a means of dealing with the mysterious and inexplicable events in life. In this research religion represents also a form of social cohesiveness. Some religions are Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and Christianity.

- *Denomination* – in an organization with similar religious beliefs govern by common practices. Examples are Lutherans, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Adventist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and United Methodist.

- *Church* - even though the word church is identified with a building for this research it means a group of people with similar believes that get together in a place to worship.

There is a distinction between local church which is a group of believers in a specific place and the Church which is the Christian community in general.

- *Congregation* – a group of people that gather to worship usually under a religious denomination or independent. In the United Methodist Church the local church is a congregation since the whole denomination is one church.

- *Ritual* - a religious act that has a specific order and usually is very solemn. In some Christian congregations an example of a ritual is the lighting of the candles before starting the worship. In Islam and Judaism circumcision is a very important ritual.

- *Contemporary service* – even though there are a wide variety of expressions on the concept of contemporary service for the purpose of this research is a service where contemporary music is used, rituals are kept to the minimum, and the setting is informal. Music is the major component of a contemporary service.

Focus and Scope of the Study

Any organization that depends on membership to survive has to make efforts to keep and gain new members. Religious organizations are no different. In the United States religious groups are facing challenges in keeping membership or gaining new members for their congregation. Small churches in rural areas are confronting these challenges with particular disadvantages. Population is decreasing in some small towns, and in others, the constituents of the community are becoming more diverse. All along, small church leadership appears to conduct business from an unyielding traditional perspective. Some small churches have had the same leadership for many years. If there are any disparities between the Church and the non-church people or between the Church people and the people that they are trying to reach, it looks like they need to be identified and addressed.

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Active participation in Church activities has declined as indicated by major religious groups in the United States. Schneiders (1997) affirmed that "the decline phase is manifested by diminishment in membership and material resources which decreases the group's effectiveness in accomplishing its goal" (p. 511). This negative dynamic for the religious organization does not match with the numbers offered by the U.S. Census where 80% of the United States population consider themselves religious with the majority claiming to be Christian. In Pennsylvania, 55% of the population claimed to be of the Christian faith. These numbers beg questions relating to the spirituality of the population. First, why aren't the same numbers reflective of Church attendance and participation? Second, is the concept of "religion" a spiritual matter that by some other means could find practice outside participation in or attendance at a formal or informal religious activity? Third, do expectations and concepts of being spiritual vary due to generational differences, time frame, and historical events or a combination of the three?

Significance of the Research

The value of this research rests in providing a better understanding concerning perceptions of spirituality between small church leadership and the perceived spirituality of young people. Collecting information on the standpoints of this population may help the leadership of small churches in rural areas create or consider the development of young adult programs according to the young adults' context. These programs then may better address the spiritual needs of this population and increase organizational membership.

Researcher's Positionality

Although I worked to conduct this research in an unbiased manner, as discussed by Patton (2002) regarding qualitative investigations, the researcher's experience, training and perspective were many times reflected and worked upon during the interviews and analysis of

the data. At the time of this research I was a 51 year old Hispanic woman who entered the ministry as a second carrier. During the past 35 years I was involved in many aspects of ministry in a local small church. I came to live in Pennsylvania in 1993 and had an encounter with worship and ministry in English. I have been helping and developing outreach ministries since 1995, especially targeting the Latino/Hispanic population.

While trying to remain objective, I realized that I went into the research of this topic with my own biases. My religious influence is from a Euro-centric approach as Methodism was born out of an Anglican minister, John Wesley. As a church leader of two small rural churches I lived everyday with some of the issues and challenges described in the literature review. Wood and Altglas (2010) stated that "although it is by no means irrelevant for social researchers to compare their similarities and differences to those they study, the prioritization of the insider-outsider issue within debates about the production of knowledge is potentially misleading because it may divert attention from scientific practice of the researcher" (p. 18). With that said, I tried my best to acknowledge my biases and to produce a study based on fact versus premises. Nonetheless, the reader should be aware of my background and experiences.

For over four years I have served as the United Methodist pastor of two small churches in rural Pennsylvania. The average age at the first church is 80 and the other is between 70 and 75 years old. In each church there were only a couple of young members whose ages were in the early 30's. The church lay leadership was very traditional in the ways of conducting services, activities, and performing outreach. There were no consistent efforts to gain new membership. In conversations with this leadership they have stated that young people were loud, noisy, and incorrigible people that will disturb the order already established. The membership in both of

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these local churches had declined primarily due to death. If the two churches do not gain new young members in ten years or less, both will have to close their doors.

In the two towns where these local churches reside, there are young individuals who group in corners and in front of bars, especially during weekends. The two towns are decreasing in numbers and changing in population and culture. According to the U.S. Census 11.5% of the population in the County is between 15 and 25 years old. I explored potential venues to reach out to a younger generation by talking to other pastors from the same and other denominations. I had also attended workshops on the topic but did not find any effective programs specifically developed for a similar area and situation. There are many successful programs being implemented in large and medium size towns where there is young leadership in the church, but few innovations for a gloomy rural area with a predominantly older population.

There were no spiritually focused young adult activities performed in the local area by any religious organization. Despite the challenges with the leadership of the two local churches some activities were implemented, but with little to no success. There are two other United Methodist churches in two small towns about four miles away that are in the same situation. There is something missing. The culture of this area in Pennsylvania is quite different from a medium size city or an urban setting. Through interviews, I wanted to document what young adults expressed as their spiritual needs and desires in hope that more effective outreach programs could be created for the area where these local churches were situated. I also wanted to identify other possible future research themes on the topic. To this end I entered into this research project.

Historical Context

Lampman (2008) stated that young people can identify the difference between religion and spirituality and "the great majority said they view both as 'usually good'" (p. 3). It is apparent that younger generations are inclined to be spiritual and religious. But the issue is broader because in recent years some of the largest denominations in the United States have been facing a decrease in membership. More than 224 million United States citizens consider themselves to be Christians that is 85% of the population. According to the statistics of the Christian Reformed Church (2008) their membership has been declining by 1% per year consistently since 2003. The General Commission on Religion and Race (2010) of the United Methodist Church informed that "church membership dropped 1.01 percent to 7,774,420 in 2008." This is a continuous pattern since 1994.

This declination in numbers is not new for the major or mainline religious denominations. Hout, Greeley, and Wilde (2001) declared that "the decline of the 'mainline' religious denominations and concomitant growth of more conservative denominations and sects has been among the major U.S. religious trends of the past 60 years or so" (p. 468).

There are several groups of Christian churches considered mainline denominations. Ammerman (2005) grouped the American congregations in seven streams of religious traditions: Conservative Protestant - 52%, Mainline Protestant – 26%, African-American Protestant – 8%, Catholic and Orthodox – 6%, Sectarian groups – 3%, Jews – 1% , and other religions – 4%. Most congregational life is dedicated to carrying out neighborhood efforts such as social work, serving the needy, and performing local and global community service. Despite efforts made by religious organizations to serve the community "traditional Mainline denominations have

declined in membership, and independent nondenominational churches have become more common" (Ammerman, 2005, p. 209).

Mainline denominations continue trying to reach out to the community, but there are many that face the challenges of an older generation membership. Across the United States the percentage fluctuates from 40 to 44% among Mainline Protestants, African-American Protestants and Jewish. Ammerman affirmed that

> Congregations across religious traditions that have older memberships are likely to see a need for help in planning their future. Often they are located in neighborhoods or towns where population has declined or changed in demography. Older members with deep attachments remain, while younger ones have moved away and/or started going to newer, more convenient congregations (as cited in Ammerman, 2005, p. 97).

Such changes can positively or negatively affect the efforts made to gain new members. Hoge and Roozen declared that "changes in the surrounding community's population significantly affect congregational membership" (as cited in Iannaccone, Olson, & Stark, 1995, p. 719). If any organization does not cope with changes, the results could be devastating for the organization.

Another aspect of the decrease in participation is the traditional versus the modern views of church involvement in social issues. According to Hout et al. (2001), "the leadership of some mainline denominations took liberal stances on civil rights, the Vietnam War, abortion, women's rights, immigration, and gay rights that supposedly alienated a segment of the mainline Protestant population" (p. 495).

If a major challenge for local churches is the declining of attendance and participation then it seems this is a particularly significant issue for those congregations with older memberships. The solution appears to be obvious: reach out to a younger generation. However,

this introduces some new issues to the leadership of a small rural church. The issue centers on attracting, recruiting and maintaining the young newcomers into the already established "church community" without losing purpose and goals. Rollins (2006) acknowledged that "rather than encouraging people to join our community (whatever 'our' community happens to be), we ought to be trying to help people to find the right community that will aid them in their further conversion" (p. 71). This also could be a possible matter of discrepancy. Religious organizations are competitive among themselves when it comes to recruiting and maintaining members. With an older age group, people currently residing in the church, generational conflicts may arise that could include the perception of spirituality, religion and the concept of being a Christian. Rollins continued by stating that "for as we all know, one does not learn to be a Christian, but rather, one engages in a process of becoming one" (p. 77).

Mainline Protestant churches have been developing and implementing outreach programs targeting a younger generation. The Catholic Church has been also making efforts to involve the young people in and outside the United States. A study was performed to identify the effectiveness of the parish youth ministry. Dixon (2006) declared that "this study has clearly demonstrated the variation in parish involvement by age and especially the phenomenon of lower levels of parish involvement among Generation X Mass attenders compared to both older and, in some cases, younger attenders" (p. 92). These findings will sustain Mannheim's theory of cohort behavior where "persons belonging to particular birth cohorts have a shared vision of the world" (Williams & Davidson, 1996, p. 274).

In term of Evangelicals, efforts are being made to attract and retain new young members. Hunter commented that "accommodation is becoming the dominant response to modernity, and that the main impetus for this response comes from the young" (as cited in Jelen, 1990, p. 268).

This is a result of new knowledge residing with the young, especially in the areas of communications and education. Religion, including the concepts of spirituality, perception, and ways of communication, boost the separation of the new generation from the main stream religions.

Despite the apparent decrease in Church attendance and involvement among people, especially in the younger generation, Smith and Denton (2005) maintained that "Christianity, in other words, still very much dominates American religion" (p. 31). Smith and Denton continued by saying that in their study about two-thirds of young people believe in God and also believe that He is still involved in the lives of people (p. 41). If this reflects the thoughts of the new generation, why is the attendance in local churches still low for a younger generation? Smith and Denton explained that when it comes to scheduling religious activities the younger generation put it at the bottom of their schedules after obligations, routines, and habits (p. 161). Apparently commitment, as defined by the older generation, is less evident. When the issue of attendance was discussed, Smith and Denton (2005) continued by stating that young people "considered religious service attendance, for example, a nice thing to do if and when it is feasible" (p. 161).

This apparent lack of commitment in many cases is measured in terms of attendance. But some Christian church statistics show that people are still involved and committed, while others present another perspective. According to Christian Statistics (2010), United States is on the top when it comes to the Christian population, followed by Brazil and Mexico. If this is accurate then numbers in attendance should be reflecting the statistics. It is important to mention that many times numbers given by religious affiliations are not always accurate. Clarke (1985) mentioned that "when churches were asked by the survey to self-report their membership, there

was often no consensus for defining membership" (p. 386). How precise are the numbers reported by a small church?

Research Questions

Four questions were developed to guide the research. Yin (2009) stated that questions in a study are to "help identify the relevant information to be collected" (p. 29). The following are the research questions:

1. How are small church leaders addressing the perception of spirituality of young people in rural areas in Pennsylvania?

2. Are there any generational cohort discrepancies?

3. How does communicative technological practice come into play in terms of community boundary formation, boundaries, and penetration strategies?

4. Is community welfare seen as a spiritual matter or just as a consequence of society?

Summary

This research study was developed to identify the correlation between the spiritual needs of young adults and the endeavors by local church leaders to address those spiritual needs. The perception of the concepts of spirituality and religiosity play a significant role in both developing programs and participating in programs. Religious statistical reports show that young adults and other youth are considering themselves to be spiritual but they are not actively involved in religious activities such as attendance at local church or church-related activities. The traditional stream of religious practices seems to be changing. The field of sociology of religion generates a rich arena for the research of human behavior in terms of spirituality and religiosity. Leadership in rural small churches is confronting conditions that previous generations did not have to. The perception of spirituality and religion and the changes in spiritual needs of community

individuals bring an apparent difficult assessment to the leadership. It seems confusing and sometimes contradictory to the traditional practices.

Some theorists aimed to elucidate this paradox of religion. In their own way they tried to understand the individual experiences and the processes that give meaning to those experiences. In the following literature review chapter some major theories of sociology of religion will be reviewed.

Human behavior is unpredictable. Changes in the world are occurring fast and are changing our society. Many great thinkers and philosophers through time have contributed to the discipline from the point of view of theories. For the purpose of this research the following theories are going to be addressed: Durkheim's *Social Realism*; Weber's *Rationalization and Secularization;* Warner's *Rational Choice Theory*; Mannheim's *Cohort Theory*; and the concept of *Postmodernism*.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will explore some relevant theories as well as other theories related to the research interest. The first section will cover the differences between spirituality and religion. The second will explain Durkheim's social realism and his view of society and religion, symbols and rituals, and beliefs and values related to this research. The third section will address Weber's rational action and relationship between religion, capitalism and secularization. The fourth section will approach postmodernism and its implications to the research. In the last section other supportive theories will be mentioned. All these theories guided the focus of this research taking into consideration the shift in people's paradigms as well as the dimensions of beliefs, values, practices, and community.

Pre-Modern

The early Christian church struggled with community and society acceptance. There were many ways of expressing faith through believing in many or one god. There was no distinction between society and religion. Order and tradition were firmly enforced. Despite the challenges and changes, the Christian church developed the necessary steps to maintain the communication, solidarity, and growth. As such, they eventually developed a structural dynamic with a defined functionality.

Structural Functionalism

The structural functionalism of the early Church provided the necessary cohesiveness and stability needed for the new movement, Christianity. Social activities like meals and meetings were important to maintain the faith and the momentum. The sharing of the bread with those that

did not have and the material possessions with the poor were fundamental in changing the concept of being religious. By socializing not only the people were sharing their stories, they were also talking about their experiences, growing in faith, and increasing their knowledge in their Christian beliefs. Lives were changed, living styles were shifted, and perception of social issues were acknowledged and acted upon. Religion, in this new formulation, emerged into a more social practical model.

Émile Durkheim's Social Realism

In this section, Durkheim's concept of social realism will be discussed. The concept of social realism reveals the effect that social common sense has in religion and each individual perception of social practices that affect behavior and adoration (Schmaus, 1996).

It is not out of the ordinary that people will agree that changes in society, politics and economy bring with them forces that change the way of thinking; it did in the past and still does today. Turner, Beeghley, & Powers (2007) stated that "new material conditions force both ordinary people in their daily routines and scholars in their more systematic pursuit of understanding to reconceptualize the world" (p. 6). All these forces produce rich intellectual currents. One of these intellectual currents is Émile Durkheim with his *Social Realism*.

Social life and contemporary events are components of society that cannot be ignored when it comes to understanding changes in religious culture. Mellor (2004) declared that "contemporary technological developments can have a significant impact upon social and cultural forms, and upon the ways in which people encounter and experience religious phenomena" (p. 358). These are real physical effects that influence human beings. Durkheim's social realism reflects how a perspective of social issues depends on each individual's perception of them. Alun Jones declared that "Durkheim also believed it necessary for people to adopt this

social realism so that their society would provide an appropriate object for their sense of veneration and duty and so that, at the same time, society would constrain their desire" (as cited in Schmaus, 1996, p. 327). Individuals are perceptive beings that can generate their own view of the world. Social issues and their influence in the religious arena are a challenge.

Social circles, economy and the practice of political endeavors have changed in the rural towns where I served. In small communities people usually know each other for years, having many things in common. Social changes and the introduction of more technology-based way of life have more impact in this rural setting. The use of technology started to increase among young and middle age adults. The older generation is resistant to this change, having the excuse that the "old way was better" or that "they are too old to learn new ways." Another phenomenon is that people that are "natives," from the town are moving out while new ethnic groups are moving in. These newcomers are bringing with them new cultural ways of life and new traditions in religion and spiritual practices. According to Durkheim's social realism, these social affairs and current events continue shaping new religious and spiritual cultures.

Durkheim's theory of origin of religion. For Durkheim the origins of religion go back to the ancient ancestors who lived in small, nomadic hunting and gathering bands. From time to time these bands would come together and spend a week or two socializing and celebrating. As people interacted with people they had not seen for some time, met new people, feasted, told stories, sang, danced, and chanted, a high level of emotion and energy would develop. This is what Durkheim called *collective effervescence* (this concept is further discussed later in this chapter). When caught in the grip of collective effervescent, people feel like they are being taken over by some force larger than themselves. People came to define these forces "larger than themselves" as deities and/or supernatural entities; for Durkheim, this is the origin of religion.

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So, for Durkheim, religion provides positive functions for society, but religion is also a product of society.

Functions of religion. Religion has been intrinsic in many aspects of human's lives and is the faithful manifestation of devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity. In 1997 Marty affirmed that religion is a practical issue present in military actions, domestic politics, marketing, and personal relations. He stated that "if people abandoned religion or are abandoned by it, academics get to study what takes its place. Something will" (as cited in Christiano, Swatos, & Kivisto, 2008, p. 51). If religion disappears as we know it, some kind of spiritual concept and expression will replace it. Religion has been the subject of study and the development of a sociology field just to try to understand the complexity of it.

There have been changes recently ongoing in terms of research in the field of sociology of religion. Ellison and Sherkat (208) stated that "sociologists have rediscovered the study of religion in recent decades" (p. 417). They continued by discussing about contemporary sociology of religion and declared that "the field has been advanced by energetic agendas linking religion with other social institutions and domains of sociological inquiry, such as family, gender, education, health, politics and civic life, and migration, to name but a few" (p. 418).

Sociology of religion has been in the mind of great thinkers. Some sociologists like Durkheim and Weber, among others, brought about some thoughts that may well enlighten behaviors, guidance and patterns to the study of this discipline. Émile Durkheim had a view of religion as a form or expression of pulling together society, and Max Weber with his Calvinistic and capitalist approach saw the religious impact in the economy and in social innovations.

It seems to be an impossible task to try to understand and meet people's spiritual needs. Greeley and Greeley (1984) pointed out that "if you want to know what someone's religion is,

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you should try to ascertain what the pre-existing paradigms in that person's imagination are, for they are likely to shape and encode his or her experiences of hope renewal" (p. 23). It would be impossible to understand each person's definition of religion but similarities can be identified.

Religion serves as a connective point, not only to celebrate and socialize but also to share life itself. The impulse to act on behalf of others emerged from the happiness and joy that people experience when they get together. In Christian churches the collective effervescence came from the joy of knowing and recognizing Jesus as the deity. The desire is to do good deeds for others and to be positively involved in community issues as needs become known by the group.

The sacred and the profane. This section discusses two concepts central to Durkheim's theory of religion, sacred and profane. Durkheim declared that "in the present day just as much as in the past, we see society constantly creating sacred things out of ordinary ones" (as cited in Christiano, K., Swatos, W., and Kivisto, P., 2008, p. 274). Christiano et al. (2008) affirmed that "notions of casualty, Durkheim argued, could emerge only after people perceived that sacred forces determined events in the secular world" (p. 305). For Durkheim the basic human thought categories like cause, time, and space emerged after people developed religion (p. 305). Was wealth considered mundane for Durkheim? Or, is this just a distinction of what is sacred or not in relation with the social order? Durkheim was in favor of people earning their wealth as long as it was not inherited. Christiano et al. (2008) stated that for Durkheim "it was abnormal in organic societies for wealth to be inherited and for this inherited privilege to be used by one class to oppress and exploit another" (p. 291).

Sacred can be anything offered to the service or worship of a deity and profane can be anything that is not from the spiritual world, meaning secular. According to Wendell (2013) "the general accepted meaning of 'profane' – secular, common, unhallowed." On the other hand

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sacred refers to "dedicated, set apart, consecrated." (p. 15). These concepts do not have to be religious in nature but are clearer in organized religion. For example, the quantitative analysis for a physical scientist is sacred. On the other hand, the theory conducted in a qualitative exploration where shifts in paradigms occurred due to social factors is profane.

Different cultures and religions have diverse sacred items. For example among Judaism the Torah Scroll is sacred, representing the liberation of the people and law given to Moses by God. For Christians, the cross is sacred because it symbolizes the sacrifice of Jesus for humanity's sins. In Buddhism the lotus flower is considered sacred because it symbolizes the generation of something beautiful from the muck.

Sometimes the concepts of sacred and profane have not been as clear as it seems in a religious setting. Music is an example. Today some older people think that Christian rock music is profane, and traditional hymns are sacred. However, at one point in history, any music in the church was considered profane. The integration of music as part of worship could be seen as a social interest accepted and incorporated into Christian rituals.

For Durkheim one fundamental characteristics of religion is the dichotomy between sacred and profane. Taking spirituality as a guide for living and being with others, and religion as the manifestation of the spirituality, then the concepts of sacred and profane will present a distinctive definition for individuals and groups. For example, in some mainline Christian religious denominations the altar is a sacred place. At the altar, what is considered profane is not allowed. Some things considered profane are guns, alcohol, profane language, or actions like running, jumping or playing. However, it might also be a minister without a robe, the use of PowerPoint slides high on the wall, or anything condoned by the person (frequently the minister) at the altar or designated to protect the alter, i.e., wild music, virtual internet based church, etc.

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The altar is usually at the front of the sanctuary or the front of the place where worship is conducted. It is higher than the rest of the room, usually a platform. Artifacts that are considered sacred are placed on the altar. In the Christian faith the artifacts are typically candles representing the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, a cross representing Jesus' sacrifice, and an open Bible as the word of God the Father. This may vary according to the denomination. These artifacts are usually placed on a table at the altar of United Methodist Churches.

Social realism and the perception of what is sacred and profane are manifested in different ways among generations. Knowing the older generation in the two small churches I served I can identify some things that are considered sacred or profane. As an example, they think that the altar is a sacred place that has to be used only to direct worship, read scriptures, or having Christian holiday presentations but nothing else. The use of technology like a projector during worship is not yet welcome. It is profane to have children or youth wandering in the sanctuary doing nothing or touching the altar artifacts and making noise. This was expressed during an inside Easter Egg hunt. Interpretations like these on what is sacred and profane are affecting the decision-making process among young adults in participating in religious activities in this small rural town. This becomes more noticeable when these young adults have children.

Collective effervescence. The concept of collective effervescence refers to how individuals cognitively and emotionally engage in their social world (Shilling and Mellor, 1998). Emotions compel the behavior, mood, and atmosphere in a group. This could be more noticeable when a rock band is performing a concert in front of a live audience.

The collective effervescence is also present in the spiritual world. Spiritual needs many times drive the actions of society and its members. The necessity for acceptance and grouping is one of them. Humans meet to achieve spiritual desires. Durkheim expressed that "it is because

men formed groups, …that they were able to group things: All they did was to make room for things in the groups they themselves already formed" (as cited in Day, 2009, p. 723). Every generation has things in common. These commonalities make it easy to relate to each other in forming and maintaining groups. Today the common things for a younger generation may include music, dances, movies, and games. This creates a collective way of sharing and socializing while celebrating similar likes. These characteristics describe the origins of religion according to Durkheim.

Young adults and other youth have spiritual desires that are similar to or different from an older generation. According to Day (2009) for Durkheim society represents a transcendental condition and humans are socially embedded and biologically embodied agents (Day, 2009, p.723). It seems to be that under Durkheim's collective effervescence the young adults are in need of being social and engaging in physical contact with other human beings in order to fulfill their spiritual desires.

The collective effervescence is very much active in the younger generation. Young people usually look for the acceptance of others. The older generation may have the wrong perception of the young people's collective effervescence. On the other hand, the young might have the wrong perception on the older generation's collective effervescence. If the two groups do not try to understand and learn from each other then social interaction, communal contacts, or collective religious or spiritual purposes could not be achieved.

Religion and community. Religion and society have an interaction influencing each other. Mellor (2004), talking about Durkheim, stated that "he emphasized the need to take full account of the interrelationships between religion, politics, family, nationality, geography and historical location that shape the complex realities of human social and cultural life" (p. 369).

Mellor continued, saying about Durkheim, that "religion, for him, is a phenomenon that embraces culture and society: it is a system of ideas, but is also a form of life emergent from the embodied potentialities of human beings" (p. 365). Christiano et al. (2008) declared that "for Durkheim, the cause of religion is the interaction among people created by their organization into the simplest form of society, the clan (p.305).

The two churches I served have an "old fashion way" system culture. They have set boundaries that guard the traditional way of performing business. Active members know when they have to attend service, when to stand, when to sing, when to sit, and when to finish. Any change in the way of worship or performing activities ends up in chaos, in their perception. A younger generation will bring new cultural perspectives and new ways of worship that would interfere with the way they are used to. According to this older generation, young people are exposed to so many things that interfere with their values and moral systems. When it comes to family, community and tradition they think that the younger generation does not value what they have. There is no factual assessment on their statement. The interaction between community and Church, as the religious representation, is not present in these small rural churches.

In summary, these rural churches are facing a social realism that is affecting their sense of veneration. All the social events that are occurring and the changes in the community composition are shaping a generation that is more liberal in defining what is sacred and profane. The young adults have their own ways of how they relate to each other including the use of technology. In terms of the collective effervescence, it is present in the two generations and has not changed its meaning. In the religious arena it has changed the common spiritual desires and practices, and this could be a point of unification or separation between the two generations.

In my research I looked into these areas and found that there are similarities and differences between the old and young generations. These similarities and differences could be addressed to be more effective in reaching out to a younger membership in the church setting.

Max Weber's

Another great thinker who contributed to a better understanding of sociology of religion is Max Weber. He addresses the influence of religion and culture in society and human behavior.

Traditional authority. Through history religion placed an important factor in terms of control and in the creation of authoritative rules that direct everyday life including activities in the economic arena. Traditional authority could exercise control by means of position, title, name, affiliations, and religious beliefs. The Christian church became hierarchically organized and became a controlling agent in individual's lives, communities and even governmentally within countries. People started to show disapproval and after years of raising voices the Reformation started to take place. Weber (1958) stated that "the Reformation meant not the elimination of the Church's control over everyday life, but rather the substitution of a new form of control for the previous one" (p. 36).

The Reformation did not bring the relief people expected. The control was still exercised by position. Traditional authority in a church setting is represented by the pastor or priest and the designated leadership. Kapp (2004) defined authority as "the negotiated privilege that allows someone to exercise power legitimately due to the personal qualities and expertise" (p. 46). Kapp continued by saying that "authority is also enacted as pastors and other leaders share specialized knowledge, model piety, shape the emotional tenor of worship, and make decisions about equipment and liturgical resources that enhance or reduce the leaders' visibility" (p. 48).

The small "old" rural Christian church could represent traditional authority. Everyone has an expertise in something and this will grant the individual the authority. They have knowledge about how to worship. The younger people have traded this form of control for another one, the use of technology. Physical presence is not required anymore. Younger generations can experience a spiritual encounter via internet, radio, TV, or any other media. Their spiritual experiences can be shared via technology with others using the same communication methods. Social media has become a perfect example.

Traditional action. For Weber the influence of capitalism in the midst of religion is reflected in the control exercised by tradition. This traditional action can be exemplified in the authority that the early organized Christian church exercised in many aspects of the followers' lives. The Roman Catholic Church performed this control over centuries. Then the Reform came giving hope to those that were waiting to be freed from this control. Weber (1958) stated that "the emancipation from economic traditionalism appears, no doubt, to be a factor which would greatly strengthen the tendency to doubt the sanctity of the religious tradition, as of all traditional authorities" (p. 36).

Traditional actions are embedded in habits already established. Rural small Christian churches encompass more traditional actions in their way of performing worship and doing business. Tradition dictates the norm to follow. Liberty in the way of worshiping and expressing spirituality is limited to tradition. If the church dictates how to behave and articulate spirituality then the control still exists despite the changes in modern religious fervor. The use of technology is one example. Internet, television or pre-recorded services are not traditionally considered ways of worship. People need to be present at the gathering to be considered that they are worshiping. These issues are some of the challenges in small rural Christian churches.

Value rational action. Value rational action is based on the value of choices for the individual. In the Christian religious arena the ultimate value for the individual is heaven. How this is accomplished is by faith. The development in the mainline Christian religions was interpreted by thinkers that questioned traditional dogma in the church and concluded that people go to heaven by faith alone. Calvin, one of these thinkers and contrary to other Christian thoughts of his day, held with this approach where good deeds are part of being religious, but not of salvation. Talking about Calvinism, Weber (1958) expressed that "however useless good works might be as a means of attaining salvation, for even the elect remain beings of the flesh, and everything they do falls infinitely short of divine standards" (p.115). He continued by stating that "in practice this means that God helps those who help themselves" (p. 115).

This change in religiosity brought secular practices and choices to people seeking to fulfill their spiritual needs. Weber (1958) argued that "in the course of its development Calvinism added something positive to this, the idea of the necessity of proving one's faith in worldly activity" (p. 121).

In value rational action individual behavior is valued not considering its effects. For Weber value rational action "is derived from a 'conscious belief in the value of its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior'" (as cited in Park, 2005, p.382). Park continued by saying:

> Thus value-rational action occurs when choices are based on belief in a larger set of values and rational within that system, regardless of the probabilities of success. Included here are the actions of individuals who, regardless of possible cost to themselves, act upon their convictions as directed by duty, loyalty, religious dedication, or some other 'cause' (p. 382).

Value is a concept that has a different meaning for individuals. In an older generation the value rational action is predisposed by the meaning of ethics, loyalty, and duty that they have been committed to for years. In some cases in rural churches it has been expressed that faith alone will help the church to overcome challenges in this modern culture and era. But, it is true that not only faith can save the church but also actions need to be taken. Inquiring about the value rational action of the younger and older generations enlightens the research in terms of possible future procedures to improve relations between the two age groups.

Berger and Luckmann, Sacred Canopy

In pre-modern societies, religion was diffused throughout the entire society. For Berger, religion serves as a legitimate power by locating humans in a cosmic framework (Gay, 2000). Berger stated that "through religion, the supports for social institutions are given a cosmic, universal status that transcends the here and now of everyday life." He continues by stating that "this gives a socialized individual peace and security in his role in society, the world, and the universe" (as cited in Gay 2000, p. 3). According to Berger & Luckmann (1966) "in society, social order is a product of humans and it is still in the making" (p. 52).

For Berger and Luckmann, the sacred covers all aspects of life. There is a continuous cycle from the objective (society) to subjective (self). They stated that "society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 61). Religion cannot separate individuals from society or the society from the individuals.

<center>**Modern**</center>

Weber saw the rise of Protestantism as one very important factor in the rise of capitalism. Religion, according to Weber, has unintended consequences for society. With industrialization the means of obtaining wealth were accessible to those that were in control. This represented a

challenge for the Christian church because until this time the sharing and living styles were part of the societal life. Now the structure has become more complex as the positions in the Church have become more aligned with power and wealth. Capitalism disengages from these religious moorings. Through the rationalization of society Weber provides an imminent move toward secularization.

Rationalization

For Weber rationalization is trying to move from the mystical word to the rational world where things can be explained in a coherent way, is leaving the world of subjective values to support more objective ones (Goldstein, 2009). For example in some Christian denominations having wealth is a sign of the blessings from God. In the Hindu religion followers have the choice to commit themselves to live a life of detachment from the world and its worldly possession. They abandon all material things to live a monastic life. This is similar to some groups in the Roman Catholic Church. This act brings a visible value to the person that performs it by living a life of simplicity according to the spiritual directive.

There could be many explanations for why people try to concretize and rationalize things especially when it comes from the spiritual into the material world. Even though the spiritual world is not made of concrete things, for some people the visual expressions of this spiritual world is important and necessary. For some denominations the use of icons and symbols represent a more coherent relation between the mystical and material words. In the United Methodist Church the social actions are the means by which the Word of God became alive for the people. Hence the Word becomes sacred and spiritually derived. One is not only to live a spiritual life but in a similar way as to how the Word becomes alive, the person also carries the spiritual realm into the material by manifesting value in helping the society in an objective way.

Weber identified different aspects of the rationalization: instrumentally rational action, legal-rational authority, and rational authority and bureaucracy which include traditional authority and charismatic authority. These concepts are explained in more detail below. Weber's secularization will be discussed later in the chapter.

Instrumentally Rational Action

For Weber, instrumentality rational action is when an option depends on what the individual desire and not necessarily on what is needed. Each action of an individual has alternatives. Hagen acknowledged that these possible alternative actions are internally evaluated seeking the more beneficial one (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2000, p. 199). These actions could be beneficial in terms of "wants" but not necessarily of "needs."

For Weber the means selection is relevant in instrumentally rational action. He argued that "ends are chosen in a value rational manner" (Parsons, 2008, p. 237). Weber continued by saying that:

On the other hand, the actor may, instead of deciding between alternative and conflicting ends in terms of a rational orientation to a system of values, simply take them as given subjective wants and arrange them on a scale of consciously assessed relative urgency. He may then orient his action to this scale in such a way that they are satisfied as far as possible in order of urgency, as formulated in the principle of 'marginal utility'" (as cited in Parsons, 2008, p. 237).

Weber argued that "*instrumentally rational action* occurs when the 'end,' the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed" (Parsons, 2008, p. 382). Each individual reflects on these three indicators and then makes a decision. For Weber the state of mind, the content, and the condition of the actor play an important role in the actor's

understanding of the situation. Weber acknowledged that "'understanding', here is the assessment of the actor's view of the situation, and his response to it, as in some way reasonable" (Burger, 1977, p. 130).

In instrumentally rational action the individual takes into consideration the marginal benefits that he/she could gain. These benefits do not necessarily supply the needs of the individual but could provide for an intrinsic desire. In small rural areas the needs and the desires or wants influence the individual's actions. Youth are caught in a decision-making process in terms of acceptance, spiritual and physical needs, and the expected social behavior of the community. The role of being spiritual or religious could be played in either of the two roles: the "needs" or the "wants". These concepts could also be applied to the older generation.

Legal-Rational Authority

Rules and regulations are needed in society. Christian churches also have rules and regulations to guide how to perform the administration of the church. Major denominations have a structure and guidelines that act as law for the organization. It is considered that the Christian church has been influenced by capitalism and its structure and laws are needed to perform the same functions. Structures of law and administration are needed in the capitalistic configuration. Weber (1958) affirmed that "for modern rational capitalism has need, not only of the technical means of production, but of a calculable legal system and of administration in terms of formal rules" (p. 25). Techniques and laws could have spiritual obstacles when it comes to adopt practical rational conduct. Weber stated that "the magical and religious forces, and the ethical ideas of duty based upon them, have in the past always been among the most important formative influences on conduct" (p. 27).

Every organization needs some kind of structure to function. Within the reformed mainstream Christian churches the Bible is the supreme force that imposes the rules and regulation. In my case the denomination also has what is called the Book of Discipline, which along with the Bible rules the business of the church. The fact that I am a pastor also brings a legal rational authority inherent with the title. But when it comes to the young adults, rules and dogmas are forces that limit them. The dogma is good for the older generation that feels comfortable with it. Their bureaucratic structure works perfectly for their purpose and goal. The use of technology will interfere with the code of beliefs. Then again, the younger generation feels restricted by the dogmas but feels comfortable with the use of technology and modern ways of expressing their spirituality. This is not an authoritative structure but is free-flowing.

Rational Authority and Bureaucracy

The shift from the spiritual or mystic to the physical or rational is embedded by authority and some kind of hierarchy. This is a symptom of the influence of capitalism in religion. The more traditional position is supported by Weber's theory where, for example, the pursuit of economic wealth is a mundane affair. This is a capitalistic influence on human behavior. This paradox is more evident in Protestantism where economic wealth was not censured because "attainment of wealth… was a sign of God's blessing" (Hughey, 1979, p. 94). The results of one's labor should be for the glory of God (Weber, 1958, p.141).

In the United States, the United Methodist Church is perceived as being an example of rational authority and bureaucracy. Many of the members are middle class and the structure in which the denomination operates is very hierarchical. The supreme structural authority is the council of bishops, which includes bishops from around the world. This body makes denominational changes and decisions. Some states are grouped according to a geographical area

and this is called a jurisdiction. Depending on population each jurisdiction has several bishops and these areas are named conferences. Each conference has a bishop that exercises the administration and regular denominational business with the help of district superintendents. The district superintendent oversees pastors and denominational churches according to an assigned area. Every local church has an assigned pastor that acts as the person in charge of leading the congregation. Then, several committees and leaders help the pastor in the task of accomplishing the mission of the church and the denomination. The pastor is the maximum authority at the local level as the administration and spiritual leader of the local church.

Bureaucracy and authority permeate in some protestant denominations. According to Weber (1958) many skilled laborers, business leaders and owners of capital are Protestants. These are the upper and upper middle class people. This has changed the religious atmosphere to a more capitalistic one, having a culture of classes more clearly seen. He continued by stating,

It is true that the greater relative participation of Protestants in the ownership of capital, in management, and the upper ranks of labour in great modern industrial and commercial enterprises, may in part be explained in terms of historical circumstances in which religious affiliation is not a cause of the economic conditions, but to a certain extent appears to be a result of them (p. 35).

Hilbert (1987) explained that for Weber "bureaucracy is, after all, a form of social organization" (p. 71). In the church setting there is a bureaucracy structure that many times is seen as an impediment to performing ministry. Hilbert (1987) continued by stating that "actual bureaucratic behavior never conforms to the bureaucratic model, not only because the model is an ideal type but because it is a subjective orientation of membership" (p. 83).

McIntosh (1970) stated that "for Weber, authority is a relation of superior to subordinate (p. 908). Weber presented three types of authorities: traditional, charismatic and legal-rational (Willer, 1967, p. 231). The three of them will be discussed subsequently.

The traditional business approach of the leaders in rural churches exhibits an authoritative-bureaucratic approach. There is a hierarchic authority structure, specialized people and leaders, there are objectives established, performance is expected, segmental participation, and there are compensatory rewards (Hilbert, 1987, p. 793). Each person has a specific duty to perform and if someone interferes or tries to do the same thing problems arise. It is expected that each person knows what to do and when to do it, and we are not talking here about how authoritative in their role people can be, expecting no one to sit at "their" seat on Sundays, even if it is a visitor.

Disenchantment

The mystic world is an essential component of religion. In a modern world there is an explanation for everything, or at least there is a component of a physical source. According to Jenkins (2000) disenchantment for Weber,

> Is the historical process by which the natural world and all areas of human experience become experienced and understood as less mysterious; defined, at least in principle, as knowable, predictable and manipulable by humans; conquered by and incorporated into the interpretive schema of science and rational government. In a disenchanted world everything becomes understandable and tameable, even if not, for the moment, understood and tamed. Increasingly the world becomes human-centered and the universe—only apparently paradoxically—more impersonal (p. 12).

With the use of technology people are more informed and more educated than before. This might carry another form of rational and intellectual displeasure with the mystic world; Weber called it "disenchantment of the world". Perhaps by rationalizing and having the influence of a bureaucratic order, religion will develop a more sophisticated and individualistic meaning. The ethical values and the thinking of mystic forces that explain events in life are changing to more scientific explanations. The well being of humans could be measured by success in life and by what is accomplished. There is a more capitalistic approach even to organization and measures of wealth. Weber called this influence the "*spirit of capitalism*".

Is this *spirit of capitalism* having a distant influence on religious activities? How much are spiritual matters operating under the concepts of power and control or under sacred and material interests? Are these separations forcing the religious groups to change to a more secularized approach? Small Christian churches, especially in rural areas, do not have the wealth to perform many activities. The control of business is in the hands of a small group of leaders in the church. Usually they are the strong supporters, monetarily speaking, of the church. Again, new consideration needs to be given to what it is considered sacred, worldly, mundane, and the power and control balance as part of the changes that need to be made.

The church operates in a community setting. Complete separation from the world is impossible. Leaders can feel disappointed by modern ways or behaviors but one thing to remember is that their duties and goals are directed to those that are out of their circle. Local churches do not need very sophisticated ways of worship or an impressive sanctuary, all is needed is a better understanding of young people and their customs. We are living in a modern multicultural world where differences are everywhere.

Multiculturalism

Two major trends affecting religion today are multiculturalism and modernity. Multiculturalism is more and more evident as time pass. Technology has situated the world as a small place to live. Christianity is no longer an isolated community affair. Christianity has become a religion of the world. This is not only because there are Christians all around the world, but because communication has placed religion, and in this case Christianity, in a more pluralistic environment. Christianity strives for unity but at the same time struggles with diversity. Frederiks (2009) stated that world Christianity has its "emphasis on diversity and pluralism on the one hand and the persistent quest for unity on the other" (p. 4).

Modernity refers to the modern era where there have been many changes in lifestyles and values. There has been a movement to rationalization and secularization in modernity but also there has been a move to a new intellectual culture. Modern societies have different lifestyles than the pre-modern cultures. People live in conglomerates of houses and apartments. Family composition is different. In a modern community there is diversity in languages, cultures, ethnic backgrounds and generations. The economy is one of consumerism, a component of capitalism that affects all communities despite social status. All these factors influenced and affect the concepts of religion and spirituality. For Weber modernity is linked with the development of rationalization and disenchantment of the world. Modernity also relates to secularization.

Secularization

For Weber secularization refers to the declination of religiosity as its practices lose social impact. Secularization means first and foremost a retreat of religion into the private sphere. This is different from the "sacred canopy" discussed previously, which characterized small homogeneous pre-modern societies. Separation of church and state and freedom of religion

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contribute to the secularization process. Secularization may also mean a rise in the non-religious (atheist, agnostic), but it does not have to mean this. Religious belief and practice can remain strong, but in the private sphere of home and church. Secularization and the religious market place are not the same but are interconnected.

One example of secularization is the weight of capitalism over religion. The value of the soul, the kingdom of God, and the spiritual life were some of the motivators of pre-modern Christians to gain new followers. Christians during the first century grouped themselves as they taught and disciple people so that they could teach and disciple others. Christianity was a way of life. Material belongings or material wealth were not signs of blessings from God. On the contrary, they sold material possessions and distributed them among themselves so that everyone had the necessary means for living. These events are recorded in the New Testament of the Bible and other documents.

As years passed Christianity became more organized and wealthy. Prosperity became a sign of power and control. Some of the evidence today is the wonderful building structures that were raised in towns, villages, and cities as a symbol of the intrinsic power that religion had in society. Control was not only exercised in the spiritual world but also in the material world as well with a capitalistic approach. Weber ventures into the conviction of the influence of capitalism in the religious arena. Weber (1958) affirmed that "a man does not 'by nature' wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose" (p. 60). In some denominations giving is addressed pre-assuming that people have plenty to give. A healthy congregation or local church is one that covers all the expenses, performs social activities, and has money left (profit) at the end of the year cycle. If there are material assets then this increases the church's value. The spirit of capitalism, as Weber

called it, and its weight on religion is seen in the change from getting necessary goods to meet personal needs to attaining profit (Weber, 1958, p. 64).

The focus on more material displays of religious value apparently did not help the religious organizations, especially Christian ones, in gaining new members. The practice of attending church and worship services has been decreasing in many religious groups. The influence that religion had over the decision making process in individual's has also diminish. There are more well-informed people attending church making the decision process more of value for each individual. Some mainstream denominations have their local churches involved in what is considered secular businesses like day cares, private schools, and partnerships with community organizations and other for profit endeavors. There are also some denominations that endorse government officials, perform lobbying duties, and are actively involved in community's issues. In the United Methodist Church these aspects are important and the involvement in community is encouraged. This might be considered for some to be too secular. The decision of this involvement and the degree of it is usually determined by the leadership of the local church.

Religious Marketplace

In today's world there are a wide variety of religions and spiritual groups from which people can choose from. Each local church has to "compete" many times with another local church just a block away. The strategies to attract and retain people involved more than a good worship service. Lee and Sinitiere (2009) argued that "successful religious suppliers locate niches in the religious marketplace, and they offer spiritual goods and services that correspond to religious consumers' preferences" (as cited in Attanas, 2010, p. 287). Is in this religious marketplace where the leadership of the local church has to make decisions if they want to create effective outreach programs.

Religious leaders have in their hands a task of decision making with so many variables affecting the process. But, according to Hamilton (2002), "church leaders and pastors are to go into the community, getting to know and building relationships with unchurched people and caring for those who are hurting" (p. 17). In order to do this, the church needs to use tools that in a traditional mode are not well seen. The world is the market, and people need to know what the church is offering. Hamilton stated that "there has been something of a disagreement in the church world in the last twenty years about the merits of using marketing strategies in the church" (p. 31). He continued that "vision is a key characteristic found in leaders who develop dynamic churches" (p. 132).

Involvement in social issues and practices does not necessarily mean that the person is less spiritual. Christiano et al. (2008) affirmed that "because people are more likely to want their religion a la carte does not necessarily mean that they are 'less religious' " (p. 79). They continued by declaring that "our ideas of the ways the world works have changed, and that these have entailed corresponding shifts of emphasis in global explanatory structures or bases on which we attribute credibility or truth" (p. 74).

The separation of what is sacred and what is not, and the spiritual world and the secular world are debatable subjects. Some sociologists believed that religion was in decline and made their statements based on this belief. Berger (2009) stated that "in the 1950s and 1960s most sociologists dealing with religion also believed that modernity necessarily led to a decline of religion, a belief that was systematized in a so-called secularization theory" (p. 69).

Some may argue that secularization of the church is something that makes the spiritual component more of the world than of the spirit. Goldstein (2009) expressed that "the process of secularization leads from the religious to the secular, from the sacred to the profane" (p. 137). As

human beings embark on a different kind of search it does not necessarily mean that they are separating themselves from the main flow. Foster (2006) affirmed that "while renegades run from religion, they're not necessarily running from God" (p. 7). So it is important to understand that there is a difference between what religious beliefs are and the practices of those beliefs. Foster continued to say about Christianity that "more and more people consider Jesus cool and His teachings current, while there is an ever-widening credibility gap between the words Christ, Christian, and Christianity" (p. 20).

Religion is part of the lives of human beings and as a consequence, of society. Christiano et al. (2008) confirmed that "religion was the glue of society, the source of social solidarity" (p. 64). Then as part of the social life, religion needs to redefine its purpose and involvement in social issues. Even the medical field is conscious of the importance of the spiritual needs of patients and has changed policies (Ross, 2008).

Weber and his theory of secularization offer clarification for the integration of the social system with the religious system, not overlooking the sacred rites and ceremonies that are part of the religious system. According to Hughey (1979),

> For Weber, then, it appears that secularization can mean different things and can take various directions within a single religious system. That is, a religion may be secularized in the sense that it makes practical and theoretical compromises to each of economic, political, aesthetic and other autonomous institutional orders (p. 93).

There are practices that could be considered too secularized for an older generation. Young adults are getting more demanding in their needs for spiritual fulfillment. Their unique experiences add new elements for their interpretation of beliefs in myths, narratives and world view; values and morals that shape character and set quality of life; practices being private or

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collective; and sense of community including family, friends, and social support structure (Singleton et al., 2004, p. 256).

Secularization means bringing the realities of the society and community into the realities of the religious ground. Separation or rejection of a group in the community could be expressed in different ways. One way is not acknowledging the spiritual needs of young people being this one form of rejection. Others are keeping the old ways, practicing authority with no regrets on who is not included or affected, and separating the church from the community. These could be seen as forms of disconnection.

Weber's rational action and traditional authority provide channels under which the younger generation and the older generation are operating. Secularization and how it is seen by Christian church leaders provides the resistant component in the formula to enhance the communication between the two generations. The gap is there and the solutions are in front of us.

Postmodernism

The concept of Postmodernism and the timeframe of it depend on the subject. For example, if the subject is paintings, a postmodern style could be after 1870's; if architecture, 1949 could be the changing point when adjustments were made as a result of the dissatisfaction of modern architecture. On the other hand if is philosophy, it could be around 1917 with Nietzsche's analysis of Modernity.

In the postmodern era there have been cultural shifts in religion and spirituality. In terms of religion the position in the United States was clearly stated when separation of state and religion occurred. Wolfson (2002) declared that "a puzzling aspect of religion in America today is that there is both less and more of it than 40 or 50 years ago" (p. 123). He continued that

"religion in the West has become a radically individualized affair, shorn of all shared theological beliefs and ecclesiastical and public bonds" (p. 124).

Cultural, political and economic forces have not diminished the individual's need for religious interaction. Even though it seems that society is moving to a more individualistic way of living some aspects of the modern era and before are still present. Wolfson (2002) affirmed that "the implication is that the postmodern world, with its broader range of freedoms and wider tolerance for individual expressiveness, survives on the borrowed civic capital of its predecessor" (p. 127). Probably the clearest example would be the turn of individuals to religious organizations during and after nine eleven (9-11).

In contrast with religion, spirituality is less evident in individuals unless they are asked. Religiosity could be visible in the involvement of individuals in a religious community but spirituality is more of personal experience and exercise of faith. This always will take place in a community even if it is a cybernetic one. Jankowski (2002) stated that "a pervasive, and yet subtle, effect of postmodernism on spirituality seems to be the elevation of subjective experience as the legitimate *way of knowing*. A way of knowing refers to how persons make sense of their selves, relationships, and the world around them" (p. 70).

Arbuckle suggested that "religious congregations, following the normal life cycle of institutions, have become distanced from their founding myths and are experiencing the resulting potentially creative social chaos" (as cited in Schneiders, 1997, p. 512). Many small church structures and rites have not changed through time. The older congregation is still doing "business" the same way was done years ago. Hervieu-Leger affirmed that "young people are not interested in hierarchical structures and old-fashioned liturgies; they are more interested in the

subjective expressions of their religious experience" (as cited in Webber, 2002, p. 40). A more modern approach needs to be taken.

It is difficult to have a postmodern approach to the concept of spiritual and religious perceptions. Elliott (2009) stated that "since the postmodern – aesthetic, cultural and political – is always and in advance an approach to human affairs from the perspective of the post-contemporary or post-traditional, it is not easy to imagine what a stage beyond the postmodern would look like exactly" (p. 264). It seems that we are living this change. Culture is changing to a more globalized approach while religious organizations are incorporating cybernetic churches to their traditional worship practices.

Postmodernism had a group of critics that resemble the conservative views. According to Littlejohn (1999), "this group believes that there is certain meaning, and this is to be found in hidden oppressive social structures, expressed in discourse" (p. 223). Power among classes and groups where "individuals have little or no freedom to act in the world" (p. 223) is another critique to postmodernism. This postmodern world has a massive exposure to media that could influence the decision-making process and the definition of spirituality. Or, enhance it as it concerns so many into virtual communities and spirituality takes place in these non-conventional communities.

In the postmodern culture there are some shifts in traditional paradigms. Clark (2004) affirmed that "variables such as shifts in cultural values and structure; changes in the family system; new research into peer relations, gender and ethnic uniqueness; and new ways of thinking about morality, character, and ethics have become increasingly important in describing the nature of adolescence" (p. 26). How influential can these paradigms be when it comes to religious beliefs?

Spirituality and Religion

   This section discusses the concepts of spirituality and religion. There are many writings and research that attempts to define and understand the perceptions of spirituality and religion. For the purpose of this research the description given by Gall, Malette, and Guirguis (2011) in their study serves as the framework for the concepts. According to Gall et al. (2011) "spirituality was seen as the nucleus of the self or the core self…. framework or guide for living and being with others: a life perspective" (p. 176). They continued by stating that "for some, religiousness is simply a manifestation of one's faith or spirituality" (p. 172). Being spiritual is an important part of person's identity and experience with a higher power. On the other hand, being religious is the outside expression of spirituality (Gall et al., 2011).

   The concepts of spirituality and religion appear to be clear to young people today than before. Bouma and Mason acknowledged that "religion has not died, but is not what it used to be. For young people, religion and spirituality have escaped the confines of formal organizations" (as cited in Webber, 2002, p. 41). According to Webber (2002) "the trend is for young people to engage in more experiential forms of religious experiences (p. 41). The traditional forms of seeking a spiritual fulfillment are changing to a more meaningful experience among youth (Webber, 2002). Spirituality seeks for a more fulfilling experience for the individual.

   Spirituality has been part of the human culture experience since the beginning of humankind (Wade, 2009). Being spiritual is related to sacred matters and things that affect the spirit. Singleton, Mason, & Webber (2004) declared that "spirituality may also take the form of a way of life which seeks to follow an ideal which is not religious, supernatural or other-worldly,

for example, to live a good or virtuous life" (p. 251). There is a difference between being religious and being spiritual and the concepts have changed through time.

History confirms that spirituality and religiosity have been shifting. Wade (2009) affirmed that "all known human societies have some form of religion and so too, almost certainly, did the ancestral population of modern humans which evolved in northeast Africa and was confined to its ancestral homeland there until some 50,000 years ago" (p. 99). Trying to explain non-physical and physical matters led to the concepts of spiritual beings. Wade (2009) declared that "it was those who believed that the gods or their ancestors were seeing into their hearts who hewed closest to their society's rules" (p. 39).

Now, the question is: Do people need the concept of "church" in order to be spiritual? People today have their own way to worship and be spiritual. In many cases people simply do not see the need for an "organized religion." Hamilton (2002) affirmed that "in a world where such views are so prevalent, pastors and church leaders must have a fundamental conviction about the absolute necessity of Church if they are going to lead the Church" (p.23). If the leadership is thinking like this, do they share the same or different view with young people in small communities?

There are some that believe that churches need to lead people to a "transcendent experience." If they do not move to this "mystical level" then they focus on morality and doctrine (McQuillan, 2009, p. 85). McQuillan continued by stating that "religion has survived throughout human existence precisely because there is something about it that has survival value for our species" (p. 78). Religion is a fundamental part of the human being as a whole.

Theoretical Foundation

It has to be taken into consideration that people have their own views on how spiritual matters need to be conducted. It would be safe to say that both Durkheim and Weber are right and religion and spirituality are dealing with many variables affecting these concepts. On one hand the sacred needs to be defined and on the other hand involvement in social issues is a must. Now, the misunderstanding could arise if the concepts are operating in the same venue but with little or no consideration given to the each other.

Durkheim's theoretical areas are more relevant, in my perception, to the older generation. The strong perceptions of what is sacred and profane, the collective effervescence that is very strong in the older generation, and the concepts of religion and community are more evident in their behavior.

In contrast Weber's approaches are more to the younger generation. The spiritual choices that young people need to make are driven by rational, value, affectual and more charismatic approaches than for an older generation. The changes in spiritual needs are affected by the changes that young adults are facing living in this modern era. Communication and ways of communicating are providing a venue of expressing the individualistic and sophisticated meaning of religion in an organized different approach.

Leadership has its views of rituals, sacred items, and ceremonies performed on a regular basis. Performing business in a traditional or non-traditional way is the difference between having success or failure. Sense of community and the welfare of the people need to be approached in a different manner.

Young adults, as outsiders, might think that these approaches are not meeting their needs and a more modern approach needs to be made. As an example of the religious market place

young adults have the choice to select what can fulfill their spiritual needs. They are also facing changes that dictate, in many cases, their behavior. Their view of society, family, and the relationship between spiritual matters and social interaction are variables that affect their concept of spirituality and religion. The view of authority and the religious structure probably do not help to cope with changes experienced by the young adults.

Influence between social actions and spiritual matters are continuous. Durkheim considered the sacred matters inherent in religion part of human beings and by consequence present in the social life, while for Weber there is that spiritual component that is being dragged through daily life experiences. In small churches, like in any other organization, both concepts are present. There are those who believe that the church has its sacred things that cannot be changed or touched and the mission is one of spiritual matter. Others might say that the church is in this world and has to act and adapt in order to perform better the task of doing ministry.

These perceptions and concepts also are present in the definition of spirituality and religiosity that young adults have. It was one of the tasks of this research to inquire how present are these two views in the leadership and young adults, and if both were in the same community.

Supporting Theories

While Durkheim and Weber will address the state of the modern world compare to the traditional world, this section will address the current shift, which is termed Postmodernism. The church as we know it now is considered modern. The shift to a postmodern approach could be visualized as the change from hierarchical structures with a bureaucratic system to a more liberated rituals and norms configuration.

We need to recognize that this social shift results in a rational-legal authority structure where religious forces influence behavior. In our Western Capitalistic Business Culture, the use

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of rational-legal action influences the conduct of church business. The consumer business model and practices result in the disenchantment of the human soul or spirit into the consumer need or desire. The postmodern shift fights for spirituality over rational legal action of the church. Structures are needed but when the structures interfere with the purpose of an organization then the system needs to be revised.

In order to have a broader perspective two supportive theories will be taken into consideration: *Rational Choice Theory and Cohort Theory*. These two theories maintain a close relationship with Durkheim's and Weber's theories and augment the theoretical perspectives already outlined.

Rational choice theory. Rational choice theory is about choices and the decisions made on those choices. The function of religion is to provide people with something they value. It could be material or spiritual. It offers answers to life questions like death, sickness and others. At the same time it provides the space and time for socialization. The concept of religious marketplace develops in the wake of multiculturalism and secularization providing more alternatives in the religious arena. People have to make choices according to what they value, desire, or choices that they have. For Weber instrumental rational action is more important in modern societies than value rational action.

According to Quackenbush (2004), "a common criticism of rational choice theory is that real decision-makers are not rational. They are constrained by institutions, cultural influences, or psychological limitations that make the assumption of rationality problematic at best, or foolhardy at worst" (p. 92). It could be argued that not everyone behaves in a rational manner and makes rational decisions.

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There are other theories that have a rational choice approach. Quackenbush (2004) continued by stating,

> Rational choice theory is a descriptive phrase used to describe any of a number of individual theories that incorporate a rational choice approach. This approach is grounded in the basic assumption that actors make rational choices in an attempt to reach their most preferred outcome. In addition, rational choice assumes that outcomes are the result of choices by actors (p. 101).

According to Young, "although Warner makes clear that new paradigm in sociology has several variants …, it has largely come to be associated with rational choice theory" (as cited in Christiano et al., 2008, p. 39). Rational decisions are mainly made to satisfy a need or what an individual wants. Christiano et al. (2008) continued by stating that "because it is the case that there are, as Max Weber would put it, 'multiple and competing rationales for action,' rational choice theory does not detract from those theoretical contributions of people, such as Geertz (1983) and Turner (1974), who wish to emphasize 'local knowledge' or 'social drama' " (p. 41).

There are many religious organizations to choose from these days. Among the Protestant side there are many denominations with similarities and differences in terms of traditional, contemporary, modern, etcetera. Christiano et al. (2008) declared that "at the core of rational choice theory is a view of the human being as a 'rational' actor, making choices that she or he thinks best, calculating costs and benefits" (p. 40). Making religious choices does not differ from making other choices in life because there are several alternatives and the process is not an easy one.

Making a rational choice in terms of religion or spirituality seems to be easy but is not. Each individual tries to make the better choice that could fit in with his/her own needs. Both

young and older generations are engaged in rational choice. In the postmodern world this engagement seems to be more irrational from the perspective of the tradition. For a younger generation communication and virtual community via cyber connectivity is the rational choice outcome while the older generation relies on the consistency of the message via physical engagement. But both environments have validity from a purely spiritual perspective. The grouping of generations in terms of perception and defining concepts could be considered as generational cohort.

Cohort theory. The cohort theory is characterized by a group of people that are considered in the same generation. One of the stronger thinkers in generational cohort theory is Karl Mannheim. According to Mannheim "a generation is a group of people of the same age in a similar social location experiencing similar social events" (as cited in Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007, p. 49). These social events distinguish one cohort from another shaping, in a way, the perception and characteristics of the group. Costa and McCrae expressed that "generational cohort theory contradicts the more traditional belief that people change, mature, and develop their values, attitudes, and preferences as a function of age" (as cited in Sessa et al., 2007, p. 49).

Religious leaders' styles are also influenced by the cohort in which they were born and grew up. Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak affirmed that "differences in attitudes, values, and beliefs of the several generational cohorts are believed to influence how each generational cohort views leadership, which then manifest itself in use of different preferred leadership styles" (as cited in Sessa et al., 2007, p. 53). The leadership style could differ from how leaders perceive themselves. Kabacoff and Stoffey, and Oshagbemi declared that "in research on age and differences in leadership styles, some research suggests that older leaders perceive themselves to be more participative and consultative than younger workers" (as cited in Sessa et al., 2007, p.

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54). The fact is that an older generation is living in a modern era, but because they are located in small rural towns there is a very strong strand of traditional as well.

The traditional strand differs from the more modern approach that the cohort of a younger generation has. While the rational choice justifies the existence and persistence of the two worlds, cohort creates boundaries that will be hard to break. The challenge of the Church is to set all old, young, rich, and poor on an even level. Changes are frequently resisted by an older generation in small local churches; and if changes are not made, it means organizational death and the old generation knows they will die experiencing it; the young do not. So boundaries are drawn and the challenges to penetrate them increase. What gets in the way? What might be the way to get through?

Generational cultures and differences. Each generation has a distinctive culture or cultures and at the same time each one reveals some marked differences. As time progresses, will the cohorts have a characterized change? Steven Warner stated that "the market-oriented approach has attained the status of a 'new paradigm' in the sociology of religion and is well on its way toward displacing the traditional secularization paradigm" (as cited in Iannaccone et al., 1995, p. 721). Are the young adults a new generation a cohort? Even among young adults there are cohorts depending on their experiences in life.

Young adults are also in cohorts when it comes to spirituality. Christianity has become another expression of faith that is not necessarily appealing to a younger generation. Kinnaman (2007) stated that "millions of young outsiders are mentally and emotionally disengaging from Christianity. The nation's population is increasingly resistant to Christianity, especially to the theologically conservative expressions of that faith" (p. 39). Now, according to Smith and

Denton (2005), among Christians there are more Protestant young people than Catholics (p. 31). Is this the sign of a cohort? Or, is this a generational perspective or difference?

Seeking the expression of spirituality through religion is not homogeneous among young adults. Life experiences and historical events influence the culture and differences among generations. The course of life affects our adaptation to our environment. Hareven (1994) affirmed that "the adaptation of individuals and their families to the social and economic conditions they face in the later years of life is contingent on the pathways by which they reach old age" (p. 438). Hareven also acknowledged that "the impact of historical events on the life course may continue over several generations" (p. 440). During the twentieth century there were a series of events that impacted the life of the generation today as well as society behaviors.

Through time spiritual life has been affected by live experiences, historical events, science, technology, and others as shown in Figure 1.
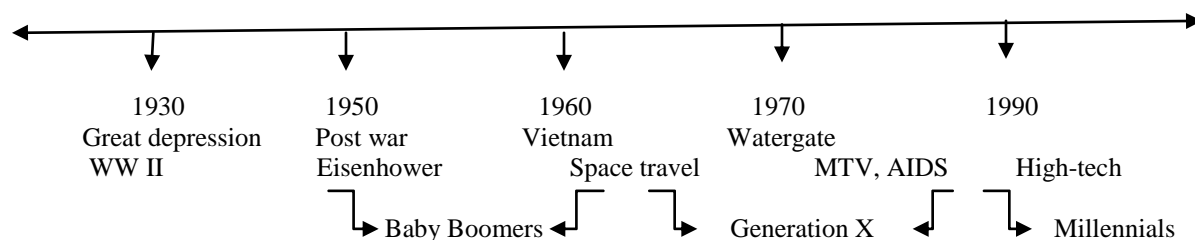
Figure 1. Interpretation of the time line of the generational explanation and Mannheim's theory in Williams and Davidson, 1996

For the purpose of this paper, three generational groups will be concentrated on: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. These generational groups experienced major historical events that could increase the differences in the definition of spirituality. Strauss and Howe acknowledged that:

Although there is broad agreement that a generation's specific character arises

from historical, social and cultural environment in which its members live during

their formative years, opinion differs as to whether, on the one hand, all persons

can be said to belong to an identifiable generation of relatively fixed length and

contiguous with those that precede and follow it (as cited in Dixon, 2006, p. 83).

Religious leaders work and behave according to the theology that they learned or have. The generational cohort also influenced the theology scene especially after WWII. Tidball (2009) identified three generations after the war. The first generation was immigrant families that "brought with them the language, customs, values, and religion of the old country" (p. 146). The second generation mostly forgot the old country, language, and customs, and started to become true Americans (p. 146). The third generation, "were confident of being Americans and felt no need to prove themselves" (p. 146). Tidball continued by stating that "every generation of evangelical scholars, like every generation of evangelical disciples, have to work out anew what it means be 'in, but not of' the host culture" (p. 160).

Do spiritual needs change through time and generation? Kettner et al. (1999) acknowledged that "need itself is elastic and relative rather than static and absolute" (p. 37). Then, the spiritual needs and the concepts of spirituality and religious commitment have changed through time, historical events, generations and culture (culture refers to customs of a group). Stark and Bainbridge (1980) constructed a general theory on religion and how its existence is based on a set of axioms. They declared that "human perception and action take place through time, from the past into the future" (p. 115). In addition, they said that human actions seek rewards. In terms of spiritual needs this translates into a reward of supernatural nature like "cure for pain and trouble" (p. 125). Furthermore, they link this compensatory system with the

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religious commitment of humans with how well religious organizations offer this compensation. They affirmed that "religious organizations vary in terms of how well-developed and credible a set of compensators they offer" (p. 126).

It would not be naïve to say that we are influenced by the environment. Similar experiences lead to similar thoughts especially if those thoughts were taught. Each specific time frame events put a weight in the way that we behave. Values, morals, view of the world, and religious perception changed through time. Thirty to forty years ago people relied on what the spiritual leader said was written in the Bible; now we have a different version at our fingertips. We had to wait to know what happened on the other side of the world, now we watch it as it happens. People want things now and fast. Satisfaction is a reward that we all want. Taking Stark and Bainbridge's theory into consideration then, further research needs to be done in what kind of reward system could work for a younger generation and its religious commitment.

It seems that these generational differences affect not only attendance and participation, but giving as well. Zech (2000) wrote that "a number of scholars of the social scientific study of religion have argued that religious beliefs and practices differ among generational cohorts" (p. 545). Zech continued by identifying differences between the cohorts in terms of roles in church. Early baby boomers "expect church members to play a more activist role" (p. 549). Late boomers "are more demanding of the church in that they expect it to play a variety of roles" (p. 549). The early group of traditional Generation X "seem to be attracted to a more traditional, more conservative, stricter church" (p. 549). This Generation X was raised with a consumer mentality and they will "shop" around until they find what they want. The postmodern Generation X were exposed to the boom changes in technology and are more inclined to high-tech closer to the Millennials.

To accentuate the generational differences, there are also some misconceptions about the elderly generation by the younger one. Minkler (1991) mentioned that "the notion that the elderly are no longer economically disadvantaged reflects an earlier mentioned tendency to homogenize the old, ignoring their tremendous diversity" (p.37).

These two different cultures sometimes collapse due to the dissimilarities. Acculturation could be a model to follow. According to Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, acculturation is "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (as cited in Miller, 2010, p. 1). This has been demonstrated in research over the past decades.

Younger and older generations have their unique perceptions on tradition and modernity. Their distinctiveness many times has been seen as dissimilarities. If both groups engage in a relationship where both can expose their views probably they would find that they have more in common than they thought. Acculturation could occur most likely in both.

Traditional stream. The traditional stream is the behavior that implements traditional actions embedded in conventional habits. Tradition dictates the model to follow. The procedures are stated by the already established religious rules and regulations. The majority of small rural churches' leadership is of traditional stream.

In the ancient world religion ruled daily lives, even in daily life stages such as changes from childhood to maturity. As time passed changes were made to the religious beliefs system. Armstrong (2009) avowed that "in the ancient world, the High God myth was replaced by more relevant creation stories that never regarded as factual" (p. 16). Then reason came into the picture when philosophers and theologians had "begun to apply their reasoning powers

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systematically to the truths of faith" (p. 130). The fifteenth century changed the vision of the world when Christopher Columbus traveled across the Atlantic Ocean and "discovered" the New World. The missionaries traveling to this new world brought with them a new perspective of religion. The unification of the kingdom roughly depended on the influence of religion, especially among the colonies. Inventions proliferated during this century and changes were evident in the Old World. Two ideologies collapsed: "one open and tolerant, the other exclusive and coercive" (p. 166). Armstrong continues by stating that "as society altered to accommodate these developments, religion would also have to change... but secularization was beginning" (p. 166).

Then, in the 1800's people experienced another dramatic change. Armstrong (2009) expressed that "people were sick of the intolerant behavior of the churches. But few were prepared to break with religion entirely" (p. 221). After all these adjustments through history, more were to come. The First World War was the result of discrepancies of ideologies. Along with the Great Depression fascism and communism arose. But the discrepancies kept emerging. These discrepancies again led to the Second World War. Armstrong continues by saying that "modern secular ideologies were proving to be as lethal as any religious bigotry. They revealed the inherent destructiveness of all idolatry: once the finite reality of the nation had become an absolute value, it was compelled to overcome and destroy all rival claimants" (p. 263).

After WWII there was a decrease in church attendance. Sociologists declared the victory of secularism in Europe and United States. In 1965 Cox affirmed that religion had to be centered in humanity instead of on a transcendent deity. Cox continued by declaring,

The decline of religion was just one sign of major cultural change during this decade, when many of the institutional structures of modernity were pulled down: censorship was

relaxed, abortion and homosexuality were legalized, divorce became easier, the women's movement campaigned for gender equality, and the young railed against the modern ethos of their parents (as cited in Armstrong, 2009, p. 289).

With liberal ideology also came the increase of people that claimed to be atheist or people against religion. Various people think that religion encourages people to keep living a miserable life. Hitchens (2007) said that "the message is one of continual submission, gratitude, and fear" (p. 124). He continued by writing that "religion teaches people to be extremely self-centered and conceited" (p. 124). He mentioned that religion and communism are not that different. Concerning secularism he stated that "just as secularists and atheists have withstood clerical and theocratic tyrannies, so religion believers have resisted pagan and materialists ones" (p. 396). His major criticism is the concept of a "permanent higher supervision" that promotes fear and the sense of eternal vengeance (p. 431).

Differences in opinion and beliefs can be seen in the attitudes of the traditional and new generations. Changes in society and acceptance of new behaviors also create friction between traditional and modern views. An example of this is the attitudes toward homosexuality. Clark, Brown, and Hochstein acknowledged that "with few exceptions, Christian religious institutions have been unsupportive of gay men, lesbians, and bisexual (GLB) persons within or outside the churches" (as cited in Finlay & Walther, 2003, p. 370). For many traditional churches adjusting to new generational views of the world is very difficult and seen as diverging from spiritual laws.

Small rural churches are more traditional and exercise traditional authority. The Bible dictates the rules and regulations and no divergence for what is traditionally interpreted is accepted. New generational views of the world could disintegrate the traditional ways. This is the

view that the rural churches have in terms of the possibility of having a new generational stream coming in.

New generation stream. The new generational stream views religion and spirituality as changing matters that are influenced by daily experiences. Flexibility and adaptability permeate the practices of religion. Traditional ways are seen as obsolete but could be adapted to fulfill the spiritual needs of the new generation.

Foster (2006) said that "Christians come off as being a subculture of smug, self-righteous, know-it-alls who exude an attitude of arrogance and moral superiority" (p. 23). He continued by expressing that "church leaders, once recruited from the ranks of the faithful and sustained by voluntary offerings, suddenly became men of power, status, and wealth" (p. 51).

The attitude of the traditional stream seems to be a factor in the disconnection of the two generations. Kimball (2007) wrote that "many indicated that it isn't church leaders' job to go out to the people; instead the people should come to us" (p. 13). The use of technology tools to reach out is not on the agenda. Secularization is the last thing to think about. However, the new millennium generations expect different things. Kimball declared that "the world around us has drastically changed over the past thirty years or so. In our increasingly post-Christian culture, the influences and values shaping emerging generations are no longer aligned with Christianity" (p. 15).

Young adults' forms of communication and the use of technology to maintain connections by having a virtual community could be seen as a disconnecting factor between the two generations. The postmodern spirituality is fed via technological revolution that advances faster than organized social systems, particularly in a small church setting. This could be viewed as a misalignment with traditional Christianity.

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Despite all the changes, the perception of what is church also has not changed that much. Freedom for choosing and behaving is essential. Kimball (2007) expressed that "people outside of the church who see the church as organized religion believe that church leaders will try to control them by dictating how and when they should pray" (p. 75). The new generation is in need of freedom and communication combined with virtual connectivity that feeds that freedom.

The perception of the leadership is also an apparent gap between generations. Kimball (2007) said that "so often only older leaders have most of the authority" (p. 81). If an older generation has the authority the perception could be that they are exercising control and power over the younger generation. They are seeking freedom. Kimball mentioned that when people were asked about their perception about Christians "the words judgmental, critical, negative, and condemning were all shouted out multiple times" (p. 97). The perception is that the church goers are not an example to follow. In this case, the younger generation would prefer a more virtual community where they can keep their individuality but at the same time be part of a community sharing only what they want.

The reality is that an expanding world through technological change affects the behavior and perception of the younger generation. Clark (2004) affirmed that "just below the sheen of coerced normality are the stress and strain of personal survival in a hostile world" (p. 19). It is not only internal issues that detach the younger generation from the traditional one. Now young people are exposed to many things that the older generation was not. Opportunities to participate in things in community and through the internet give young adults a broader perspective of the environment. Clark, talking about technology, declared that this venue will eventually create a distance between the needs of the younger and older generations (p. 45). He continued by saying

that "the vast majority of adults simply do not comprehend the complex and different world" (p. 59).

Relationships through the lives of young adults also affect the vision and trust in older adults. Clark (2004) stated that many young people are disconnected with from people because "many adults have let them down throughout their lives" (p. 171). This is particularly true when it comes to having been raised by only one parent while the other is present sporadically or not present at all.

The perception about Christianity among the new generation needs to be considered when leaders are to make decisions on what to do to perform outreach programs or to plan events. Kinnaman (2007) stated that "Christianity's image problem is not merely the perception of young outsiders. Those inside the church see it as well – especially Christians in their twenties and thirties" (p. 18). According to Kinnaman, 47% of church outsiders consider Christianity hypocritical. This negative perception also affects young churchgoers (p. 42). Christian leaders need to be conscious of this reputation perceived by young people. Today the involvement of religious people in political matters is also a point of discrepancy between the traditional and the younger generation. The criticism is not only about the Christian faith but also at its people as well (Kinnnaman & Lyons, 2007).

Views of the sacred and rituals in a traditional way might affect communication with the new generation. But according to Hamilton (2002), people "are not turned off by tradition, provided it is appropriately interpreted for them" (p. 70). Communication is a key component in the process of connecting traditional and new generations. Littlejohn (1999) affirmed that "communication (interaction) is the vehicle by which we learn how to behave and what things

mean" (p. 14). Communication ways have changed drastically. Today technology has altered the meaning of communicating.

The access to technology has also changed the ways in which people see religious practices. Smith and Denton (2005) acknowledged that people have "easy access to masses of information about endless array of religious systems and spiritual practices that might broaden their religious horizons and kindle new spiritual interests" (p. 181). Not only can the use of technology affect the connection between the old and new generations but also it will shape historic and social changes. Smith added that technology is affecting the structural disconnection between the older and younger worlds (p. 183).

Of all the social changes, technology is the fastest one. In their book, Carrol and Clark (2002) affirmed that "among social changes, …shifting family and education patterns as well as certain technological developments as being especially salient" (p. 412). McMullin, Duerden and Jovic (2007) declared that "besides music and fashion, computing technology is also identified as a marker of culture through which generations may be formed" (p. 300). The use and knowledge of technology shape the new generation as well as the traditional stream presenting a challenge to try to keep up with it. This technology generation has a different way to interact. McDaniel (2001) said that "the interaction of ICT's [information and computing technologies] with generation has received scant attention, particularly generation as a social relation, and even less to generation as a system of social relations that shapes technologies and is shaped by them" (p. 537).

In the next section I will present specific aspects of the foregoing theoretical perspectives and place them into a synthesized perspective correlated to my research. Specifically, I surmise how the modern social stability outlined by Durkheim and Weber has been interpreted and

advanced into a more rapidly advancing and continually morphing set of social environments through the technological advances of communication connectivity. This foundation tool of communicative action feeds the postmodern movement that in turn has split generational perspectives at multiple levels: First, at the old young generational level, and second, at the young-traditional versus young-freewill/self-determined levels.

Conceptual Framework

Spiritual needs and desires change through time. The socio-technical advancement affects the systems that operate within social context. Small communities are reluctant or sometimes resistant to change. But, modernization as it feeds postmodernism is around to affect everything. Religious leaders that function in small communities have the task of helping the people go through such changes and to be aware of methods to connect modernity and postmodernism with Christianity. Ingleby (2007) recognized that many times the traditional beliefs affect the way that progress is perceived. If pre-modern religion is rooted in the community the reception of modernity affects the way people perceive the mission of the religious organization within a new construct to community. According to Beeby, "some have emphasized the similarities between Christianity and pre-modern religion suggesting that pre-modern people have a deep level ability to 'hear' the gospel" (as cited in Ingleby, 2007, p. 14); the notion is similar to Durkheim's social realism in terms of collective conscience. Younger generations today, however, are now operating in a post-modern formulation where community, through communicative action, has become continuously emergent and virtual.

The following table summarizes the presented theories and relative viewpoints of this study. Even though a younger generation might be operating in a postmodern environment, they can simultaneously perceive things in a more traditional way as evidenced by a split in the

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younger generational practices of traditional religion versus nontraditional free forming

spiritualization. A similar paradox can exist among small church leaders.

Table 1

Key Theoretical Viewpoints and Perspectives

Theoretical viewpoints	Sacred/Profane	Ritual	Tradition	Community
Social Realism	Concepts change being affected by society's creation of sacred things	Need for interaction among organized groups called community	Influenced by social actions	Involvement in social issues via collective consciousness
Secularization	Spiritual and worldly matters should be separated	Spiritual needs of individuals happen via connectivity within technologically derived communication	The scientific paradigm is important to keep things separated	Involvement in social issues could be considered replacing religiosity with spirituality
Rational Choice	People are beings able to distinguish what is sacred or not	Whatever actions that fulfill spiritual needs	The option of adopting tradition or not	There are alternatives for involvement in social issues
Cohort	Social concepts are passed on according to the generational cohort where the individual was raised	Practices are learned by observation or involvement with significant historical events	Tradition remains within the cohort relative to shared experience	Changes historically and is influenced by practices of the generation

The postmodern world intersects with this grid in a particular way. Postmodern

individuals define their spirituality by the experiences, relationships, and the world. Religious

interaction is still present. This interaction could be expressed in different ways. As we can see in

Table 1 interaction as ritual is important in any of the theoretical viewpoints. So it does not

matter if a person is traditional or postmodern, community and community interaction permeates

the individual need.

The majority of young people are searching to find themselves and what they want in life.

They are dealing with the influence of family, friends, and religious beliefs trying to make sense

of everything (Carr, 1977). Their journey in life is about choices and decisions despite their

surroundings. The fast way of living in which they are existing demands quick and more group

accepted behavior.

More than ever young people are influenced by the media. Movies, TV, radio, internet, video games, and magazines are among today's methods of communication and influence. Mueller (2007) stated that "all of this old and new media technology has changed the face of the world and how teenagers live in it" (p. 79). Mueller continued by stating that "in today's world it's impossible to remain untouched by the powerful influence of media – unless you're a hermit" (p. 144). These methods of communication are in use in large religious organizations, but what about small churches in rural areas? Among the young adults are those that are traditionally oriented and those who are not. In both cases connectivity can be fulfilled by having both systems in place, virtual and traditional.

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Larson we need to first catch their attention and then engage them (as cited in Lytch, 2004, p. 25). The sense of belonging, social network, and family influence are among variables that influence young adults' religious involvement. According to Lytch evangelicals have a high active level of attendance compared to other churches. There must be something that is attracting them (Lyntch, 2004). This reinforces the assumption that there are some young people that are attracted to the traditional practices.

There are some big changes that this young generation is experiencing today. The increased level of family restructuring is a major variable. Some years ago a family unit could include two or more generations in one household. Lytch (2004) referred to young people "more often reared in single-parent families than were their baby boomer parents" (p. 193). How does this affect the spiritual life of a young adult?

Small churches in rural areas do not have the necessary resources to target the needs of a younger generation. Many are traditional in their ministries. In order to create a ministry that appeals to a younger generation King (2006) stated that it "will require us to discern between

tradition and traditionalism" (p. 101). He added that this will have to have "an environment of authentic community" (p. 69). The alarming statistics of young people leaving the religious organization aggravates the issue of membership numbers. King declared that "more than 80 percent of people who grow up in the church leave it when they hit their twenties "(p. 24). This leaves the ministry to young people in the hands of an older generation whose practices are probably not of interest to a younger one. King (2006) affirmed that the connection could be achieved when leaders start to "eliminate the ineffective practices of the past twenty-five years" (p. 25).

Many times older adults try work with young adults as if they know what the young people want. Lawrence (2006) acknowledged that this practice is as if leaders are answering questions without knowing what the questions are (p. 19). He suggested that the best practices are to be simple, get purposeful, and be real. Young people perceive authenticity and truth. If differences in perceptions are detected then communication is cut.

It does not matter in what theoretical viewpoint the leaders are standing. There are commonalities that could be uniting the two generations. As shown in Table 1 we can see that rituals, tradition, community and perception of sacred and profane are expressed in each viewpoint. There are different expressions but the common purpose is there. Each person can also identify his/her theoretical standpoint according to the expressions or beliefs in each area. Some people might have a combination of theoretical viewpoints. In communicating with a younger generation we have to be conscious of where we are standing recognizing our perspectives in order to recognize and respect others'.

Not only is being familiar with perspectives important but also leaders need to know the young language, their artistry interest (graffiti), their fashion trends, spiritual needs, and their

music. Leaders have opportunities to connect with the young people by knowing all these things. One example is music. Smith & Jackson (2005) acknowledged that music, like hip-hop some years ago, have influenced young people in church (p. 36). The cultural force and influence of music among the lives of young people could be used by the church to present the gospel.

Music is a way of communication, and communication is the key to community and social understanding of spirituality fits with dogma, liturgy, authority, and bureaucratic structure. Young people are divided between the modern and traditional currents, and also in a combination of the two. Ways of presenting the gospel have to be diverse and meaningful.

Probably postmodernism could explains the drive or shift in communication as it addresses the power of communicative action as it relates to technology when intersected with Weber and Durkheim's theory. It could explain the split between young-traditional versus young-self/world-determine. This new spiritual communication in religion replaced the traditional by contacting the surroundings and the environment via technology, in other words the whole world.

The supporting theories augment the above by noting rationality, which adds strength to the existing cultures, and barriers that prevent penetration; also there are generational perspectives that create differing foundations for communication. In order to be effective it is important to identify common perspectives. This was done by performing qualitative research in the targeted community. Even though it was difficult to identify each person's perceptions commonalities were found.

As a church leader I was intrigued to know what the younger generation thinks about community, tradition, rituals, and sacred/profane concepts. The findings will help in the

implementation of effective communication channels in order to create the spiritual community that young adults are seeking.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of the literature relative to the concepts of religion and spirituality. Some relevant theories were discussed in addition to other theories. The differences between spirituality and religion were recognized. Durkheim's theories were clarified in relationship with this research. Weber's theories and the relationship between the theories were recognized. This literature review provided a starting point to contextualize the study.

The next chapter will present the methodology used to answer the research questions. In the chapter I will also present the role of the researcher, population, sampling and sampling strategies, data collection methods, analysis and credibility, and limitations to the study.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Introduction

This chapter will present the procedures employed for the completion of the research: methodology, population, sampling, data collection methods, analysis, and credibility and trustworthiness.

There are many issues when sociologists approach religion from a philosophical point of view. The concepts of good and bad, evil, immortality, and God can create ethical debates. Christiano et al. (2008) stated that "for the sociological study of religion what matters is not whether God exists or whether the soul is immortal or how evil comes to be defined, but the fact that people act on beliefs that God does or does not exist" (p.27).

The purpose of this study was to inquire on young adults' spirituality and how church leaders are addressing these spiritual needs in small rural churches. The complexity of the topic was better approached by using a qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted. Three sets of questions were developed to guide the interviews.

The information from this study can be used to develop strategies to better address the spiritual needs of young adults in small churches located in rural areas. In this chapter I will present the methodology used for the research, the role of the researcher, the population, sampling strategy, data collection, analysis and credibility, limitations to the study, and chapter summary.

Research Methodology

There were some approaches that I took into consideration before making my final decision: positivism, post-positivism, constructivist and constructivism. *Positivism* is defined as

the "philosophical doctrine that denies any validity to speculation or metaphysics. Sometimes associated with empiricism, positivism maintains that metaphysics questions are unanswerable and that the only knowledge is scientific knowledge" (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2010).

Post-positivism differs from positivism. According to Fauske (2000), it is "a position within the theory of science putting emphasis on theoretical and empirical elements. No sharp distinction between theory and fact is upheld. Empirical data are always to certain degree determined by the theory chosen" (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2000, p. 236).

Powell and Kalina (2009) stated that "Piaget's main focus of constructivism has to do with the individual and how the individual construct knowledge" (p. 242). Brandon and All (2010) stated that "constructivism is a theory founded on observation" (p. 90). According to Hagen in constructivism "*observation* becomes in this respect the central concept" (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2000, p. 355). *Constructivist* according to Mills, Chapman, Bonner & Francis (2006) "reflects the basic beliefs of constructivism as a paradigm of inquiry" (p. 74).

The perception of spirituality and religion could be influenced by many factors and variables in each individual's life experiences. Patton (2002) stated that "because human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and *construct* reality – indeed, they cannot do otherwise – the world of human perception is not in an absolute sense,.." (p.96).

Some researchers have changed from a constructionist approach to a constructivist approach when it comes to religion. In a constructionist approach meanings are transmitted collectively, while in a constructivist approach each individual creates the meaning. McGuire was one of these researchers. McGuire (2008) wrote that "the definition of what is properly 'religion' and 'religious' changed during long periods of upheaval in which many people vied, sometimes violently…" (p. 21). McGuire added that "when we take popular religious

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expressions seriously, we begin to realize the complexity of each individual's religion-as-practice" (p. 67). The model of religious has changed "when we focus on religion-as-lived, we discover that religion – rather than being a single entity – is made up of diverse, complex, and ever changing mixtures of beliefs and practices, as well as relationships, experiences, and commitments" (p. 185).

Since this research was carried out in a constructivist approach, a qualitative venue was taken. The richness in the data generated empirical observations that were evaluated to make sense of the topic. Singleton, Mason, & Webber (2004) stated that "a qualitative interview, with carefully structured questions, can provide valuable insight into an informant's life" (p. 255). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) declared that:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self" (p. 4).

The research topic is rich in complexity, perception and beliefs. The methodology used was interviews, a model case, and media analysis. Patton (2002) affirmed that "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods" (p. 247). This added validity to the research (Huberman and Miles, 2002, p.344).

Population

The population sample was taken from four small towns in Pennsylvania. Town B, Town A and Town C are four small towns with a population of 4,300 to 5,200. The small churches in these communities were all affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

The church in Town C has an active youth group that is very involved in the community and in church related activities. This church was purposefully selected and became the model case in order to have a comparison group. All of the churches have an average of 150 members or less and have an average attendance on Sundays of less than 50. The only church that has more attendees is the church in Town C whose efforts in reaching a younger generation appears successful.

Sampling and Sampling Strategies

The sampling strategy was as follows: The first group sample was the leadership of the three churches. This group was small and purposefully selected. They were asked to participate by the pastor of each church. The intention was to have at least twelve (12) total participants interviewed. The second group was the actual young adults actively participating in the Town C church. Initially ten (10) young adults were going to be interviewed. The third group was young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 years old born between 1981 and 1992. The goal was to interview at least ten (10) in each town for a total of 30. Some of these young adults were referred by church leaders and other church-going young adults. A flyer was posted on community boards and some businesses in the towns to get participants (see Appendix H), but the majority were referrals.

Data Collection Methods

The main data collection method was interviews. The interviews took place in various locations in each town such as local restaurants, libraries, local churches, and outside on benches in community areas. Each interview was different and last from fifteen minutes to two hours. A guided questionnaire was used (see Appendix A, C and D). Sometimes I got through the questions on the guide easily but at times I got derailed having to get back to the question asked.

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I performed all the interviews finding all participants very cooperative. There were some cancellations, re-schedules, and very late shows. There were several participants that asked many questions while there were others that gave short and poor answers making me probe for more information.

The data collection interviews were conducted and analyzed. Individual interviews were performed to get facts and opinions on the topic and observe reactions. Potter (1996) affirmed that "interviewing is the technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally" (p. 96). Personal interviews with church leadership, church attendees and non-church participants were conducted (see Appendix A, C and D). Patton (2002) expressed that "*interviews* yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (p. 4). Seidman (2006) affirmed that "interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (p. 10).

A total of sixteen (16) questions classified under four main themes were asked of church leaders. The questions were divided into four main categories: Spirituality & Religion, Church Involvement, Community, and Future Church. Table 2 illustrates how the interview questions relate to the research questions.

See Appendix A for interview questions guide. The first section of the questions is under the theme of spirituality and religion. The questions are: What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you see young adults today as being spiritually oriented? Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so? What do young adults think about God or the existence of a higher power? What spiritual practices do you think young adults engage in today (things such as prayer, meditation, religious studies, conversations about God, etc.)? Do you

think young adults find these things meaningful? What do you think might be equally or more meaningful for them? What do you think young adults wonder about spiritual things such as right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.? What (other) life questions do you think they wonder about? Who do you think in a young adult's life helps them to grow the most? …spiritually?

Table 2

Research Questions – Church Leaders Interview Questions Matrix

Research Question	Interview Questions
1. How are small church leaders addressing the perception of spirituality of young people in rural areas in Pennsylvania?	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2a, 2d
2. Are there any generational cohort discrepancies?	1b, 1e, 1f, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f,
3. How does communicative technological practice come into play in terms of community boundary formation, boundaries, and penetration strategies?	4a, 4b
4. Is community welfare seen as a spiritual matter or just as a consequence of society?	3a, 3b

The second set of questions was related to the theme of church involvement. The questions were: What do young adults think and feel about church services? What are they looking for in a church? How do young adults make you feel? What kinds of young adult outreach activities do you engage in? What other outreach activities does your church do? How are these activities received by the young adults? What do others in the church think about these activities and about young adults in general? How would you describe the kinds of people who go to your church? How would you describe young adults that attend your church? …how are they different or the same as those that don't go to church?

The third set of questions was under the theme of community. The questions were: What are some primary needs in your community? Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so?

The fourth and final set of questions was related to the future church. The questions were: If you could establish a new church today that would attract young adults, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)? What barriers would have to you face?

There were thirteen (13) questions classified under the same four categories and were asked of young adults. A total of six church attendees and eleven non-church attendees were interviewed. The questions used the same four main categories. Table 3 illustrates how the interview questions relate to the research questions.

Table 3

Research Questions – Young Adults Interview Questions Matrix

Research Question	Interview Questions
1. How are small church leaders addressing the perception of spirituality of young people in rural areas in Pennsylvania?	1a, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2a,
2. Are there any generational cohort discrepancies?	1b, 1d, 1e, 1f, 2b, 2c, 2d
3. How does communicative technological practice come into play in terms of community boundary formation, boundaries, and penetration strategies?	4a
4. Is community welfare seen as a spiritual matter or just as a consequence of society?	3a, 3b

See Appendix C and D for interview questions guide. The interview guide questions for church attendees and non-church attendees were the basically the same. The first set of questions under the category of spirituality and religion was: What does it mean to be a spiritual person

and do you view yourself as spiritual? Do you view being religious differently than being

spiritual? How so? What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power? Do you

ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations

about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more meaningful to

you? What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who

God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? …What (other) life questions do you wonder

about? Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this?

The second set of questions was under church involvement and the questions were: Have

any of you ever attended a church service? What did this experience feel like for you? What do

you think about church services? How do they make you feel? Why do you think some people

attend church and others do not? How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church?

How, if at all, are church goers different from you? Question 2a differs in wording but the

purpose was the same, to inquire about church services and how the young adult felt during their

experience in the services.

The third category was community and the questions under this category were: What are

some primary needs in your community? Are these community needs affected by religious or

spiritual practices? How so?

The third category inquired about the future church and the questions were: If you could

establish a church in your community, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use

of media)?

Finally, some documentation was reviewed to supplement the research. Altheide (1996)

mentioned auxiliary documents as means "which can supplement a research project or some

other practical undertaking but are neither the main focus of investigation nor the primary source of data for understanding the topic" (p. 3).

Analysis

For the analysis, an ethnographic approach was used. Taylor and Bogman (1998) affirmed that in "ethnographies, researchers try to a paint a picture of what people say and how they act in their everyday lives" (p. 135). This research will present a picture of the participants points of view and will portray a realistic reporting of the information collected (Miller and Salkind, 2002, p. 159). Patton (2002) stated that "direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perception" (p. 21).

The analysis began by descriptively capturing participant's answers to the questions in the interview guide. Next, similarities and differences across the four major categories of participants (church pastors, church leaders, church-going young adults, non-church going young adults) were identified.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Credibility was added to the research by triangulating in the data collection methods. Three methods were used in this research. First, interviews were conducted with leaders, church attendees and non-church attendees. Second, a small church that had an apparent successful program for young adults was selected and church leaders and attendees were interviewed. Third, auxiliary documents were reviewed. Creswell and Clark (2007) affirmed that "it is an efficient design, in which both types of data are collected during one phase of the research at roughly the same time" (p. 66). They continued that "an overarching validity can follow if the

researcher draws evidence from different datasets that provide better results than either dataset (qualitative or quantitative) alone" (p. 146).

There were many challenging considerations when performing the interviews. Occasionally during the interviews the participants did not understand the question and needed clarification to answer the question. I have a strong opinion on the topic and it was hard to control myself and remain objective. Fortunately I was able to maintain objectivity by continuously keeping an awareness of this potential biasing influence in check

Summary

In the light of the literature review there are apparent streams of thought regarding religion and spirituality. As time passed generations have changed their perspectives. Social, economical and historic events shape each person's views. Is there a clear distinction of what is spiritual and what is not? Are sacred and spiritual matters issues of the past? Is knowledge of what is going on in the world (globalization) a variable influencing individual choice? All these questions and others were in my mind as I conducted the research. They got clearer after the interviews were performed.

While conducting interviews and reviewing some documentation issues arose in the following areas: First, the respondents' understanding of spirituality and religious views among leaders and young adults varied. Second, there was a variation in perceptions of society and religion, symbols and rituals, and beliefs and values present in the decision-making process. Third, variation was noted in aspects related to the rationality on the religious practices and how the postmodernism, positively or negatively, affects the approach by leaders and young adults. And finally, the issue of the shift in people's paradigms as well as the dimensions of beliefs,

values, practices, and community was also revealed. In the following chapter I discuss my

findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter will present the auxiliary documentation and the findings. The decrease in attendance and the lack of young people participation in local church are some of the motivators to perform this study. The purpose of this research was to investigate the concepts of being spiritual or religious among young adults and leadership of small churches in rural areas in Pennsylvania. The identification of differences and similarities will help in the decision-making process of the leadership in attracting young adults to church-related activities.

Auxiliary Documents

In order to understand the trends in membership in the three churches involved an auxiliary documents review was made. The sources were the United Methodist Church and the Eastern Pennsylvania United Methodist Conference websites. General statistics in membership were reviewed as well as the specifics of the three churches involved in this research.

Three main documents were examined to investigate the reports on the United Methodist Churches' membership and composition of members. The first source was an article, United Methodist Church Continues to Decline in America. According to the article, "in 2011 the UMC suffered a decline of nearly 72,000 members, with 18 conferences reporting membership losses of 2 percent or more."

The second was United Methodist Church statistical report which is required from every church to be submitted every year. This report includes the membership, programs and budget of each congregation and was summarized in the US Statistics Report by the General Commission on Archives & History. According to this report, from 1985 to 2000 there was a 9% percent

decrease in membership in the United States. In The 2011 State of the Church Report the membership statistics from 2008 to 2009 decreased 8% (p.4).

The same statistics are reported in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church (EPAUMC) and are available at the conference website. The counties in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference are Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Columbia, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Montgomery, Northhampton, Northumberland, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill. According to this report there was a 9.2% decrease in membership in the conference alone between 2006 and 2011.

The following are the statistics from 2006 to 2011 for the churches involved in this research: First UMC in Town C reported an increase in membership of 1% each year. First UMC in Town A reported a decrease of 7%. First UMC in Town B reported a 9% decrease.

Other facts reviewed were the average ages of clergy and laity of the United Methodist Church. According to the reports in the United Methodist Church and the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference the "baby boomers" are the majority of the active members in many congregations. The average age of clergy is 52 years old, according to the report and in the small churches in rural areas the average age increases to over 65 years old.

A quick examination of other documentations was performed in order to have a better perceptive on the phenomenon of contemporary services versus the traditional and more ritualistic aspects of the liturgy. According to the National Congregations Study (NCS) from Duke University there are some highlights in their findings for congregations. Some of these are: worship services are becoming more informal; congregations embrace technology; congregations and clergy are getting older; congregations' involvement in social service activities remains unchanged (p. 2).

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University in 2012 there were 66.3 million Catholics in the United States registered in the official catholic directory. Attending regular mass once a week or more were 23%; this is only 15.3 million. Others attended as follows: at least once a month but less than weekly - 21%; a few times a year - 24%; rarely or never – 32%. The research also looked at the statistics in priests. From 2000 to 2012 there was a decrease of 15% in priests going from 45,699 to 38,964. This also had an impact in parishes without a priest going from 2,843 in 2000 to 3,389 in 2012. This is an increase of 16%. These statistics are consistent with the statistics presented in chapter one for the protestant churches under the historical context on page 11.

A qualitative research method was employed consisting of twenty four interviews. The interviewees were: seven church leaders from three United Methodist Churches in the coal mining region of Central Pennsylvania - Town C, Town A, and Town B; six young adults actively participating in Town C United Methodist Church; and eleven non-church participants - four from Town A, three from Town C and four from Town B.

Data

The data will be presented in the following order: First, the church leaders with no young adult group; second, the leaders with an active young adult group; third, the young adults participating in young adult group; and forth, the young adult non-church participants.

The information collected from the interviews will be presented in this chapter using nicknames as per participants' request and to protect confidentiality. Also, in this chapter the data analysis will be presented and discussed relative to the research questions.

Participants

Twenty-four participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. The interview questions are presented in Appendix A (p. 169) for church leaders, Appendix C (p. 173) for church attendees, and Appendix D (p. 175) for non-church attendees. Some demographic information from each participant is provided in this chapter in order to provide a description of age, gender, background, education, and years living in each community. This provides a portrayal of how participants perceive spirituality according to these demographic categories. Emergent themes based on the data are presented at the end of the chapter.

The specific participants in this study included four church leaders and three pastors from three United Methodist Churches: First United Methodist Church in Town C, First United Methodist Church in Town A, and First United Methodist Church in Town B. The four church leaders were female and their ages were over 46 years old. The three pastors were two female and one male. The three of them were over 50 years old. The interviews were conducted at the church in each town. The following tables present the participants in the order in which their answers are offered in this chapter. Table 4 provides a summary of the demographic information of church leadership participants.

Table 4

Demographic Data for Church Leaders

Name	Position	Town	Age	Gender	Cultural Heritage	Education	Years in community
Charles	Pastor	Town A	55 over	Male	German	College	10
Barbie	Leader	Town A	55 over	Female	Lithuanian	High School	60
Carsie	Leader	Town A	55 over	Female	Irish	High School	58
Blondie	Pastor	Town B	46-55	Female	Irish/German	College	2
Sally	Pastor	Town C	46-55	Female	German/Irish	Advanced	4
Pam	Leader	Town C	55 over	Female	Lithuanian	College	55
Lisa	Leader	Town C	36-45	Female	Italian/Irish	College	10

Nineteen young adults participated in the study. Six of the young adults are actively involved and attending church activities at First United Methodist Church in Town C. The interviews were carried out at the church mainly on Sundays while the group meeting was conducted. Table 5 provides a summary of the demographic information for the young adults that attend church activities.

Table 5

Demographic Data for Church Goers Young Adult Participants

Name	Town	Age	Gender	Cultural Heritage	Education	Years in community
Steve	Town C	18-20	Male	German	Not Finish	11 years
Greyson	Town C	18-20	Male	Don't know	High School	6 years
Josh	Town C	18-20	Male	Italian	High School	All life
Tiff	Town C	18-20	Female	Irish	High School	All life
Kiersten	Town C	21-25	Female	Italian/Irish	Tech	All life
Shaylee	Town C	21-25	Female	Don't know	Not Finish	18 years

Table 6 provides a summary of the demographic information for the young adults not involved in any church activities.

Table 6

Demographic Data for Non-Church Goers Young Adult Participants

Name	Town	Age	Gender	Cultural Heritage	Education	Years in community
Lexii	Town A	25-29	Female	Don't know	High School	All life
Ashley	Town A	18-20	Female	German	Not Finish	All life
Nassin	Town A	18-20	Male	Italian/Irish	High School	7 years
Chody	Town A	18-20	Male	Irish	Not Finish	All life
Sienna	Town B	18-20	Female	Lithuanian	High School	All life
Rachael	Town B	26-29	Female	Don't know	Tech School	3 years
Mike	Town B	26-29	Male	German	Tech/Army	20 years
Michael	Town C	26-29	Male	Lithuanian	High School	All life
Summer	Town C	26-29	Female	Irish	Tech/Army	15 years
Josh	Town C	21-25	Male	Italian/Irish	Tech School	All life
John	Town C	18-20	Male	Lithuanian	Not Finish	All life

Thirteen non-church goers were interviewed: five from Town A, five from Town C and three from Town B. The interviews were conducted at public places like restaurants, the mall, and some at church at the convenience of the participants.

Church Leaders

The following section presents the interviews with church leaders. The first part includes the leadership of the churches in Town A and Town B that do not have an active young adult group. The second part will provide the interviews with the leadership of the church in Town C that has the active young adult group.

The first step was to contact the pastors of each local church. I explained that I was a doctoral student conducting a research on young adults' spirituality. Since I personally knew each pastor it was easy to get their cooperation. They provided the names of the leaders that possibly were able and willing to help me. The process before the interviews was the same for each person. Each volunteer was called. I introduced myself, refer to the pastor, and explained the purpose of the interview. After the person consent an appointment was made. All the interviews were conducted at each local church per request of the leaders. There were some activities at each church when interviews were performed. The interviews were individually performed in a room that each pastor of the local church provided. The majority of the appointments were performed weekdays late afternoon and evenings. Two out of seven were performed on weekends. The interviews with church leaders went from a minimum of one hour to the maximum of two hours. Before starting with the questions I explained again to each person the purpose of the study and thank them for their willingness to help me by sharing their

experiences and thoughts. I asked each of them about recording the interviews. All were recorded.

Leadership Without an Active Young Adult Group

Four church leaders from two churches were interviewed in Town A and Town B, including two pastors. The responses of the interviewees are summarized in this section.

Charles. Charles has been the pastor of First United Methodist Church in Town A for the past two years. Before, he was the pastor at First United Methodist Church in Town B for seven years. Charles expressed that since he arrived in Town A he has been trying to attract young people and children with very little or no success. He had a small group of children but no youth or young adults.

Spirituality and religion - For Charles being spiritual is "having daily walk with God" and is more biblical and church-based than the others. For young people these days it is more how you live. It is not an intellectual exercise. They are more hands on. He expressed that this young generation live their spirituality but it is not a philosophy. The young adults want to serve and do things. There are some young people in church and they always offer to help. They will not attend or provide a Bible study but they will help with cleaning or painting.

In terms of being religious or spiritual Charles said he does not see the difference but the young adults might. There are even others that might see a difference. Being religious is the "old school" way. He believes that today's young people are somehow spiritual and he can see that in the contemporary secular music. He mentioned that some lyrics are very spiritual even if the music is not really appealing for him.

Charles said that a lot of young adults today believe in God but they do not have any worship practices like they (his church) have. "We looked at our parent's practices; I am part of

the WWII generation." Charles thinks that today's young people do not have any specific spiritual practices. "They do not engage in spiritual practices as the church defines them. I think they have their own. They will look at helping others as a spiritual practice. They do not see prayer, meditation or any other practice as necessary. You will have to initiate the practice for them and with them."

In terms of spiritual concepts such as good, evil, morality, right or wrong and sacred things, Charles stated that he thinks young people "wonder about those things as we do and they have the same longings as we have." For him the church is called to fulfill those longings. Young adults know that something is missing but there are so many distractions. He pointed out that things are changing so fast and dramatically these days that even the youngest ones realize it. In terms of morality, Charles said that it has changed. "My dad did what was right even if it will cost him." Today young people wonder about life. They also want to know what there is for them. "A lot of churches might think that there is only A and B for the younger generation but in reality there is C and D as well." Young adults do not see long term relationships like the older generation does. An example is friendship. Charles has a friend for 50 years. Now with changes in society and mobility it is hard to keep long-term relationships. "We are dealing with a moving target today," he expressed. The only way you will know what the young adults want is on a one-to-one basis.

Charles declared that ideally the ones that help the young generation to grow had been immediate family at home. He is almost certain that today it is not happening. "The seed is not there," he said. The practices in religion have changed. Young people do not have respect for rituals. "Religion is what you do for them." Charles declared. He continued by saying that when his church has soup kitchen the young people will be there but if they have a service or Bible

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study, they will not attend. If the young adults see that an activity is traditional or ritualistic they will not show up. He declared that, "in the 60's, when I grew up, everything was questioned but if you expressed it, we were thrown out. The young adults today need to be evangelized. Their parents and grandparents were not. They are not receiving any practices or direction to grow spiritually. They have no clue, they need to be evangelized."

Church involvement - In terms of church involvement Charles thinks that services today are not meaningful for young people. Even if the church has a contemporary service it is not fulfilling the young adults' needs. There are some mega churches that have a lot of young couples but he thinks that "they would like to belong and is difficult for them to belong to a mid-twentieth century church." In these mega churches they have choices. For some they have small groups and for others they are not noticed. Worship today is not as meaningful to young people as it was in the past, even contemporary services, at least in the area of Town A.

Charles feels comfortable with young adults despite the age difference. "That does not mean they feel comfortable with me. I would like to think they are," he articulated. Charles said that recently they have some young people attending church and they are providing a Bible school class called Christian class, not Sunday school because this old term will scare them away. The church is trying to participate in winter activities with other young people in other churches in the area.

There are some people in Charles' church that are not friendly with a younger generation and keep their ways. He stated that even the building is not welcoming and is even intimidating. The front doors are locked on Sundays and people have to enter the building from the side doors. If there is a visitor they will find the doors locked. Change is not in the minds of the older generation in the church. They are so locked in their ways that even activities are not shared. In

the past they used to have a homemade candy sale. Now the people in charge of that activity are too old to continue but they keep the recipe in their minds and are not willing to share it with young ones to continue. The sale has stopped.

Community - Charles believes that "young adults today are not satisfied." There is a lack of communication between generations. He stated that "they are looking for a sense of family, feeling of belonging, being loved and accepted. If they feel welcomed, loved, and accepted then we can pull people in. They need a safe place where they can come in case of a need or a problem."

The church should be the source of spiritual practices. Young adults need to know that the church is here for them. The church should be involved in the community. He thinks that young people are not getting that when they mess their lives with things like drugs and alcohol. These bad choices will bring consequences in their lives forever. He stated that "the church should be the pillar for community spirituality and religiosity."

Future church - If Charles has the opportunity to establish a new church he would build it as a multipurpose room with chairs, bright colors, and the use of media. He also expressed, "I will not throw the towels on the hymnals. But that is me." In terms of the media, he likes power point which can be used to illustrate sermons or show the words of hymns. He articulated that he would give the young people the choice of what they want to do.

Barbie. Barbie has been a member of the church for the past 35 years or so. Her generation was one of the ones that grew up at the church, she was about 10 when she came to church, and now has seen it declining. Her children grew up in this church. She has been involved in Sunday school for a long time and also trying to outreach in the community by planning activities.

Spirituality and religion - For Barbie being spiritual is "share what I know and bring people to join us." I do not think young people today are spiritually oriented nor have the "background to come to church". They do not have the principles from home. Her church has some young adults but they need to be involved with other churches that have activities. They are not sufficiently involved or are not enough in numbers to plan activities. They share with other churches that have an active group of young people. Being spiritual is a combination of both being spiritual and religious. When someone comes to church you are in God's house but you also look at the church as second family and a place where you have good friends.

Barbie believes that young people feel something in their hearts but not necessarily God. "They do not know the real feeling of having Him in their hearts." They believe in something but it is not God. They are in a search.

Barbie does not know if young adults today engage in any spiritual practices. She expressed that young adults go "from day to day, repeating things." They do not have a real meaning. They live one day at a time without even thinking about the consequences, the future, or even eternity.

Barbie believed that today's society is bombarded with information. In terms of spiritual things, "the media tell it as it is, there are no wonders." This does not help the formation of young minds. When she was growing up she just did not know a lot of things. Today's young people "think that they are right in what they do." Formation at home was different. For example respect was something that she showed until she was an adult. She expressed that "when I was growing up even courtship was very formal for a young adult even when I was 22. Respect the elders was very important. She said that "I would like to read their minds, sometimes."

For Barbie, home is where young minds should grow emotionally and spiritually. Parents and family are the base for helping young people to cope with the future. This is the ideal, but she expressed that "we know that it is not happening." They need to grow up in the environment with friends and peers. She said, "I got married to a catholic man and in those days we had to sign a paper saying that we were going to raise our children in church. I baptize them catholic and my father did not speak to me for years. Then when they married they stopped attending church and they just go for the holidays, but at least they go."

Today's children grow up without that relationship with God. "When I was growing up even in school we prayed. Now we cannot, there is a separation between religion and society." Society brought this discontinuity from home, to school, to society. People grew and were nurture everywhere, not only in minds but in their spirit as well.

Church involvement - Barbie thinks that today's young people are not involved in church as they used to be. An example is her daughter. She and her husband are involved in church but her two young ones, 16 and 18, do not want to go. If they are in the mood they attend. Barbie said that "young people today come to church when they have a need, someone died, get married, or need to have a baby baptized. Is a sad situation but they just come when they have a need."

To the questions about what adults are looking for in a church, she said "I cannot give you an honest answer to this question." If is for the services, she does now, and if it is for the building she said that "our building is not appealing," talking about her church's building.

Barbie said that she likes young adults and they are great! "We have a couple that just had a baby. I like to communicate with them and I hope that they like to communicate with me too." One Sunday she asked the couple, "don't you feel better today coming to church?" In the

church they only have Bible school on Sundays. They do not have anything else targeting the young adults. Some of the young adults participate in regular activities but their attendance is not regular.

Barbie said that some of the people at church are set in their own ways, meaning doing the same things they did 50 or 60 years ago. "They will not accept change. You cannot move them. Pastor Charles was the one that opened the front doors because they were closed for years." Barbie believes that people were set in their own ways.

The young adults are coming with their babies. There are two couples that they have been attending since they have their babies and now the babies are toddlers attending Sunday school. "Some young adults that used to come to church some years ago split and I think that they did not have the church connection."

Community - According to Barbie, today's young adults need a church that is their family because they do not know where to go. There are many single family units. They did not have the base because their parents were not there for them. "The main need is family and family values because if we have that many of the problems that society has and this community has could be prevented." People need to get more involved in church and develop spiritual values.

Future church - If Barbie had the opportunity to established a new church she would put a big outside sign that reads "Welcome to Free Church." The building will not have steps, pews, benches or chairs. She will have visuals all over.

Carsie. Carsie has been attending church since she remembered. She was christened there and grew up in it. Her children attended the church and the Roman Catholic Church since their father was Catholic. She has seen the church from its glory to the present with just a few members. She has been involved in Sunday school and small Bible study groups.

Spirituality and religion - Carsie thinks that today young adults have some kind of spirituality but is different from what she knows. Spirituality and religiosity can be interpreted as one or interchangeably. Even people that have been in church for many years cannot differentiate between the two.

The generation that is growing today has a lack of guidance. This guidance has to come from home but at home the young ones do not have this "right guidance." According to Carsie, "in a lot of homes with young families raising children this guidance is not there. When I was growing up it was not a choice to come to church, you had to." Carsie said that people need to be both religious and spiritual. They need to combine practices like coming to church and having fellowship but at the same time share with friends and others.

Carsie thinks that young adults believe in God. This is most clearly expressed when they have an emergency but in their everyday life "they put Him on a shelf." They do not have any set practices saying, "I do not think they do." She recognized that young adults today do not have the same foundation as her generation. Family values and families as she knew it have changed.

In terms of spiritual concepts Carsie thinks that "they are going to do what they are going to do." She mentioned that this is a different generation. In her days, for example, young people had to respect their elders and parents. These things are missing. The guidelines had been blurred.

The people that help young adults grow ideally should be family at home. She explained "I was married to a catholic man and my children used to come to church every Sunday. Along the way they were lost, they are in their 40's and they do not come to church. The seed is there but they do not practice what was taught to them. They always come to church on holidays and that is a good thing."

Church involvement - Carsie has seen that many young adults come to church on holidays but not to regular services. "My own children are an example of this." She mentioned a young couple that have been coming to church and recently had a baby. She also thinks that she can relate to young people well.

At the present her church has Bible study. They do not have any other activities for them. "The Catholic Church in town has a group of young people very active. I would like to see a group here so that we can go there to share." Carsie recognized that the congregation is not very welcoming. "I told them that if they want the church to survive they need to outreach to young people." She knows that they have too many grumpy people. Even if they want just to decorate or paint a room with a more cheerful color they will refuse, even in that. Another example she gave was that the church usually has a bake sale and they tried to combine it with a yard sale. It was a battle because it was a change. They did it and it was a success. It was not only a fundraiser but also fellowship with community.

Community - One of the main needs, according to Carsie, is that the young adults are missing the sense of family. There are many young adults raising children alone, only one parent present. They do not know where to go or what to do. The church should be helping these young people. "They seem to be fearless and that gets them into trouble." Carsie alleged that they do not have the family values that she had when she was growing up. "They do not know who to trust or where to go. When I was growing up you did not do things in front of your parents even if you were old enough to do them, like smoking."

Future church - Carsie will have a church with no name and if she has to have one she will call it "This is your church." As a matter of fact there is a building that was a grocery store and the previous pastor thought about buying it because it was flat, had parking, and many things

could be done with it and she agreed with that vision. She said that "we need to change from these classical buildings."

Blondie. Blondie has been a pastor as a second career. She has been the pastor of First United Methodist Church for the past two years. Her previous appointment was in a small church in rural Pennsylvania not that far from Town B. She said that mainly she has been the pastor of very small congregations were the majority of people are old.

Spirituality and religion - Blondie expressed that for her, a spiritual person is the one that seeks for something higher and bigger than him or her. "Many Christians claimed to be spiritual but they are not." According to Blondie, human beings are flesh, soul, and spirit. These three components try to live in us. For her there must be a balance between the three. "The spirit always calls to its creator but we keep feeding what is good for the flesh." She expressed that not always what is driven by the flesh is bad but not always is it good neither. For Blondie young adults today have "some kind of spirituality." She said that they are in need of that spiritual component in human life. "The problem is that they are not directing that spiritual need to our Creator. Instead they are looking at the wrong places."

"Being spiritual and being religious are two different things," Blondie said. "Being religious is when you follow what is written or told no matter what. Being spiritual is having that inner force of God's spark that enables human beings to be more like the Creator."

Blondie expressed that she considers that young adults today believe in a higher power. "Many believe in God," she said. According to Blondie it is matter of directing those beliefs to God. "Young adults today are in search of themselves and the One that created them but they do not know yet."

Blondie said that she does not think that young adults today perform any spiritual practices. She believes that they are in a search and that search probably leads them to prayer, especially when thing do not go right or the way they want. "Young adults do not find these things meaningful because they did not learn the meaning of them." Blondie stated that for young adults today it is meaningful "what they can get out of something. If they do not see that they can get something out of what they do, they will not do it."

For Blondie young adults wonder about their purpose in life and probably who God is. She thinks that they know what is right or wrong and many have been taught moral values. She stressed that "we need to understand that in today's world sacred things are those you can touch and cost a lot of money." She said that young adults today will do anything to obtain what they want and like. She stated that she does not think that they wonder about any life questions "they have Google."

Blondie affirmed that whoever was closest to the young adult had the most influence in his or her life. She said that sometimes is the mother, father, or both. "In today's world it could be grandma or grandpa. Many kids also are growing with other close family members." She mentioned that friends are also of influence.

Church involvement - Blondie expressed that she thinks young adults have mixed feelings about church and church services. "In all the churches I have been I see the young adults attending during the major holidays like Christmas and Easter. So there must be something inside of them that drags them to church." Blondie does not think that they like the services that much. Many churches are still performing services like 50, 60 or 70 years ago. Young adults are looking for excitement, good music, involvement, and liberty.

Blondie said that she feels good around young adults but it has been some time since she had a group at church. In the other churches there were not that many young adults, youth, or children in the communities. "In Town B there are not that many either," she said. She said that they really do not have anything special for young adults. Her church has Sunday school classes and that's mainly it. They do not even meet other than Sunday mornings.

Blondie expressed that the majority of the people in her congregation are over 70 years old. They are very happy with what they do and they try to be welcoming when new people attend church. "We do not have any young adults or youth in our church. We have a small group of children from the community on Sunday mornings."

Community - For Blondie one of the primary needs in the community is education. "Around two years ago the elementary school closed and the children are being driven to another town more than four miles away to get educated." She mentioned that the community is very quiet and united.

She believes that the church could help if it has the resources for having a private elementary school in the area. "It is too costly and the town is very small if we put it in perspective." She mentioned that the church could also be more involved in advocacy on behalf of the community with the Department of Education.

Future church - Blondie said that if she has the chance to establish a new church to attract young adults she would consult with them first to see what they like. She will have a building with no "formal altar." She will also have a big stage with speakers and screens. She will also bring some Christian artists to perform. There will be no pews but comfortable chairs. The building will be a multipurpose building so that the young adults could have their programming without limitations.

Blondie thinks that the barriers that she might face are the "traditional people that cannot see beyond their own obstacles and probably other churches that will question if that is really a place to worship God." She expressed that there must be a balance because there are some young adults that still want what we call "traditional."

Leadership With an Active Young Adult Group

The following interviews were held with to the leadership of First United Methodist Church in Town C, PA. Three women were interviewed including the pastor of the church. The church has an active young adult group.

Sally. Sally has been the pastor for First United Methodist Church in Town C, PA, for six years. She came from a more urban setting in her previous appointments. Even though she did not have big groups of young adults in her previous churches, she had groups actively involved in the church life. She tried some of the strategies she implemented before in Town C and she has been to some degree successful. She has a group of around 12 to 15 young adults involved in their meetings and activities. In a good meeting she might have more including what she called the "explorers."

Spirituality and religion - Sally believes that there is a big difference between a person who claims to be spiritual, the definition of it, and being a Christian. She mentioned that Oprah claims to be spiritual but Sally is not sure that she is a Christian. Sally thinks there is a disconnection between what young people think is being spiritual and what is being a Christian.

"Being religious is another ball game," she said. What Jesus said about being religious can apply today. He criticized the religious people of His time because they were doing what they were supposed to do, but not with the proper heart. There are people today the same way.

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People come to church because that was the way they were raised. They feel that is not right if they do not come to church but Sally does not know if they have the right heart in it.

Sally said that her congregation is trying to build a relationship with the young people that come to her church. She understands that young people are in contact with so many different religious beliefs and practices. She is pretty much sure that they believe in a higher power but they do not have the practices that Christians in church have.

The practices that they do with their group are praying and Bible study. They meet on Sunday evenings. Sometimes they have a good group and sometimes they have a small group. The time they meet is meaningful for them. They have occasional visitors and some might stay while others just think that this is not for them. She mentioned that she could see the growth but she is not sure that they have spiritual practices when they leave. "I do not think that even our people in church have the practices of studying, prayer, or meditation. They are conformed to Sunday morning."

The young adults have questions on right/wrong, morality, evil, who is God, and sacred things. When they do not have nor had the spiritual guidance at home they did not learn the basis for all the spiritual things. Sally's church is more open with what is sacred or not. They are more open than others, according to Sally. About 15 years ago even clothes were a big problem; jeans were an appropriate Sunday outfit. There were so many rituals and behavior expectations. Now they have a contemporary service that is more relaxed, friendly, and have the correct music for them. "They cannot mess anything because it is very flexible."

The growth of the young adults depends on how they were taught at home. This day whoever they can identify with is the most influential person. It could be parents, friends,

neighbors, or grandparents. Usually they are friends and sometimes are not the best people in our community.

       Church involvement - Sally said that they have two services and the young adults come to the contemporary. They do not like the traditional because is more ritual and there is little or no flexibility. They like the liberty they have in the contemporary. "I think that young people are looking for liberty of expression and no imposed rituals that probably do not have any meaning for them." Sally expressed that she likes to work with people that are young. It has been a challenge for her. "In my previous churches I did not have as many challenges as the ones I have here but it is a different experience and young adults today have so many issues and things that they have to face every day." Despite her success compared to churches in the area, Sally said that "sometimes I go home and ask myself, why I am doing this?" She said that despite all the challenges it is satisfying.

       The activities that they perform with their group include thirty (30) hours of famine where they fast and pack meals for the poor in conjunction with the United Methodist Women. The young adults are in charge of some of the activities for children and youth like parties at Halloween and Christmas. They bring the supplies, set up, and clean up after the activity. They prepare meals for the elderly and for special groups that have special activities in town or nearby. They also help with meals for the church in regular activities. On super bowl Sunday they have a hoagie sale fundraiser for the food bank that is very successful. "They love to be hands on." Sally mentioned that they also try to connect with other groups in the area or outside of the area for activities. Sally mentioned that not all the young people that attend on Sunday evening attend church. "They like the camaraderie and the activities they do together."

Sally expressed that the church was in need of a person that could reach out to a younger generation. She mentioned that she had the experience. "I believe that is why the District Superintendent moved me here." In terms of her congregation and the people that attend, Sally mentioned that she was trying to get some adults to mentor the young people that come to the church. There are some that refuse to do so because that is the way they are. There are some that are doing a good job and she understands that they are trying really hard because of the differences in styles, expressions, practices, beliefs, and behaviors. On the other hand she said that the congregation was open to starting a contemporary service and to support young people's ministries.

Community - Sally understands that there are many challenges and issues in our communities today. Being in a rural area where population is changing is a real challenge. People have told her that years ago almost everyone had something to do. Adults were working, young ones were in school or working as well, and the very young ones stayed at home helping or being taken care of by their mom. Today there is a lot of unemployment and there are some social "diseases" that are affecting the young minds such as drugs, alcohol, degradation of moral values, and violence. Alcoholism existed before but now it is a way of refuge for many young adults and youth that are in search of something meaningful in their lives.

Sally expressed that as a religious entity they have to help children, youth, young and old adults to re-direct their lives to God and to a better way of living. The church must be involved in all aspects of society, not only helping but preventing as well. In Town C there are fifteen (15) churches: three Roman Catholic, three other Catholic (Orthodox and others), and the other nine are protestants. Her church is the largest in town having an average attendance of 70 to 80 at all services. For the size of the community there are a lot but not all are actively involved with the

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community. The majority have 30 in attendance or less. As far as she knows she is the only pastor or priest in a full-time position. Many of the churches are in a "survival" mode. That influences the way that they outreach to the community. Sally said that her church is the only one trying to develop programming for young people and trying to engage them at their own terms.

Future church - Sally declared that if she has the opportunity to establish a church she would develop it with a lot of technology. The facility will have a gym and the sound system will be the best. Young people today need a place to just hang out where they can do a lot without leaving the premises. "We have long and very cold winters and people do not have any place to go for enjoyment." She brought power point to the service but she had to tell the older members that it was mainly for the children in order for them to accept it. The screen was supposed to be up and down, but so far has been down for the two services with no complains. She uses it for scriptures and pictures related to the sermon.

Pam. Pam has been a Christian since she remembers. She moved away from Town C but she came back after getting married. Since attending First UMC she has been involved in regular activities. When the pastor asked for volunteers to coordinate activities for children, youth and young adults, she responded immediately. She is part of a group of people that oversee these groups.

Spirituality and religion **-** Pam does not think that young adults today know what it is to be spiritual. "They claim to be spiritual but they are not Christians or attend worship on a regular basis." She assumed that they do believe in higher power and have some sense that something is there for them. She thinks that they do not say it is God or Jesus but they do believe that there is a higher power.

Pam acknowledged that there are people that attend church every Sunday but that do not make them good people. "They are not always kind or showing Christian characteristics and young adults pick up on that." She also understands that they are religious but that does not mean that they are Christians or make them good persons.

Pam expressed that in today's word there are so many different beliefs out there that young minds get confused and their faith gets misled. "Young adults believe in God. The way they talk and say things reflects that they believe." She understands that the expression of these beliefs changed and it is not the way it was.

The group that Pam helps coordinate does Bible study and prayer. "I do not know if they keep the practices at home or when they are alone." There are some that she can identify that she can say that, yes she recognizes that they observe some spiritual practices but the majority she is not sure. She expressed that the group of young adults that they have in her church are willing to help when they have any church activity or at the food pantry. They will not come to what she called spiritual growth activities but they are willing and ready to help in performing activities.

Pam recognizes that there are a lot of broken families in the community and one-parent homes. Today young people are exposed to evil things and the media constantly "bombard" with misleading moral values.

Pam's church has a contemporary service that is "very down to earth with young people." She said that "there are some old elements but the majority is very friendly and flexible, not judgmental and very welcoming." Even the implicit "clothes code" is very flexible. She remembers when she had to dress-up for church in her Sunday dress. In the contemporary service they dress anyway they like, "of course within the consideration that they are coming to church."

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For Pam the growth of a person, in the case of our young adults, relies on their immediate family. "I can also say that our pastor has played a big role. She pays attention to their need and understands without judging." Her church has created a contemporary service to try to meet their needs. Some of the young adults have their own group with whom they identify. "There is a lack of role models when it comes to young people these days." In the case of the group in her church Pam said that many come from a single-parent home or from a home where a family member raised or is raising them because their parents were not there.

Church involvement - Pam said she heard the young adults and youth in her church expressing that traditional services are "boring, dry, and stuffy. They do not care for traditional services." It was Pastor Sally that shaped the contemporary service to be more laid back, and the young adults and youth like it. "I have a daughter that she loves to come to the contemporary service but do not invite her to the traditional!"

Pam said that she loves to be around young people, "they are different among themselves and they are unique and they also present different ideas and perspectives." When they meet it is an enrichment process, especially when they are engaged. This does not happen all the time but "when they are engaged they are. They participate, ask questions, share their experiences, and talk about their problems," she said. The group attends "Creation," a big concert for young Christians.

According to Pam, the majority of the people at church are kind of receptive to the fact that there are young people around. They will not attend the contemporary service but they are happy that we have young people. There are those that are "grumpy" about it but they "will go with the flow."

Community - Pam said that there are no places for good and family oriented entertainment. There is no YMCA or exercise places, no clubs for young people to be other than bars. There is a bar almost in every corner of town. The churches in the area do not have any programming for young adults or youth, some even do not have anything for children. According to Pam the community needs to start nurturing individuals at a young age. Many of the problems that the communities have could be minimized if families and children engage in positive activities as well as in community oriented activities. Churches and spiritual practices definitely would help the nurturing of the minds.

Future Church - Pam express that if she has to establish a new church it will be in the contemporary style. She thinks that the young people would like an altar but nothing that reminds them of the old; probably a cross, no candles, and no stained glass windows. Maybe some plants around with comfortable seats.

Lisa. Lisa has been attending church for a short period of time, around five years or so. She moved to Town C because of economic issues. Her husband's family is also from the area. She enjoys going to church and working in any outreach program.

Spirituality and religion - For Lisa there is a difference between being spiritual and being religious. Lisa mentioned that Pastor Sally told them that being religious is being like the people in the Bible during Jesus' time. They practice rituals but inside they do not have the right reason for attending church or following God. She said that "young people today have their own spirituality that not necessarily is as we Christians see it. They are too exposed to all the communication devices such as internet, radio, TV and others where they can find anything they want."

Lisa assured that young people believe that there is a higher power. The groups that they have at church, especially the young adults, know that there is a God. "I think that others believe that there is a higher power but I do not think they believe in God." For Lisa different religions believe in a higher power but this higher power is different from the Judeo-Christian. She often wonders about Muslims. "The Muslims believe in the same God, do they go to heaven?" Exposition to knowledge sometimes presents a test for a person's faith. She mentioned that "the challenge is that young people are exposed to other beliefs and that can delude their own beliefs."

The young adults she helps with at church have prayer and Bible study. "Others I do not know," she said. "There some Christians that do not even have these practices." For Lisa, young people today have so much pressure from their social group. They keep things to themselves and try to be like the rest of the group. "It is easier to attend other things like parties, bars, or other places because it is a norm for the group. Coming to church is not a priority or a meaningful thing for them."

Lisa reiterated that young people today are exposed to so much. "They do not have the foundation in their homes and now that many of them have their own families they do not know what to do. Values and morality are not the same as when we were growing up."

At her church Lisa expressed that they have the contemporary service that is very suitable for young people. They try to create the space for experiencing God in a different way than the adults in the church do. "They can dress anyway they want, even in a Penn State tee shirt."

Lisa said, "I do not think that today's young adults had a person or persons that helped them in their spiritual growth. You can see that they do not come to church or participate in

religious activities. They are resistant to anything that has to do with church." Lisa mentioned that that is why it is so hard to try to develop program to reach to them.

Church involvement - Lisa said that her church has two services and the young people come to the contemporary one. "They like the fact that they can express themselves without people looking at them funny or strange. They do not understand why in traditional service there is a Psalter reading or the rituals that we do." She thinks that young adults and youth are "looking for something with meaning for them." She reiterated that she feels energized when she is around young people. "That is why I decided to work with them." She had seen them every time there is something to do. There was a group with special needs that went to Gretna Glenn Camp near Lebanon, PA, about 60 miles south and they went to play mini golf with them. If there is an activity that is more "spiritually oriented," probably they would not attend, or just a few do.

Lisa expressed that there are still some people at church that are not very welcoming, not only to young people, but to anything that is new and implies a change. She explained that there are some that make comments here and there but is not really something not manageable. There are some "sticklers" but they are the minority.

Community - Lisa thinks that there is not enough involvement from church or religious organizations as well as government and other organizations in providing alternatives for young people in the community. They do not have sports or a safe meeting place to be themselves. She expressed that young people in general turn their energy and thirst for seeking answers into the wrong venues. The needs in the community are many but everyone needs to be involved if we want to see results.

Future church - Lisa said that if she has the chance to establish a new church she would have computers, screens, and graphics to be used in the service. She thinks that young people want something different "not without an altar, I don't think." They need to be comfortable and relax.

Church Goers Young Adult Participants

Six young adults were interviewed from First United Methodist Church in Town C. The group has about 16 to 18 regular participants. The young adults were asked by the pastor first if they were willing to participate in a research project. The pastor gave me the list of names with contact information. I called each young adult and I explained that I was the doctoral student that the pastor told them about and that I was conducting research on young adults' spirituality. I asked if they were willing to participate. After the person consent an appointment was made. These interviews were conducted during weekends. For this group of young adults it was easier for them to meet at the local church. The pastor provided me with a room to perform the interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted during the night that they usually meet. The interviews were individually performed. Only one young adult was not willing to participate. The interviews went from a minimum of a half hour to the maximum of one and a half hours. Before starting with the questions I explained again to each young adult the purpose of the study and thank them for their willingness to help me by sharing their experiences and thoughts. I asked each of them about recording the interviews. All were recorded.

This particular local church has two worship services, one traditional and one contemporary. The group of young adults knew the difference between the two styles. The church-goers participants in this research were Steve, Greyson, Josh, Tiff, Kiersten, and Shaylee. The following are the responses to each question by the interviewees.

Spirituality and Religion

What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you view yourself as spiritual? - For Steve to be spiritual is to "go to church and do the right thing." He considers himself spiritual by attending the young adults meetings and doing things for other. "I have been involved in meals, children's activities, and clean ups. I like that feeling that you feel after doing something good. I think that spiritually you have harmony."

Greyson said that "to be spiritual is to pursue your spirit's needs." He considers himself "somehow spiritual but not always." He said that he is in search of his spirituality and he is trying by attending the group on Sunday evenings. He expressed that he is getting something really good from the group and the activities. He said that "It makes me feel good on who I am."

Josh stated that he really does not know what it means to be spiritual. "I guess I am seeking an answer,… for that I am attending the Sunday evening group." He said that he felt a need inside and when he got the invitation to attend the group he accepted. "It was a good decision."

Tiff affirmed that being spiritual is "to be happy with what you do." She said that she is coming to church and the young adult group in search of something spiritual.

Kiersten said that being spiritual is what you feel when you, for example, "sing to God. It's that feeling of being connected to something bigger than you." She expressed that she can count on the church and God to help and guide her. She explained that it is about the feeling that you have when in happiness, need or sadness. "It's that relation that you have with God."

Shaylee expressed that every Sunday she goes to church and sings in the praise band. For her, the feeling she experienced while singing is a spiritual connection with God. "I don't know if that is being spiritual, but I think it's the closest thing I think of."

Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so? - Steve thinks that "you basically do the same thing, expressing yourself." For him there is no difference between being religious and being spiritual. He clarified that what he meant was that "you can express your feelings to God in whatever form you want to, by being spiritual or religious."

Greyson believes that there is a difference between being religious and being spiritual. "I learned here on Sunday evenings that being religious is like the people in the Bible, the ones that Jesus encountered. I think that Pastor Sally mentioned something about it." He said that being spiritual is going into that deep relationship with God.

Josh understood that for him it "is the same thing." But then he explained, "I am trying to be more spiritual than religious." He also expressed that "Pastor Sally talked one day about being religious like the people during Jesus' time." He said the he does not want to be like them, "preaching one thing and living another."

Tiff stated that she really does not know. "I think that the way you connect with God is spiritual, but is also religious." She said that "when people go to church they are trying to have a spiritual experience." She mentioned that for her that is important. "That is why I come on Sundays."

Kiersten thought that there is a difference between being spiritual and religious. "Being religious is what you do so that others may see you. Being spiritual is doing things for God to see you. That does not mean that you are not both, because we all are." She mentioned that there are many other expressions of being spiritual, like "those ancient tribes," they were spiritual as well.

Shaylee said the she cannot tell the difference between being spiritual or religious. "For me you kind of are both and I cannot separate the two." She mentioned that people are praising

something higher in a way that they know how to. "When you are in church you do that. You share your inside, in and out of the church and through the things you do at church."

What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power? - Steve expressed that, "He is real. He is always after you." He said that he believes in God and His existence. Steve affirmed that he not only believes God is real, he also thinks He is taking care of us through His word. "He has all power and it is up to us to decide what is best for us."

Greyson emphasized that "I believe that God is real, if not I would not be here." He believes that God is inspiring him in many ways, "through the Bible, other people, and what I do for Him." He strongly believes that doing things for God is an expression of believing in Him.

Josh articulated that he thinks God is real. He attends the young adults' group because he thinks that "God deserves that we do what we can for Him. I am here because I believe in Him and I think that the little I can give back is a sign of my gratitude."

Tiff said that for her God is the higher power. She exclaimed, "He is guiding us and is real." Tiff acknowledged that other faiths might have other gods but the one she comes to serve is the "real deal."

"He is amazing and holy," said Kiersten. For her, God is always there. It does not matter "what you say or do." She expressed that she feels good after she leaves Sunday meetings or any other activity in which she participates. "You cannot get that feeling with other things you do in life."

Shaylee affirmed that she believes that God is the higher power. "We depend on Him when we need help." She believes that God is real and He is listening to all of our needs. Shaylee exclaimed that there is nothing that she can do to express her gratitude to God. "I am trying," she said.

Do you ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more meaningful to you? - "I do some spiritual practices once in a while, like prayer," said Steve. He comes to the meetings and also when the group performs some activities for others. He loves to help with children, the kitchen and other things around the church. "Do these things count as spiritual practices?" he asked.

Greyson expressed that he loves to do more than prayer and Bible studies as spiritual practices but "sometimes it's difficult." He said that he even does not go to Sunday meetings all the time. He tries to attend the activities in which they help. "I enjoy that very much," he expressed.

Josh said the he just prays and occasionally reads the Bible as spiritual practices. Josh attends the young adult group gatherings but when there are conversations or studies usually comes but not always. "I am more a hands-on person."

Tiff said that as spiritual practices she prays and comes to the young adult group activities. "That is pretty much what I do." She loves the activities in which they help out. She also stated that the pastor also talks to them and they also have some occasional guest speakers.

Kiersten said that she engages in meditation, prayer, and Bible reading as part of her spiritual practices. She also engages in conversations when she attends the Sunday group meetings. "That has helped me a lot. I experienced different ways to stay connected with God." She also attends church for Sunday Bible studies. "All of the practices bring a good feeling toward God."

Shaylee expressed that mainly what she does is prayer. She does not observe any other spiritual practices. She is also part of the praise band for the contemporary service on Sundays. "I

also attend Bible study on Sunday mornings." She questioned if hearing the word is also a spiritual practice.

What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? What (other) life questions do you wonder about? - Steve said, "I wonder about those spiritual things, especially evil because life is not always good. There is too much evil in the world." He also mentioned that he wonders about morality. "People try to be moral and sometimes things come out worse." He expressed that is not always easy to act with morals and "follow your parent's teachings." He said that in today's world morality is changing and people in leadership are "many times responsible for these changes."

"Sometimes I do wonder about the things you mentioned," Greyson said. He expressed that life is not easy and if people think about right and wrong, for example, "they wonder about who God is and why He allows this battle inside of us." He said that at one point in everybody's life "we wonder about our purpose in life, especially when bad things happen to good people." He added that there are many "whys."

Josh stated that "it is difficult not to think about those things." He mentioned that the difference between good and evil "sometimes is not clear." He also said that even though he has faith it "is not always easy to trust in what God is doing."

Tiff sometimes wonders about right and wrong, moral values, evil, and the existence of God. She said that she believes in God but occasionally she is in "doubt if there is a real God." She questions herself about her "true praise to God" and if her praise is "real or fake." She said that she also wonders about what is life and if people made God. In terms of good and bad she said, "I do not want to do bad things but I do them anyway." Tiff does not understand it.

Kiersten expressed that she wonders in particular about evil. Even though sometimes she wonders about God's existence she affirmed that she has a "strong faith." She has some questions herself about evil like: "Why is evil contagious? Why does evil influence you? Why does God allow evil to take over?"

Shaylee said that she wonders about the purpose of life. Now that she is attending church regularly and singing with the praise group she feels more comfortable with it. She trusts that God has a purpose for her. She mentioned that she also thinks about morality, especially when there are people that have "double standards."

Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this? - Steve said that his parents helped him the most. They taught him what is right and wrong and also guided him to do the right thing. He said that when he has to make a choice he remembers what they would tell him. If he cannot make a decision he stills ask them.

Greyson expressed that his parents were crucial in his development. "They were there during my good and bad behavior." He also said that God, through people in church, helped to shape him, especially spiritually.

Josh said that his family shaped who he is today, especially his grandmother. She taught him the respect for church and for others. "She was a loving person and had a lot of wisdom in her words."

Tiff said that her mother was the one that shaped her. "She taught me values, morals and behavior." Tiff said that on occasions she does not follow exactly what her mom taught her but she tries.

Kiersten affirmed that her family played an important role in her life. Her mother was a strong woman and a fighter. Although they do not have a lot of material things in life she grew

up in a "happy family." The values that her mother taught her helped her to make decisions and to "fear God in the Bible sense."

Shaylee expressed that her parents shaped who she is today. "They tried their best," she said. She also stated that things were not always good but she is grateful for all they did.

Church Involvement

What do you think about church services? How do they make you feel? - Steve stated that he likes the contemporary service at church. "I attended the traditional service and it was boring." He said that he loves the music, the spontaneity and "the fact that he doesn't have to dress up."

Greyson said that he went with his mother to their old church and he felt good. "They were very serious though." He said that if he compares it with the contemporary service, he prefers the contemporary.

Josh declared that he went with his mother few times. "I felt bored and awkward. It seems that I needed to catch up on things. I do not like the feeling." He mentioned that he is used now to the contemporary service and going back to the traditional "doesn't feel right." "Do not get me wrong, it is okay but not for me."

Tiff affirmed that when she goes to services she feels sad. "It reminded me of a happier place and I feel like I never been there. I feel like I am moving in a lonely and sad world." She explained that the happiness in church should be in all that she does. She felt sad because she is not able to extend that happiness she experienced in church into her daily life.

Kiersten attended some services and she expressed she liked it and felt good. "I think when you go to church looking for God you will find Him," she said. She also stated that she prefers the contemporary service.

Shaylee likes to go church on Sundays. "I feel peace every time I come," she said. She does not care what service the praise group has to sing, she will be there. She enjoys very much the contemporary service.

Why do you think some people attend church and others do not? - Steve expressed that in Town C some people do not attend church because of "transportation, hours of services, little kids, and other more 'fun things' to do than coming to church." He believes that for many people church is boring and there other things that can be better on Sundays, "even sleep late."

Greyson stated that there are many factors that affect the decision about going to church. "Some people do not have that example at home." He also affirmed that "church needs to be more aware of what people like today. Young people like music, visuals, and active participation. If you do not have these components, it is boring for them."

Josh expressed, "I think because some people love God and others do not believe." For Josh what attract him to church are the activities he is involved in. "I like the activities but not the service. I really cannot explain why." He declared that probably that is why some people do not go to church because they like more hands-on. He also expressed that other do because they "just like it."

Tiff declared that for many people it is matter of time. "They have time for everything else but not for God." She said that when a person really wants to do something, he or she makes time for it and enjoys it. "In today's world people put their priorities in material things, not in spiritual matters."

Kiersten expressed that for her the people that attend church love God but there are others that do not care about Him. When people attend church "they like to be around people with the

same interests." She thinks that probably this "same interest" also makes people not attend church. She said that there are so many things outside the church that it is hard to compete.

Shaylee stated that "some people believe more in God than others and that is why they attend church." She affirmed that if people have doubts about God and do not have faith then "they lost their interest in church."

How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church? - Steve said, "I do not know that." He stated that he does not pay attention that much to people. The times he attends church he is just in and out in a way. He expressed that when he had the opportunity to share with the other church members they "seems to be very good people."

Greyson stated that of the ones he took a good look at, "some look happy and some depressed." He mentioned that he does not have very much contact with that many people at church to make a good judgment.

Josh acknowledged, "I never thought about that before." He stated that the people he knows look happy and helpful. When he had the opportunity to help in any activity at church he said that "they are kind and understanding."

Tiff declared that when she encounters them "they usually are happy, friendly and often offering hugs." She said that "outside of the church is difficult to distinguish who is a Christian and who is not."

Kiersten affirmed that "they are happy people." She believes that they are happy for who they are. She mentioned that there "some that you cannot tell difference if they attend church or not." She also knows some church goers that seem to be sad or depressed.

Shaylee stated that the ones she knows are "outgoing and happy." She mentioned that she admired that about church goers. "They look at life from a different perspective. It's probably because the majority of them are old."

How, if at all, are non-church goers different from you? - Steve affirmed that "they do not go regularly to church and I kind of do." He thinks that his spiritual life is richer because of this. "Now I can view life from a more hopeful point of view. Everything sometimes looks negative but I have hope."

Greyson declared that "they are different because we are all different in our own way." He mentioned that he is more a doer than a listener or a talker. He thinks that church non-goers are not good at listening and sometimes they do not even like to talk that much.

Josh affirmed that he thinks church non-goers are the same but at the same time different. In terms of the difference he said that "probably their feelings toward God are not the same as mine."

Tiff stated that church non-goers are not very happy. "I am very bubbly they are not." Tiff said that she likes to be involved with people in the community in activities like the meals they offer. When they have meals or activities for children or youth church non goers come and some even help out. For her that is very important.

Kiersten affirmed that "everyone is different." She understands that people try to do the best they can. "Some might not be doing all they can but they are trying." She said that she does not consider herself different. She is just seeking God in a different way. "In today's world there are many ways to seek God. I do not think that the people that do not come to church are less Christian than me." She expressed that even in church she has seen people unhappy, angry, dishonest, so "there is no difference, we all are just people."

Shaylee declared that the people she knows that do not attend church are good people. They seem different in terms of their attitudes toward situations in life. People that attend church are usually "very happy and joyful." She notices that people that do not attend church do not have that same happiness that the ones that attend church. People that go to church enjoy attending church. "I really enjoy it, too," she said.

Community

What are some primary needs in your community? - Steve expressed that the needs in the community are activities for children, youth, and young adults. He also expressed that "the community needs better roads, driving around is awful."

Greyson affirmed that more services are needed "like after school programs. If kids are busy they are more likely not to get in trouble." The school system has some programs in the elementary school but not in middle or high school. He expressed that there is a lack of places that young people can go with their problems or concerns. "They need people they can trust, and here we do not have it. There is nothing around here." He said that there is a need for entertainment. The closest entertainment place is the theaters at the mall but people have to take the bus. He declared that the movies should be free for kids 18 and under.

Josh expressed that "there is a need for entertainment for people. There is nothing around here." He said that if people want to see a movie they have to go to the mall and the bus is not free. He continued by saying that people get in trouble because they are not doing something positive.

Tiff affirmed that she thinks more programs for children and youth are needed. The churches can help by being involved in more community events. She said that "the town should have clubs where kids can help restore the places in the community like the ones with graffiti."

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There are many good kids out there and they would be willing to help and do positive things if you guide and help them.

Kiersten stated that there is a need for "more preventive programs for children and youth." She said that in Town C people, especially young people, get in trouble because basically there is "nothing to do in town." She mentioned that there was a skate board park but now it is closed.

Shaylee declared that there are a lot of issues with people's behavior, especially kids, because there is nothing to do in town. "Kids are not doing anything on their free time," she said. She mentioned that there is boys and girls club but it is in Pottsville. "To get there the children need to get a ride with someone or have to take the bus." She expressed that "It is not easy to move around the area if you do not have a car or money."

Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so? - Steve stated that it is possible that religion and spiritual practices can help with the problems. "Maybe if churches are more involved." He said that more churches need to be present in the community having more activities especially for those who need it like the children and youth. "It is not only coming to church and pray, is to go out and help."

Greyson affirmed that "education is essential." Religious people need to be involved in their communities. "Talking about Jesus will help families to redirect their values and have a better community life." If a person loves God and loves his neighbor then the community will be a better place to live with respect and love."

Josh expressed that he thinks that if religious people get too involved in community matters "conflict may arise." He said that "people are not spiritual anymore. They might be

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skeptical about the intentions of church." He mentioned that there must be a balance on what the church can do, the community needs and the mission that the church have for God.

Tiff declared that she wished that communities were united for the common good. She said that "people united can do more." She expressed that being spiritual and religious can unite or divide a community. She mentioned that it is difficult to be united as a community because "even religious organizations are separated."

Kiersten expressed that are many needs in Town C. "You see more and more drugs, alcohol, violence, and people not getting along." She mentioned that prevention and education need to start at home with the children. "There is nothing to do here." She affirmed that organizations and churches could play an important role in prevention. "If people have more positive activities, moral values, and fear God they can make a difference."

Shaylee said that "I do not think that church makes a huge difference, but can try." She believes that people fight about everything. If the church involvement could be questioned in terms of the intentions then "people will back up and do nothing."

Future Church

If you could establish a church in your community, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)? - Steve said that it was "hard to think about that." He said that he would have people available to talk with as part of the programming. "Worship will be separated into ages. They will be doing things appropriate and interesting to that age group." He said that he would also create community jobs for young people to "keep them out of the streets."

Greyson stated that he would build a community church with rooms to fit 60 people at a time. He said that each room would have activities according to age and there would be a place

just for children. The activities would include singing, a short message according to age, and a lot of hands-on activities.

Josh stated that he would have activities for all ages. "Not only worship but also for entertainment." He said that he would also have "a shelter and a place for getting people back unto their feet."

Tiff said that she would "build a church in the middle of nowhere. I will have a huge stage with big screens in the sides with big letters so that people can read from far away. It would have a waiting room, a basketball court, and a swimming pool. On the other side people can sing and they can meet according to age and we will have services every other day."

Kiersten said the she would have a place with a lot of media. "People can come dressed anyway they want. They will have a place to sing, another to study and another to hear a preacher." She said that people do not like to do the same thing all the time so she would provide variety so "they can pick and choose" every time they attend church.

Shaylee said that she would have a lot of people on the praise team. She mentioned that "I am happy the way our service is going. I am pleased with it. I do not know what other people like or want."

Non-Church Goers Young Adult Participants

Eleven young adult non-church attendees were interviewed. The first step was to try to get referrals from the local church leaders, pastors, and from the church-goers in Town C. This brought a couple of names but not enough. Flyers were put around the businesses in the towns, libraries, fire halls, restaurants and any public bulletin boards. Some people contacted me and I explained that I was a doctoral student conducting research on young adults' spirituality. I have some rejections after the first call. The volunteers that agreed were scheduled right away for the

interview. Interviews were conducted in a local restaurant, library, local church, and outside on benches in community areas. Some people never showed for the interview, others called to reschedule various times, and others called to cancel their participation. The process of the interviews was the same for each person. I introduced myself on arrival, if the person was refer by another person I will allude to that person, and I explained again the purpose of the interview. The interviews were individually performed. The interviews were conducted weekdays late afternoon and evenings, and weekends. The interviews with young adults went from fifteen minutes to an hour. Before starting with the questions I thanked each person for their willingness to help me by sharing their experiences and thoughts. I asked each of them about recording the interviews. Only one person did not want to be recorded. The rest were comfortable with recording.

The majority of the participants recognized the difference between a contemporary service and a traditional service. The ones that attended a contemporary service did so because someone invited them and explained in a simplistic way the concept of a contemporary service. There were a couple of participants that did not know the difference and I asked some questions and clarified which one they attended. Usually in these local churches when they have contemporary and traditional services they display the announcement in front of the church with the proper time for each.

The four volunteers interviewed from Town A were Lexii, Ashley, Nassin, and Chody. The three interviewed from Town B were Sienna, Rachael, and Mike. The last four volunteers from Town C were Michael, Joe, Josh, and John. The following are the responses to each question by the interviewees.

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Town A

Spirituality and religion. *What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you view yourself as spiritual?* - Lexii expressed that she really does not know what is to be a spiritual person. "I cannot say if I am spiritual or not." She expressed that if being spiritual is a person that attends church, then she consider herself not spiritual.

Ashley stated that she does not think that she is a spiritual person according to the expectations of other people. "I am spiritual in my own way. If you ask some of the people that know me if I am spiritual, probably they will say no. If you ask some of my closest friends they will say yes." For Ashley being spiritual is to "be in search of those things that nurture your soul."

Nassin stated that "being a spiritual person is seeking for something bigger than us." He said that spiritual people have a special connection with God. He does not think that he is a spiritual person but he believes in God.

Chody expressed that a spiritual person is "a person that is in search of spiritual things." Chody considers that he is not a spiritual person. "I do not think that I am a spiritual person because I do not attend church… I do not seek for those spiritual experiences that other people seek."

Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so? - Lexii said that she thinks that being religious and spiritual is the same thing. "People go to church and they go to worship God, I guess." She mentioned that the people she knows that attend church seem to be spiritual. "They go to church every Sunday and go to the church activities."

Ashley expressed that there is a difference between a religious person and a spiritual person. "A religious person is the one that attends church on Sundays, follows the rules of the

church and follows the instructions in the Bible. On the other hand a spiritual person is the one that lives a life full of joy and is always optimist because things happen for a reason."

Nassin expressed that for him there is no difference between being religious and being spiritual. "I think that the people that attend church are spiritual people. They are in search of God."

Chody stated, "I do not think that there is a difference between being spiritual or being religious. The majority of the people that attend church are religious and spiritual. They are there for a reason." He mentioned that people that are religious attend church and pray. He also stated that they get together looking for something that is more than physical contact with others. He said that they are also "looking for an experience with God."

What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power? - Lexii expressed that she thinks that there is something that is superior to human beings. "I do not know if it is the God of the Christians or if it is another god. I believe that there was a force that created everything, at least in the beginning."

Ashley said that "there is a God and He is watching us." She mentioned that today's people believe in God but "they do not express those beliefs the same way our grandparents or even parents did."

Nassin said, "I do believe in God." He considers that everyone believes in something bigger. "Even the atheists that say that they do not believe in God, believe in something." He said that he enjoys hearing about the Native Americans and "the way they explain our existence and the connection between all the creation and the Great Spirit." He said that "that is very spiritual."

Chody said that he believes in "God as the higher power over everything." He said that God is also the one that maintains everything in its place. "I do not attend Church but that does not mean that I do not believe in God. I believe that God is real."

Do you ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more meaningful to you? - Lexii said that she does not pray, read the Bible, or meditate. She said that "I really do not care that much for church or anything religious." She said that she is too busy and she does not "have time for any of these things."

Ashley mentioned that she prays her own way and she also meditates. She loves to read and to do research using the internet. "When I have a question, I just go to my computer and 'Google' it. Today it's so easy to get an answer on almost any question."

Nassin said that he does not do any spiritual practices. He mentioned that he "kind of prays" when things are not going well and when he is in trouble. "I know that God is listening, so I call Him when I really need to." He said that he does not like to study or read that much.

Chody expressed that he is not very "good in practicing any spiritual things. Once in a while I pray but it's not something that I do on a daily basis." He said that he does not do "any kind of activities that could be considered spiritual."

What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? …What (other) life questions do you wonder about? - Lexii expressed that "life is what you make out of you living it." Lexii said that she has her moral values clear and she understands what is right and wrong. In terms of God and sacred things she said that she is not "really into it."

Ashley stated that she thinks that she is "well grounded. The only question that I have is: Where are we going with all this technology? You know, the internet even has virtual churches. People do not have to go to a building; they can get the services in their own homes. Well, that existed before with TV's, but now it is more interactive." She mentioned that everything is cyber now and there is no human contact.

Nassin expressed that he "never thought about that before." He said that he takes life as "it comes. It is hard to live today so I just live the best I can doing the best I can." For Nassin life sometimes is complicated by itself; "why ask more questions?"

Chody stated that sometimes he really wonders about evil and good; "especially when religious people say that evil and good are in a constant battle in us." He said that he has a much clearer understanding of what one is expected to believe in terms of right and wrong, sacred things and morality. "I believe that all of us have the purpose in life. We all need to find that purpose according to our way of living."

Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this? - Lexii mentioned that her friends helped her grow. She did not have a steady family so she is grateful of her friends that "were there when I needed them the most."

Ashley said that her family plays the most important role in her growth. "Their support and love helped me to be the person I am today." She said that they did not have much but the love was there.

Nassin stated that his family played an important role is his life. "My grandmother was an important part of my life when I was little. She even took me to church with her." He expressed that his parents did the best they could with the resources that they had. He said that "they are not very educated but they try to live the best they can."

Chody expressed that the person that helped him a lot to grow spiritually was his mother. "She was a fighter and she always tried to give us the best she could. She was not the perfect person but she tried really hard." He said that she always shows her love for him. "She always loves us. I believe that love is the most import thing in life, especially when you do not have much."

Church involvement. *Have you ever attended a church service? What did this experience feel like for you? -* Lexii mentioned that she has been in weddings and funerals. "I have not attended a regular Sunday service." She mentioned that the funerals and wedding services "were okay but too formal. I guess it's the way it's supposed to be."

Ashley declared that she attended some services. "I felt good but it was not something that I would like to have every week." She said that the service she attended was a traditional service and she likes more contemporary music and more involvement in the service. "I do not have transportation so I depend on people or public transportation. In town we do not have a church that offers a contemporary service."

Nassin said that he attended church when he was little with his grandmother. "I enjoyed Sunday school. They had a big group of children and we used to sing and play. It was fun." Nassin said that during the services he felt that is was normal to behave as everybody else. He never thought about something different. "Now I have a different opinion."

Chody mentioned that he attended church when he was younger and he enjoyed that very much. "I went to Sunday school and to the services. Then, when I reached my teen years I lost my interest in church. I started to look at people differently and they started to look at me differently too." He affirmed that the music was not of his interest and the things that they did were not interesting to him anymore. "I guess I started to hang with the wrong crowd."

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Why do you think some people attend church and others do not? - Lexii stated that she cannot say why other people attend or not attend church but she can talk about herself. "I really do not care that much for church." She said that it does not appeal to her even "for curiosity."

Ashley stated that she thinks that some people attend church because "they like what is going on." She said that people like to be active, especially young ones. "If there is a church that offers good services and also activities for the family, then people will attend."

Nassin mentioned that some people attend church "because they feel guilty about the things that they do at home or outside the church." He said that there are some people that are genuine in their faith and the search for God but many are there "just because they are used to going, it is a routine."

Chody said that if a "person grew up in church it is easy to stay in church." He affirmed that when a person has the example of the parents or the excitement of attending church then he or she keeps going. "My parents were not church goers but they sent me to Sunday school. Not having that example let me to leave the church when I was in my teen years."

How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church? - Lexii said that the people she knows that attend church "are not that great. They are normal people having the same struggles that I have. I do not understand why they attend church if they do not get anything special out of it."

Ashley said that the people she knows that attend church are very helpful with a "true caring heart. People that attend church look as if they have something special." She said that when she had some problems in the past, some church people helped her get through the problem.

Nassin expressed that many people that attend church are caring, loving, and truly want to help others. "There are some that they just care about themselves and they go to church for their own good." He mentioned that he has met good Christian people that make him think about the goodness in attending church. "I have met more Christians that are so selfish and do not care about who you are. First they look at your clothes, and then they start to ask more questions than the police. You do not feel comfortable at all."

Chody declared that the majority of the people that attend church are good people. "There are people that attend church because they have to, not because they feel it. Others attend church because they want to be seen by the community but in reality they are not there because they want to serve God."

How, if at all, are church goers different from you? - Lexii expressed that she does not think there is a difference between church goers and her. "I think that they just want to feel better." She said that "life is rough and people need some kind of support and if they are getting it by attending church, so be it."

Ashley mentioned that church people have a "special gift from God." She said that not all have that gift, but the majority does. "I think that they are closer to God. When I have a problem I ask them to pray for me."

Nassin said that church goers and he are not different. "I think that there are people in church worse than me." He said that he does not feel very comfortable around Christians. "I even don't feel very comfortable with you and this interview."

Chody said that he believes that church goers have something that he doesn't have, faith. "They have more faith in God than I do." He added, "in terms of being human beings, there is no difference. I think that we are searching, all of us."

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Community. *What are some primary needs in your community?* - Lexii said that one of the needs in the community is places to attend for entertainment. "I have children now and there is nothing in town unless you have a car or take the bus. When you have little children is not easy to take public transportation."

Ashley said that one of the needs is that there is nothing to do in town. "This has been a problem for years. That is why so many kids get in trouble; they do not have any places to go." She also said that the churches in the area are very traditional and there is no contemporary services that can appeal to the younger generation.

Nassin said that a need is that there are no places in town for entertainment. "If you want to watch a movie you have to have a car to get to the mall or go by bus. If the movie ends late you are on your own because the buses run until certain time." He said that people need to have fun and to have a balance in life. "Not everything is about working or studying."

Chody expressed that the community is in need of more activities, especially for the young people. "Many young people get into trouble because there is nothing to do around here." He said that even religious organizations are in need. "Many churches are closing and others are just open on Sundays." He mentioned that there are many parties in the summer but not with a real meaning. According to Chody, another need is places for entertainment not only for young people but for adults as well.

Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so? - Lexii declared that she does not think that religion can help with the needs of the community. "The same people that claimed to be religious are the ones in the borough, in the police department, and in the government agencies. So making a difference, I don't think so."

Ashley mentioned that churches can be more involved in the community. "I think that one or two churches can start developing a contemporary service. I also think that churches can unite to offer recreational programs… I think it is possible."

Nassin stated that he has seen some churches trying to do something. "There are some festivals during the summer. There was a church that started a movie night but I do not know what happened." He said that if Christian people say that they have the love of God they should be able to help the community and the people.

Chody said that he thinks that religious or spiritual practices can help redirect the people into the real meaning of life. "We need more unity in our town and that unity can lead into having some activities." He expressed that communication is also important. "We are in a world where everyone is in his own world. We need to see if we have the same interests in life." He mentioned that people that attend church have the same interest and they are united. "The community needs to do that."

Future church. *If you could establish a church in your community, what would it look like? (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)* - Lexii said that she will just have a building where people could go to do whatever they like to. "I would have different rooms for any religion. I would have one for mass, another for Buddhists with a Buddha, and another for Christians."

Ashley said that she would establish a church that is community oriented. "I would have a theater to have performances by different groups in the community. I would also have inside recreational facilities such as basketball court, gymnasium, and a pool." She said that worship is important but the community needs to unite and realize that "if we have so many worries we cannot attend church with a clear understanding."

Nassin declared that for him the most important things are people. "I would like a church that has people that care for others no matter who they might be." He said that he would have a building that has programs for all ages and have "resources for those who need help with food, clothes, counseling, addiction, and getting a job."

Chody expressed that he would have a church that is involved in all parts of the community. He said that the building is not important but the people are. He thinks that people need to "show more care for others without judging or trying to change their lives. After all, the church is the people."

Town B

Spirituality and religion. *What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you view yourself as spiritual?* - For Sienna being spiritual is to be in balance with God's creation and other people. She said that "a spiritual person is in constant search for having inner peace and peace with others." She mentioned that there are many religions that can offer ways to get this peace. "There is not only one way to achieve peace. A person does not even have to be part of any religious group." Sienna said that she considers herself to be spiritual. She is always trying to have inside harmony and serenity. "If I achieve that during the day I feel good about myself and sleep well."

Rachael said that "being spiritual is believing in God and honoring Him." She mentioned that people need to believe that He is with them. "I think I am a spiritual person; I believe and I pray every day."

Mike said that being spiritual means "you have faith and no doubt there is a God." He said that he considers himself to be spiritual. "I know that God is watching us."

Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so? - Sienna said that "there are plenty of religious people in the world. We need more spiritual people, people than can take action not only to better live their lives but also to have better community life for everyone." Sienna stated that religious people follow too many rules and regulations that church imposed. On the other hand "spiritual people act guided by their spirit."

Rachael said, "being religious for me, as a Roman Catholic, is believing in God and Mary". She said that following the rules is the primary goal of religious people. "Now being spiritual is to believe in the Holy Spirit and in the Holy God."

Mike stated that there is a difference. "You can be religious toward anything like mother, nation, or science." For a spiritual person "the trust and faith are in God and the Holy Spirit."

What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power? - Sienna affirmed that "there is a higher power that is taking care of things." She said that "God is spirit and that is why we need to be spiritual." For Sienna people need to connect beyond words. "That is why you 'click' with some people and not with others. It is a spiritual thing." She explained that people are naturally inclined to be spiritual.

Rachael said that she believes in one God. "As a Roman Catholic I believe that other religions also believe in this one God." She expressed that in her mind others share these same beliefs and "that is why I do not mind other religions."

Mike affirmed that for him "God exists." He continued by saying, "depending on your religion you believe in a higher power that is up there (pointing to sky)." He declared that that for him there is only one God.

Do you ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more

meaningful to you? - Sienna expressed that she has her own way to keep her spirit going. "I do not meditate or pray as many people do. If I have something to say to God I will talk to Him about it. I do not repeat prayers or use fancy words, I just speak to Him." Sienna stated that she is not really good at reading or talking about spiritual things with others.

Rachael said that she does some spiritual practices taught by her mother. "I have my novena on Wednesdays. It's a booklet I read with prayers." She also mentioned that she practices talking to others about God. "God wants us to do good things to others, and be nice to everybody."

Mike said that he sometimes does some spiritual practices. "I do engage in prayer and stuff like that. For me it is not only prayer. I think that not the only way to praise God is through prayer or through the Bible reading. You can express yourself and emotions through other things like music, dance, and actions."

What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? ...What (other) life questions do you wonder about? - Sienna said that she is on a spiritual journey. "As years passed, the more you question life and things about life." She expressed that life was easier when she was little. "I was told what to do and even what to believe. Now I have to make all those decisions by myself." She stated that "life is a mystery that we have to discover." She said that she questions many things. "Right or wrong sometimes is hard to distinguish. Moral values get diluted with ambition and self-interest, and your purpose in life changes sometimes to something you did not expect."

Rachael said that in life there are a lot of questions that "sometimes are never answered." She mentioned that morality, for example sometimes conflicts with the right and wrong. "Sometimes in life you have to do the wrong thing to do right." She affirmed that for people it is

a daily conflict. In terms of life she said that she believes she has a purpose in life. "When I was younger my mother told me that I almost died but I did not. Later in life my younger brother got sick and I helped the family with the expenses because I was working. I believe that that was my purpose, to help them."

Mike said, "For me, personally, everybody has their own purpose in life. It does not matter if it is small or big." He also mentioned that right and wrong are also not always clear and "you have to go with what you believe." Mike stated that "in life we always have questions. You wonder about: is this the right thing to do? Is this my purpose in life? At the same time you need to find out by yourself."

Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this? - Sienna stated that her parents help her grow the most, especially her mother. "She always encourages me to do my best and to follow my dreams. My mother is a strong woman that raises her voice to injustice and discrimination in life. She is my role model."

Rachael said that her parents were in charge of her formation. "My parents were the strongest influence and help in my life." She mentioned that she was not always in agreement with them or their decisions but "when I became a mother, then I understood a lot of things, especially how I have to deal with life." She finds herself doing the same things her mother did to her. "I have to do everything for them and I need to show them how to follow God."

Mike said that his parents helped him grow. "My parents were always there for me, pushing me to do the right thing and pushing me to continue on." He mentioned that his parents are stronger supporters of attending church. "I have my opinion about church like you can praise God wherever you are or wherever you go, no matter where you are, at school, work." Mike mentioned that "some parents think that you have to go to church every Sunday. You have to be

there and you have to do everything on time." He said that "once you grow, you read and you notice that it never said in the Bible that you have to be at church. For me, Sunday is the holy day. People can praise God anywhere".

Church involvement. *Have you ever attended a church service? What did this experience feel like for you?* - Sienna said that she attended "one or two services in different churches. I was raised Roman Catholic and we attended mass regularly when I was little. In recent years some friends invited me to a protestant church and I think the services were all right… It was different to what I knew."

Rachael reaffirmed that she is Roman Catholic and for her attending church on Sundays was a must. "My parents are into mass. I attended Catholic school and every Sunday we went to mass." She declared that "there was not option." She had attended some protestant services and she enjoyed the format and the singing.

Mike expressed that he had attended some services. "It depends on what they were doing." He mentioned that he attended traditional and contemporary services. "I feel some activities are redundant." Mike mentioned that he has been to Sunday school, services and a picnic. He said that when he attended the activities he felt good depending on who was involved.

Why do you think some people attend church and others do not? - Sienna expressed that "today it is difficult to balance life." She declared that "some people attend church because they love to go to church. Others attend church because they need to be reassured on their purpose in life." She said that many do not attend church "because they consider it boring, while others do not have time or do not care."

Rachael expressed that some people do not attend church "because they have so many things in life." She affirmed that many people today work too hard and have a family with young children. "They want to rest on Sundays because they are not working."

Mike said that "some people attend church because they like it. Others they do not like." He mentioned that "you cannot tell people to praise God. You give them advice but you cannot force a person to go to church." Mike added that "if people do not go to church, you cannot assume that they are not praising, praying or showing the love of God in their lives." He mentioned that people cannot be judged by attendance at church. "Church people are trying to show them the right way and path. Probably in the future you can see them at church or at an activity. If you push them it is not good."

How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church? - Sienna thinks that the people that attend church "are following their spiritual journey." She expressed that "it is not easy to find your own spiritual path but you have to keep trying until you are satisfied with what you are doing." She thinks that "we have so many religions because people are in search of that path." She described people that attend church as good people.

Rachael said that the people that go to church are good people. "Some are into it and enjoy activities, praying and praising. For me I like singing and praising. Sometimes you are there to be one-on-one with God."

Mike expressed that people that attend church are different. "You have there a future pastor next to a drug dealer. You never know." He mentioned that "there are all kinds of people at church." He said that he does not like to judge people because he does not like people to judge him. "As long as they try to follow God and try to be what He wants them to be, it is 'cool' with me."

How, if at all, are church goers different from you? - Sienna thinks that the people that attend church are not different from her. "We all are spiritually driven. Our interest is to fulfill our spiritual needs, I do it my way and they do it their way."

Rachael expressed that she does not see a difference. "It does not mean that if you go to church every Sunday you are doing the right things in your life. Sometimes there are people that go to church every Sunday but what they are doing at home is different." She said that they are trying the same way she is trying.

For Mike, "there is a different point of view from church goers and myself." He mentioned that "people that attend church like to tell others how they should do stuff versus how people have been doing this stuff for while." He said that one of the biggest things is that church goers think that "you have to go to church every Sunday. I do not go to church every Sunday but I have Him (God) dear to my heart. People judge me because I do not go to church every Sunday." He pointed out that probably that is a difference between him and church goers.

Community. *What are some primary needs in your community?* - Sienna expressed that there is too much violence in the community. "People are not getting along very well. We are having many newcomers to town and people are not being very friendly to change." She also expressed that there is a need for places to go and things to do in town. "If you do not have a car, you are trapped in town. It feels like a jail."

Rachael thinks that the people in the community are too separated. "We need more community communication. We are living beside each other and we do not know our neighbors." She said that being united would help prevent some of the issues with children and youth. "We can help each other with small and big tasks like help each other cleaning front porches and make our town beautiful."

Mike said that "personally, I think the church should step out more to reach out to the community showing that they are there with the people." He said that church people claim to be happy. "They need to tell the community 'we are happy and we want you to be happy too'." He declared that there are other needs in the community. "We need to put bumps on the street. People are 'flying' on the streets. We need more police officers; there is a little bit of chaos like in the rest of the world."

Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so? - Sienna affirmed that "church people can join to present a united front against violence." She also expressed that churches can develop programs for people, especially young ones that need activities that could keep them away from the streets. "It is not only prayers, we need actions."

Rachael thinks that community needs could be affected by spiritual practices. "Sometimes if you are a spiritual person you are happy. If you are happy you can help others and communication is more effective."

Mike expressed that spiritual practices affect people positively. "If people in positions are spiritual like the cops then better communication can occur. There is some racism in this town and church can help with that."

Future church. *If you could establish a church in your community, what would it look like? (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)* - Sienna said that she would established a church that is "up beat" with loud music. "I will paint the building with different bright colors. The sanctuary will be more or less what you call 'traditional' so that it looks like a church."

Rachael expressed that she would have a building that definitely would "look like a church. Once in a while I will have events in front of it. I will distribute flyers to communicate

these events. I will have events appropriately for different ages. I will have programs for kids, youth and adults. I will also have free concerts with big bands so people see the joy."

Mike affirmed that he would have a building "more like a theme park. I would have different rooms: a big room for music, one for prayer, and another for preaching, and every hour and a half a room to listen to a preaching. I will also have an entertainment room." Mike thinks that people want to have fun. "You want them to have fun with God the way it should be." He declared that when "someone develops anything like this, we should be thinking about what people will like." He declared that people have different needs and likes. "I would also have traditional services, music for the young and dance so they can praise God their own way."

Town C

Spirituality and religion. *What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you view yourself as spiritual?* - Michael said that to be a spiritual person is to be connected to God. "When a person tries to live a life that is pleasing to God that is being spiritual." Michael considers himself to be spiritual. He mentioned that he tries to keep his spirit in peace so that he can have a happy life.

Summer mentioned that she does not really know what it means to be a spiritual person. "I guess that the people that go to church or have any other religious practice is a spiritual person." She said that she is not a spiritual person. "When you are in a group you depend on your peers, I guess that that will do for me."

Josh thinks that being spiritual is "being in search of God. A spiritual person searches for guidance and asks God for His blessing." He expressed that he considers himself being spiritual. "I have my own view on how we connect with God. You do not have to be in a certain place to seek God. That is an old way of thinking."

John stated that to be a spiritual person is to believe in something or someone higher than you. "I considered myself to be spiritual. I know that there is a God up there that is watching us." John said that he does not think that what he does will affect what he believes. Even though he thinks that he is not searching for God, He is always taking care of him in many ways.

Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so? - Michael mentioned that there is a clear difference for him between the two concepts. For him being spiritual is that "feeling of peace that you have at the end of the day when you did the best you can." In terms of being religious he said that "we have plenty of religious people that they just want to judge and to condemn."

Summer said that "definitely, I am not a spiritual person." For Summer a "spiritual person goes to church, prays, and helps others." "I do not do those things," she said. "Don't get me wrong, I am not a bad person but I am not for those things." When she was in the service she met some people that claimed to be spiritual but then they showed the other side of their "spirituality. They were not religious at all."

Josh expressed that being religious and being spiritual "is not the same thing. Religious people behave erratically. That is why we had so many wars in the name of religion." Being spiritual is "being in a search journey. I believe that the monks and nuns are spiritual people. They are in constant search of God."

John expressed that being religious is when a person that claims to be religious or Christian looks at others and starts to criticize how the other person looks, what he says, does, or eat. He said that they even start to disapprove even of the way the other person talks, walks or even dresses. "A spiritual person sees beyond those things and when they see another person they see themselves. That is being a true Christian."

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What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power? - Michael expressed that he believe in God. "I do not think that others are wrong when they believe in other gods or higher powers. It is their form of connect with the Maker of everything." He said that through time the concept of God has changed and that does not mean that people are absolutely right or wrong, it means that "they believe in their own way."

Summer expressed that there is "something out there; some might call it God, others might call it another name." She mentioned that she is not "a person that really cares about religion." She said that she does not do anything bad to others and she expects others not to do anything bad to her in return.

Josh expressed that he believes in God. "I know that God is with us. There are so many things that we cannot explain… like, how is the air kept inside the atmosphere without leaving to the open space?" For Josh life itself is a mystery that can only be explained if we believe in a higher power. "We cannot create life without our own cells, from the nothing."

John affirmed that God exists. He said that he does not communicate or practice this belief but despite that he believes that God is real. There are other beliefs in other gods like "the god of the Muslim people, but they still believe in a higher power, I guess."

Do you ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more meaningful to you? - Michael mentioned that he meditates and reads. He mentioned that his prayers are more like a conversation with God. "I do not need to attend church to talk with God. He is everywhere." Michael expressed that he likes to ride his bike and go through the woods admiring God's creation. He loves to paint and that gives him another way to connect with God.

Summer said that she really does not do "anything like prayer, meditation, or anything similar to that." She mentioned that her life is simple and too busy. She has two part time jobs and she just "have enough time to rest and to keep moving."

Josh stated that he practices yoga and meditation. "I am not a big fan of reading but when I have a doubt about something or a question I ask or look through the internet until I am satisfied." He mentioned that he has some friends that once in a while engage in conversations on what could be considered their spiritual exploration. "Some are meaningful, others we just bubble about life."

John said that he does not really have any spiritual practices. "I attend church on special occasions like Christmas and there I follow what is done." He expressed that by himself he does not pray or mediate or do any of the other spiritual practices.

What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? ...What (other) life questions do you wonder about? - Michael mentioned that sometimes he wonders about morality and sacred things. "I do not understand why many so-called Christians have double standards. In church they are one thing and outside they behave worse than the ones that do not go to church." He mentioned that that is why he stopped attending church. He also said that there were too many sacred things for people. He declared that when he went to church he tried to be part a youth group. They were singing some songs and he heard some of the church members criticizing the kind of music that they were singing. He said that the altar was not "for that kind of things. For a teen this is devastating. They did not only say that they did not like the music, they said that they did not like us."

Summer affirmed that she is looking to be more in life. "I think that life itself has challenges that are like a battlefield." She expressed that many times "you do not have time to think, just to react." She said that during the time of her service the concepts morality and what is right or wrong "were shifted to another dimension." She explained that when she was in the military she knew that if they were attack she had to react with her unit. "I was taught not to kill but if they attack I was going to attacked back. At that point I was not going to evaluate my moral values or what was right or wrong. I was just going to react to the situation. No questioning or thinking."

Josh acknowledged that "life is not an easy topic. We are bombarded by media and traditions of thoughts. Many times we are in a crossroad in terms of our own beliefs." For Josh life is not back and white. "Even what is right or wrong can be affected by the circumstances." He said that moral values are something that adjusts according to culture and ethnicity. "People from Latin America, for example, have a different value on time than people from here." In terms of purpose in life, Josh said that "all of us need to find out what is our purpose in life. Many people live like there is no tomorrow. I think that life is a journey. If we stop nothing happens but if we keep walking we can find many kinds of adventures. Some bad, some good but we have the option to pick where we go and with whom."

John said that he understands evil, right and wrong and "all that stuff" but it is difficult to live according to what people believe is right or wrong and especially with the pressure of moral values. "There is a lot of pressure from the older generation to do things the way they did. I do not think that they understand that we are different." John said that sometimes he wonders about why people try to control other people. "You see older people trying to control our lives; the way

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we should talk or behave, even the things we should do or eat. They think that if we do not do the things their way it is wrong…. Even if we do not go to church we belong to the devil."

Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this? - Michael said that his mother was the one that helped him grow. He mentioned that his father was one of those that "were one thing in church and another at home." He expressed that his mother is still a big influence in his life. "She still thinks that I need to go to church."

Summer declared that her family was a vital pillar in her growth. "I was loved by my parents and grandparents. They worked hard to give us what they could." When she mentioned that she was going to join the Armed Forces some of her family tried to get her out of her thinking but "at the end they supported my decision." She expressed that she really wanted a change. "There is not that much around here. A lot of my peers from school were living with someone or married with kids, even before they finished high school. I did not want that for me. Not at that time of my life."

Josh said that his parents played an important role in his growth. "They made some mistakes, but who doesn't. Nobody is perfect." Now that Josh is starting a family he said that he "appreciates better" what his parents did. "I have a baby coming and I want to be the best I can. I will also make mistakes but I hope that I can be always there."

John mentioned that his grandmother was the most important person in his growth. "She took care of me when my mom couldn't." He pointed out that she was very loving and a prayer person. "She used to pray for everything. If we had a problem, she prayed. If we needed something, she prayed." He said that his grandmother tells him that he needs to go to church. "At least I go sometimes."

Church involvement. *Have you ever attended a church service? What did this experience feel like for you?* - Michael said that as he mentioned before he used to attend church. "It was okay for me. I felt really good when I was in church. It was when we got out that the struggles begun." He mentioned that sometimes he wanted to stay at church and did not want to go back home. "I felt safe and in peace there."

Summer said that she attended religious services on base. "They were okay," she expressed. The services on base are more ecumenical. She mentioned that before that she attended one or two services. "They were very 'traditional'." She described the service as not very interesting for her or joyful. "They sang hymns, read the Bible, and that was it."

Josh attended church when he was growing up. "I think that when I became a teen that's where I lost it." He said that his interest in church was not there anymore. He wanted to "hang out" with his friends instead of attending church. "There was always something more interesting to do." He thinks that today's church is losing the focus on what is important. "Old people feel good having services the old way but young people like to have something more meaningful and appealing to our needs."

John said that he attends church on some holidays. "I do not always go but I try. I now that that was important to my grandmother and I love her so much." He thinks that the services are okay but not too appealing to him. John said that for him church is a very formal place and he does not like formality very much.

Why do you think some people attend church and others do not? - Michael acknowledged that there are many reasons for people to attend church. He mentioned that for some people "it's a fulfillment of a spiritual need," for others "a place to show that they are

spiritual but in reality they are not." In his experience Michael expressed that "for others it is a refuge and a safe place."

Summer affirmed that people she knows do not attend church because of work, are too busy, want to rest, or are not interested. "In my case there is nothing in the service I attended that interested me. I am an action person. I like to do things, not sitting listening to some music and a preacher."

Josh expressed that he cannot talk about others but he can say what he thinks. "I do not attend church because I do not feel that connection, especially with people." Josh also stated that he has been changing jobs and the majority of the time he has to work weekends. If he has a weekend off he wants to rest. He mentioned that probably these are some of the reasons that they cannot attend church either.

John said that they are too judgmental. "If you do not look like them they will look at you like if you were an alien." He expressed that sometimes that makes him feel uncomfortable. He likes to attend church the way he is but they (church people) even look at the way he dresses.

How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church? - Michael said that today "there are all kinds of people that attend church." He said that some are good and some are bad. "You cannot recognize who is who, but God knows." In his life Michael said that the majority of people that he encountered that attended church are people that are trying to help others and "really love God."

Summer mentioned that she knows people that attend church. "Some are true Christians while others… I really doubt that they are religious people." She expressed that that is one of the reasons she does not attend church. "I do not want to be one person in church and another when I

get out." She said that a person must do what he or she thinks is best and "give the best they can." According to Summer attending church will not get the best out of her.

Josh said that the majority of people he knows that attend church are "good people." He also said that he knows some that are very "judging. They talk too much about others and complain about things but they do nothing." He said that there are people like that everywhere but expected to be less in church.

John affirmed that many people that attend church are good people. "They try to help others and many care for who you are." He also said that he also met some that are one thing at the church and another at home. "If only the pastor knew who they are they will be no longer a church member."

How, if at all, are church goers different from you? - Michael expressed that there is no difference. "The only thing that they do different than me is that they attend church and I don't." Michael thinks that spiritually speaking he is as close to God as any one that attends church.

Summer said that the issue is precisely that "there is no difference between the people that attend church and me. I don't think I am going to go through all the problems to attend church if there is no difference for my life."

Josh acknowledged that he does not see a big difference. "I have my connection with God, it's not like I am separated from Him." He thinks that church goers sometimes do it because it's a routine in their lives. "Some of these people have been in church for decades."

John declared that "probably they are closer to God." He said that some people try to do the best they can in life and do the right thing. "I try to, but I know that being closer to God is something I need to do better."

Community. *What are some primary needs in your community?* - Michael said that the community needs to be more connected. "We are too isolated. Everybody is going his own way and doing his own thing. There is no community feeling, if you know what I mean." Michael thinks that if we communicate and care for each other, then "many of the issues and problems that we have can be solved by us."

Summer stated that the community needs some things that are government related, "like better roads, honesty in the administration, and government agencies in town." She affirmed that many government agencies are in Pottsville about seven miles away. "People need a car or have to take the bus to get there or to go to any entertainment. That is another thing. There is nothing around here for entertainment." She expressed that young people in town do not have anything to do. "I have seen some groups going around. I hope they are not gangs."

Josh said that his community is lacking of preventive programs. "There is not much to do around here." He said that many of the young people do not have places to "vamp their energy. I thank God that I have a car but those who don't are stuck in here." Josh said that there are two small parks, a couple of stores, and a lot of bars. "That tells you something."

John said that there are a lot of young people that are in need of acceptance. "It is hard to live to somebody else's expectations and try to do the best you can." He said that young people today are lost in their own way of living. "We need more places where people are genuine and want to help others in their search for purpose in life." John said that in Town C there are not many places where people can relax or have fun. "There are many bars in town so when you have a problem and no one to help where do you go? You have easy access to these places even if you do not have the legal age, believe me."

Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so? -
Michael said that our religiosity and spiritual practices have to play a vital role in any changes in the community. "I think that people need to be more spiritual in order to respect and care for others." For Michael unity and the connection between people can be real and possible if all have spiritual practices and "have common grounds on how to express our spirituality in consideration to others."

Summer expressed that probably sincere religious people can make a difference. "If people are truly Christians their values and morals are shown in what they do. Many Christians are hard workers and care about others." She said that care for other will make people make better decisions for the community.

Josh mentioned that if people are spiritual they can see the needs in the community. "If you ask an older adult about the needs in the community they will probably say the same thing. There are those that think that we are okay the way we are. They do not see beyond the completion of their individual needs." There are three elderly places in town and passive activities for this population. "Besides our famous 'block parties' in the summer there is not much excitement the rest of the year."

John declared that the religious or spiritual practices, as he understands it, "will help with the inside struggles." He said that many people feel alone, especially the young generation. "I am 19, almost 20, and it is hard to think that expectations from others change when you are an adult." John said that he was in need of guidance and acceptance. "If people that claimed to be religious were there to help, I think it would be an easier journey for us." He thinks that religious and spiritual people that are truly Christians have something special that can be used to help others.

Future church. *If you could establish a church in your community, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)?* - Michael said that he would have a beautiful building. For him it does not matter if the congregation is big or small. "The congregation needs to be connected by knowing each other by name. They have to be bonded to each other. A great congregation and a real church only can be great because of the people that are part of it."

Summer said that the ideal church for her is the one that have "honest people in it." She thinks that if people communicate and share ideas they will find what is best for the community. "People need to work together." She feels that people are acting too individualistic and that is "affecting the way people act, the way we conduct business, and the way people are raising their children." She expressed that a church could have the best building, media, and programming but if its people are not honest and true it "doesn't matter."

Josh stated that he will concentrate on the people. "You can have the most modern building in the world with screens, decorations, and the most beautiful architecture but if the people are not genuine all that is nothing." Josh said that people need to be "welcoming and not judgmental." He mentioned that "many times you do not have to say a word."

John expressed that his dream church will be a one "with a lot of music." He said that for him it is not about the building it is about the people. He said that "all people will be so pleased to attend that they would like to come back." John finished by saying that "the heart of any church is its people."

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Review

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Uncovering the emerging themes from the data was not an easy task. Potter (1996) affirmed that "when dealing with the facet of people, the qualitative researcher must develop a composite picture about how people think about things" (p.123). It was not only collecting the

information, it was also scrutinizing and seeing the rationale of the data collected. Potter continues that "the researcher must make sense out of all of this seemingly conflicting information" (p. 123). Even though I stated at the beginning of this paper that the research was conducted in as much of an unbiased manner as possible, it was difficult to do so. Despite the fact that I had my opinion on the subject it was surprising to find the spirituality and the concerns that young adults have. I guess that my frustrations were to try to answer questions for young adults without asking what their questions were in the first place. In the following sections I will make an assessment of the information collected, identifying the themes and patterns in the answers of participants.

Limitations to the Study

There were some limitations to the research. Creswell and Clark (2007) stated that "validity is also enhanced when the researcher discusses, in a mixed methods study, potential threats to validity that arise during data collection and analysis" (p. 147). First, the number of participants for the interviews was not accomplished in each town. Several attempts were made to meet and perform the interviews without success. Second, church leadership of one of the churches were not available at all. The interview was conducted only with the pastor. The church does not have any programming or people that are working with young adults or developing any programming to reach out to this population. Third, the young adults interviewed were not very communicative. Their answers were short and sometimes the answers were not related at all to the question. Fourth, the small churches are located in the middle of the coal region in central Pennsylvania; generalization to other areas would deviate from the initial statement on the differences in the challenges that small community churches faced.

Nonetheless, in spite of the noted limitations and challenges, the data produced was rich and informative. It lays some of the groundwork necessary for understanding the problem and for considering possible interventions that would provide benefits for all parties, the young adults, the pastors, the other church leaders, and the community. The next section begins to outline this foundation by providing a contrasting of similarities and differences among interview responses.

Similarities and Differences Among Interviewees Perceptions

In this chapter I identified the themes that surfaced from the data. There are apparent similarities, differences, and misconceptions in relation with the research questions. The first question was: How are small church leaders addressing the perception of spirituality of young people in rural areas in Pennsylvania? There were several similarities in all the groups interviewed and some differences as well. The following table (Table 7) summarizes some of the emergent themes for research question one. The people interviewed have one thing in common that is not recorded in the table; all in one form or shape experienced in their younger ages attending church. The leaders are still attending, while the non-goers stopped the practice at one point in their lives.

Table 7 shows that there are more similarities than discrepancies among the church leaders, church goers and church non-goers. One of the major components for outreach in a religious setting is to identify a need and try to provide for it. Church leaders expressed that young adults are in search while the young adults identified themselves as seekers. This common ground alone can be a key component in the outreach efforts in small local churches. Young adults considered themselves to be seekers. This seeking urge for something spiritual is what the

local church could tackle. But first the leadership needs to identify what specifically the young

adults are seeking to fulfill.

Table 7

Comparison Between Church Leaders, Church Goers, and Church Non-Goers for Research Question One.

Church leaders	Church goers	Church non-goers

Young people are:
    Spiritual but not spiritually
    oriented
	Consider themselves as:
	    Spiritual
		Consider themselves as:
		    Being spiritual

In search	Seekers	Seekers

Hands-on and care for
    community
Young adults:
	Hands-on and do things for
	    community and church	

Believe in God or higher power	Believe in the God of Christianity as the high power	Believe in God or a higher power
Do not have worship practices	Have worship practices	Do not have worship practices
Do not have spiritual practices	Have some spiritual practices	Have some spiritual practices
Need more communication		

Do not understand the
    difference between being
    spiritual or religious
	Understand the difference between
	being spiritual and religious
		Differentiate between being spiritual
		and being religious

Do not like traditional
    rituals, or they do not
    understand it
	Like contemporary services	

The second research question was: Are there any generational cohort discrepancies? The

following table summarized some of the emergent themes for research question two.

On Table 8 we can see more discrepancies than similarities. Church leaders think that

young adults are different than they were as young adults. They also think that church goers are

no different than themselves. For church leaders family and family values are not relevant for

young adults. On the other hand, for young adults the family played a vital role in their lives

helping them grow. These discrepancies accentuate the existing gap between the two generations

creating a barrier for communication and understanding.

Table 8

Comparison Between Church Leaders, Church Goers, and Church Non-Goers for Research Question Two.

Church leaders	Church goers	Church non-goers
Services are not meaningful for young adults	Traditional services are not appealing	Church services are okay even traditional ones
Young adults are different from them	Habitual church goers are not different from them	Church goers are not different having same issues as judgmental and having double standards
Values and morals were better when they were growing up	Family helped them grow	Family were vital in their growth
Would not give up totally on liturgy in contemporary service		
	Church goers are happy and good people	Some people attend church because: Is a habit, they feel connected Is a refuge, is a routine Learned at a young age

The third research question was: How does communicative technological practice come

into play in terms of community boundary formation, boundaries, and penetration strategies? The

following table summarized some of the emergent themes for research question three.

Table 9

Comparison Between Church Leaders, Church Goers, and Church Non-Goers for Research Question Three.

Church leaders	Church goers	Church non-goers
Use of media and visuals		Multipurpose building
	Age appropriate programming	Age appropriate programming
		Lot of music
	Screens and lot of media	Screens and media

The use of technology does not play an essential role in rural small churches as presented on Table 9. The use of media is not a boundary for a better communication. Even though the young adults mentioned the use of technology it was more stressed by the church non-goers. The concept of age appropriate programming was mentioned by the young adults more than the use of technology. Church leaders mentioned the use of media as something that is more appealing to the younger generation than for them. For the young adults the human component and the care of human needs were more significant than the use of technology.

The fourth research question was: Is community welfare seen as a spiritual matter or just as a consequence of society? The following table summarized some of the emergent themes for research question four.

Table 10

Comparison Between Church Leaders, Church Goers, and Church Non-Goers for Research Question Four.

Church leaders	Church goers	Church non-goers
Spiritual practices will help in community endeavors	Spiritual practices can lead people into more community involvement and unity	Spiritual practices play a vital role in community changes
Church should be involved in community	More church involvement	Church needs to be more involved in the community

Needs in the community are:
    Communication
    Sense of family
	Needs in the community are:
	    Entertainment
	    Activities for young people
	    Education
	    Preventive programs
		Needs in the community are:
		    Entertainment
		    Preventive programs
		    Tolerance and acceptance
		    Unity
		
		More contemporary services to attract a younger generation

The community welfare is seen as a spiritual matter as shown on Table 10. Church leaders and all young adults agreed that spiritual practices are essential for the community. The more spiritual a person can be the better he or she engages in social issues. All interviewees

agreed that the church needs to be more involved in the community versus only taking care of spiritual matters. Young adults expressed that community needs are for activities and more educational and preventive programs. The general welfare seems to be a top priority for the younger generation contrary to what the church leaders thought. The leaders tended to believe that young adults were lacking in values; but community and community welfare are valued by young adults today.

Similarities

Some similarities can be identified in the four groups of participants as noted below:

One major similarity is that all the leaders and young adults believe in God or a higher power. This was very clearly stated during the interviews, and the majority of the participants believe in the God of Christianity.

There is a perceived lack of generational communication. The young adults that attend church do not engage in conversation with the older generation. They attend their service and the young adults attend theirs. The non-church goers spoke about people that attend church in general expressing that they are good people. No specific details were given providing the indication that there is no close relationship among the local church leaders and young adult church goers and non-goers.

Young adults are looking for something in worship that is more than the "traditional" way. Many like more of today's music, more participation of the people, and less formality in the services. The leaders also recognized that the young adults desire something different.

Community education and resources were common themes. The interviewees agreed that the Church should be more actively involved in the community. They agreed that the Church

could make a difference in the community by being more connected to the needs and issues faced by the people. Young adults see the Church as a resource for the community.

The majority of the interviewees do not grasp the concepts of spirituality versus religion. Some of the interviewees clearly stated that there is a difference but just a few clearly stated that difference.

The groups believe that churches should focus their programming on people according to age groups. Not one size fits all. People need to have choices according to their preference.

Differences

There are some primary differences in perception of concepts between the four groups as indicted below:

Church leaders think that the young adults live the moment and do not think about the future. On the other hand young adults expressed that many of the community needs are education and the lack of entertainment especially for children. These concerns reflect their worry about the future and how they can help now to make it better. They thought about themselves, but also about other people's needs especially children.

Leaders expressed that children today grow up without a relationship with God. This was contradicted by the fact that many of the young adults interviewed expressed that they attended church when they were younger or children, and this impacted their lives and helped them to be who they are today.

For the leaders, involvement in church equals the development of spiritual values but activities performed by the church are not seen as growing or developing spiritual principles. Young adults see the social action as an expression of their spirituality making them feel good when they are helping others.

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Misconceptions

One of the major misconceptions found was the concept of family and values. Church leaders talked about the declination of family values and how children do not go to church because of the lack of influence from parents. Many of the young adults identified a family member as the most important person in their growth. The value of family was expressed several times during the interviews. For some of the young adults the most important person in their lives is their mother or grandmother being a key constituent in where they are today.

Another misconception is the apparent confusion in terms of behavior; attending or not attending church signifies being or not being spiritual. The majority of the leaders expressed that they do not think that today's young adults engaged in spiritual practices. The expressions of the leaders on these practices were limited to those well known by them like praying and studying the Bible. On the other hand, many of the young adults interviewed consider themselves spiritual even if they did not attend church.

Although the concept of being spiritual and religious were not clearly stated by some of the interviewees it is in their perception that they understand there is a difference. This does not mean that the can discern the difference but they are aware of it. For the leaders this concept is not understood by the young adults while the young adults, church-goers and non-goers, acknowledged that there is a difference. Now, the challenge this presents is the proper address of spiritual needs of young adults and the expression on these spiritual needs in practices that could be interpreted as religious practices and not spiritual.

The interviewees expressed in their way, their understanding on spiritual and religious concepts according to the question asked. The sociological concepts might provide the insight

needed to understand the responses given by the interviews. In the following section I will tie some sociological concepts with some of the responses of the interviewees.

Connection with Sociological Concepts

Some responses were clearly identified with some of the sociological concepts presented in chapter two, while others were not clear; at least for the researcher. One of the young adults experienced what Durkheim has addressed as *the sacred and the profane.* He mentioned that when he was a teen, a group of them were forming a singing group. After a practice they heard some adults criticizing the music to what they were singing stating that that kind of music was not for the altar. I experienced as a pastor of a small rural local church these generational differences in perceptions of the concept of what is sacred and what is not as stated in Chapter 2.

Some of the young adults expressed that they feel happy when they attend the local church and sing. One of them even mentioned that when she sings in the praise band she experiences a special connection with God. One of the leaders expressed that young people are looking for excitement, good music, involvement, and liberty. These are examples of what Durkheim called *collective effervescence* and the needs of being with others and then to communally experience the enthusiasm that this act brings.

In terms of *religion and community*, young adults think that Church and religious people should be more involved in community issues especially in education and prevention. Some problems like drugs and violence could be prevented through education, especially education for children. Even one young adult specifically mentioned that if the police and government officials were spiritual then they would better perform their duties for the community and they would also communicate better.

Young adults expressed that some people attend church because they want to be seen by the community. Attendance to church is seen as *traditional authority* where by the action of a person being actively religious places him or her in a relevant and respected position in society. I perceived respect, admiration, and understanding in all young adults interviewed as they talked about people that attend church.

Several of the non-church young adults goers expressed that they attended church when they were younger and they enjoyed it. At one point in their lives they value other things more than attend church. One of the leaders mentioned that young adults need to find attending church a meaningful experience and that they need to get something out of what they do. These are examples of *value rational action*. The young adults attending church activities are finding the value they like in these activities. They feel good about serving the community.

Young adults said that some people have other things they would rather do on Sunday mornings than go to church, including stay home and sleep. This is an example of *instrumental rational action*. If there is nothing interesting and appealing for them at church they will prefer other activities.

One of the pastors mentioned that she put a screen for PowerPoint presentations during the contemporary service. The deal was to put it down for the contemporary service and up for the traditional. She mentioned that after a while she left it down for the traditional service and uses it for scriptures and pictures. The older generation, at the beginning, perceived this tool as too worldly. She had to provide a lengthy explanation on the use of the screen in the altar. This is an example of what people might perceive as the *secularization* of the Church. As she explained, however, the older people are used to it now.

When young adults talked about the ideal church, many of them talked about a church with different rooms for different ages, activities, and worship styles. This is a good example of *religious market.* Young adults now that people are into something because they want to feel connected, good, and accepted. Having a variety of ways to attain spiritual needs will give each person an opportunity to select according to wants, needs and desires.

Even though young adults and local church leaders did not consciously address many of the theories that framed this study it is clearly seen that in community life almost all of the theories are present. One way or another, religion and community interact creating a wide variety of expectations, actions and results on people's perceptions of life.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This final chapter will present the answers to the research questions, conclusions,

limitations to the study, and recommendations for future research based on the data collected

from participants. The field of religion provides a multiplicity of topics to research. This research

on young adults' spirituality and religiosity provided just a starting point; there is so much

research that could be conducted. The discussion, however, is centered on the data on hand and

has little generalization, yet it introduces many ideas and thoughts that others could explore in

the future or even to use in their own environment. The transfer of such information must

involve caution. Nonetheless, the rich information can certainty enhances one's thinking and

stimulates new and exciting ideas for exploration.

Research Questions

Research Question One

How are small church leaders addressing the perception of spirituality of young people

in rural areas in Pennsylvania? - The leadership in small churches in rural areas is doing an

effort to effectively address the spiritual needs of young adults. The task has not been

accomplished successfully. This might be because: the young adults cannot articulate their

spiritual needs; there are those that say they are spiritual outside the church; or there are those

that attend church and are satisfied with it. The general perception of the adults is that young

adults do not engage in spiritual practices. The people interviewed from the church are much

older than the young adults they are trying to reach. This presents a challenge in communication,

perception, ideas, concepts, and behavior.

According to my literature review Durkheim's collective effervescence is relevant in the perception of spirituality in young adults. The active group in the church at Town C expressed that they feel accepted as they are and they are actively involved in activities where they feel that they are doing something for others.

Research Question Two

Are there any generational cohort discrepancies? - I believe that there are generational cohort discrepancies. The young adults are acting more under Weber's instrumentally rational action. They are looking to fulfill their spiritual needs in a different way than the older generation. The value that they gain by participating in religious activities or spiritual rites differs from the value gained by the older generation given the same experience. Some of the leaders interviewed spoke a lot about how things were when they were growing up. They compare the spirituality they learned to the spirituality they perceived in the young adults.

Young adults are engaging in a spiritual search. All believe in God or higher power. The challenge is that they would like more activities that fulfill their needs for action and achievement. Young adults are expressing their spirituality in social action, while the church leaders are expressing their spirituality in religious action. It not only about the music or service style it is about helping and being involved. The leaders have to be aware of the perceptions and needs of the young adults. The comment of Charles from Town A about not giving up on hymnals is an indicator that changes are needed as long as they are not complete radical changes.

Research Question Three

How does communicative technological practice come into play in terms of community boundary formation, boundaries, and penetration strategies? - Technological practices did not come up as a major theme in the research. Three leaders mentioned the use of technology in the

development of a future church and two mentioned screens and visuals without going into the technology per se. I was surprised that technology was mentioned just sometimes during the interviews of young adults. Six out of seventeen (35%) of all the young adults interviewed, church goers and church non-goers, mentioned some kind of media during the interview. The participants that mentioned technology were: in Town C 33% attending the young adult group mentioned media and screen, and 50% off the ones not attending mentioned screens and media; in Town A none of the participants mentioned the use of technology; in Town B 66% mentioned some kind of technology in music and entertainment, not giving much attention to other areas.

It is noticeable though that the young adults prefer a contemporary service. This probably implies the use of technology but not necessarily. One of the themes was the music. The use of speakers and other technology comes with the call for contemporary and loud music. I was expecting more of the use of screens, projectors, and more specifics. I noticed that not all of the participants had cellular phones; many did not even have a car. I noticed that communications to the community is still done by flyers, posters, and hand-to-hand promotion. I have to acknowledge that this was one of the areas where I thought I was going to collect a lot of data.

The boundaries found are of a more traditional kind than that of technology use. In order to penetrate the boundaries of young adults, leaders must recognize what young adults need and want. The majority of the young adults concentrated their answer to the future church in the needs of people in terms of ages and their distinctive desires. I believe that this is one of the most important components in developing strategies to penetrate the young adult's boundaries.

The churches of Town A and Town B do not have an active young adult group but have young adults in the congregation. They did not mentioned consultation with these young adults

or any young adults in order to strategize the overcoming of boundaries between the two generations.

There is disenchantment from the leadership side. According to them they are trying to reach out to a younger generation but the two churches that do not have a group of young adults do not even have a contemporary service or at least a ministry that can address the needs of the young adults.

Research Question Four

Is community welfare seen as a spiritual matter or just as a consequence of society? - The young adults believe that spiritual practices are needed for the welfare of the community. Churches have to be intentionally involved in community needs to make a difference. Young adults in small rural areas face particular community challenges. When young adults have children of their own they realize that society must be more aware of the needs of the whole community. Then values shift and change. Weber's value rational action comes into play. The young adults even expressed that good and bad sometimes is difficult to understand and act upon.

On the other hand the leaders addressed the needs of the community as the need of sense of family. Values, religiosity, education, and spirituality are a result of church involvement in the community. There was a clear difference in the perception of community needs between the church leaders and the young adults.

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Conclusions

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Some of the young adults have the perception that not attending church is an indicator of their spirituality. This is the same indictor that the older adults have. This similarity is unhelpful in the development of programs to reach out for a younger generation.

Leadership of small churches needs to discuss with young adults in their communities what they need and how the leaders can help in their spiritual journey. The perception is that being spiritual has to be accompanied by certain actions. Young adults expressed that they engage in spiritual practices like praying and reading. On the other hand expressions were made that in order to be spiritual attending church is not an essential component.

Young adults not attending church or church activities do not see themselves as different from church goers. Nevertheless church leaders perceive them as different. Many times the attention to differences is precisely what might cause the failure of efforts.

Future Research

Given the difficulties with the interviews I would suggest that the methodology change to focus groups. Maintaining appointments was challenging. There were too many questions. I recommend reducing the quantity of questions and sections. There were four sections and by the time that community-related questions were asked the participants were engaged in the topic of church and their involvement in church. Changing to community was a little bit confusing for them.

If I have the opportunity to do another research I will concentrate on the topic of the future church. There were some very interesting concepts on how to fulfill the spiritual needs of people. I personally like Mike's concept of a "mall" church where people come and chose where they would like to go according to what they feel at the moment they attend the church. This is an example of the religious marketplace. The young adults expressed that they would like to see more community local activities. Socialization is an important value for young adults.

Another area for research is the church leadership. Perception from an outsider could be that church leaders are doing their best to reach out to young adults. They are but the

consideration is doing it the precise way. The leaders also need to take into consideration their own biases in the development of programs.

There are also the vast and broad perceptions on spirituality and religiosity in terms of behaviors and beliefs, and the internalization of these beliefs. The contextualizations in terms of personal characteristics, life experiences, and environment are predictors and have an influence on the definition and perception of spirituality and religiosity. Further studies could examine these areas.

Summary

The objective of this research was to explore young adults' spirituality through a set of questions requesting leaders about their perception of young adults' spirituality and also inquiring the young adults about their own spirituality. I was able to interview 24 people: seven church leaders, six young adults attending a young adults group, and eleven non-church going young adults.

Valuable findings were brought about from conducting this study. Interviews with church leadership provided insight into their biases in the perception of young adults' spirituality. The interviews with the young adults participating in an active church group offered the opportunity to examine a program being effective in a similar geographic area. In contrast, the interviews with non-church goers provided the comparison perception on spirituality needed to examine the effectiveness and actions to take. These findings lend themselves to informing church leaders and formulating basic suggestions for action.

Suggestions for Church Leaders

The Bible is the supreme declaration of God's will for the world and for our lives in many mainline Christian denominations. In James 2:16-18 it says **"**If one of you says to them,

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'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds." It is important to understand both the view points of the young adults and the view points of the older generation. Young adults see social action as spiritual while the older generation sees Bible study, regular attendance on Sundays, participation in church-related activities, and other similar things as spiritual. If the verses in James are taken as guidelines for living a spiritual life, then the younger generation is right because "faith without deeds is dead"; on the other hand, the leaders and the older generation are correct as well given that in a reformed Christianity the Bible represents the supreme God breathed word.

Living a spiritual life encompasses more than faith and deeds. Both of them have to be lived under the great commandment that Jesus emphasized in Mark 12: 29-31 "Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." The love for God and the love for neighbors should tie the spiritual world with the physical world by means of actions. This is where the faith and deeds meet.

In the United Methodist Church the teachings of John Wesley connect the spiritual practices with social action. For Wesley praying, fasting, confessing, and reading the Bible were practices that all Christians must engage in order to achieve sanctification, in other words Christian perfection by holiness of heart and life. But he also believed that the grace of God could be expressed in this life through love, but only through the love of God in our hearts.

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Wesley had a holistic approach that Methodists should be practicing daily. He believed in social action. He was very active in his time in opposing slavery and in the reformation of the prison system. Today this attitude can be converted into many other social actions like the community needs expressed by the interviewees: after-school programs, preventive educational information, and recreational activities. The Methodist and Wesleyan traditions are not far from the young adults' perception of faith, religion, and spirituality and the action that needs to take place through the three.

There have been studies done on the matter of Christian faith, perceptions and generations. One of these studies about the perceptions and disconnection especially in generations was presented by Kinnaman in 2007. Kinnaman found that "especially younger adults, have little trust in the Christian faith, and esteem for the lifestyle of Christ" (p. 9). This certainly reaffirmed that relationships and communication need to be created. The findings in my research are also aligned with Kinnaman's findings.

In light of these findings, I will venture to express some specific suggestions to church leaders. First, engage in a dialogue with young adults. Not only introduce yourself, but also ask questions and listen to what they have to say with a genuine interest. This could be done on the street, in restaurants or any communal or public place. Generational gaps are expressed in the lack of understanding and distance between generations. Both church leaders and young adults are thinking that the other has different beliefs, views, and expression of faith and spirituality when in reality they are not that different. When generations communicate, assumptions should not be based on perceptions; rather, awareness should be based on information and facts.

Second, identify commonalities; build a bridge with a relationship. Socializing is important for young adults. Points of interest could be identified and addressed by simply having

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a conversation with the younger generation. This could be a way to engage them in a meaningful spiritual journey and the creation of a connection between young adults and the older generation. Creativity is essential in engaging young adults in a meaningful socialization event. This action must not be confused with gaining new members for the local church or the group.

Third, community involvement and helping in addressing community needs is important for young adults. This is another tool for creating trust and relations. Engage the young adults in a spiritual walk of social action. Serving others is meaningful for young adults as well as for an older generation. This is why many churches have food banks, clothing banks, hot meals, and other ministries. Working side-by-side could help change the perceptions in the way each generation implements and carries out their spiritual practices. These activities might serve as a crossroad for both generations when they find that some of the traditional "spiritual disciplines" and the new generation spiritual practices have commonalities. This connection could be accomplished only when there is a good communication and the spiritual practices have meaning for both groups.

Fourth, there are many social activities that could be performed and could catch the interest of young adults. They could help in the creation of preventive educational activities for social problems like drugs, alcohol and violence. Also, young adults with children could get together to help each other in recreational activities for their children, especially if nothing is available in the community. The local church building could be available for these and other endeavors that attract the attention of young adults.

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APPENDIX A

CHURCH LEADERS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Church Leaders Interview Guide

1. Spirituality & Religion
    a. What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you see young adults today as being spiritually oriented?
    b. Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so?
    c. What do young adults think about God or the existence of a higher power?
    d. What spiritual practices do you think young adults engage in today (things such as prayer, meditation, religious studies, conversations about God, etc.)? Do you think young adults find these things meaningful? What do you think might be equally or more meaningful for them?
    e. What do you think young adults wonder about spiritual things such as right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.? What (other) life questions do you think they wonder about?
    f. Who do you think in a young adult's life helps them to grow the most? …spiritually?

2. Church Involvement
    a. What do young adults think and feel about church services? What are they looking for in a church?
    b. How do young adults make you feel?
    c. What kinds of young adult outreach activities do you engage in? What other outreach activities does your church do?
    d. How are these activities received by the young adults? What do others in the church think about these activities and about young adults in general?
    e. How would you describe the kinds of people who go to your church?
    f. How would you describe young adults that attend your church? …how are they different from or the same as those that don't go to church?

3. Community
    a. What are some primary needs in your community?
    b. Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so?

4. Future Church
    a. If you could establish a new church today that would attract young adults, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)?
    b. What barriers would you have to face?

APPENDIX B

CHURCH LEADERS DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Church Leaders Demographic Data Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please complete the survey below and return it to the interviewer. Please note that the information collected in this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

1. Age Category: _____ 25-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55 _____ 55 or older

2. My gender is: _____Male _____Female

3. Cultural Background: _____ Lithuanian _____ Irish _____ Italian

    _____ Latin America (Hispanic/Latino) _____ African American

    _____ Other (specify) _____

4. Education (check the one that best describes your educational level):

    _____ Did Not finish High School

    _____ High School or GED

    _____ Tech School

    _____ College Degree

    _____ Advanced Degree

    _____ Other (specify) _____

5. How many years have you lived in this community? _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your time and participation are very much appreciated.

APPENDIX C

YOUNG ADULT CHURCH ATTENDEES GUIDE QUESTIONS

Young Adult Church Attendees Guide Questions

1. Spirituality & Religion
    a. What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you view yourself as spiritual?
    b. Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so?
    c. What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power?
    d. Do you ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more meaningful to you?
    e. What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? What (other) life questions do you wonder about?
    f. Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this?

2. Church Involvement
    a. What do you think about church services? How do they make you feel?
    b. Why do you think some people attend church and others do not?
    c. How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church?
    d. How, if at all, are non-church goers different from you?

3. Community
    a. What are some primary needs in your community?
    b. Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so?

4. The Future Church
    a. If you could establish a church in your community, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)?

APPENDIX D

YOUNG ADULT NON-CHURCH ATTENDEES GUIDE QUESTIONS

Young Adult Non-church Attendees Guide Questions

1. Spirituality & Religion
    a. What does it mean to be a spiritual person and do you view yourself as spiritual?
    b. Do you view being religious differently than being spiritual? How so?
    c. What do you think about God or the existence of a higher power?
    d. Do you ever engage in spiritual practices (i.e., prayer, meditation, religious studies, or conversations about God or other spiritual matters)? What other activities are equally or more meaningful to you?
    e. What do you wonder about spiritually (i.e., things like right/wrong; morality; evil; who God is; sacred things; your purpose in life, etc.)? …What (other) life questions do you wonder about?
    f. Who has helped you grow the most in your life and how have they done this?

2. Church Involvement
    a. Have any of you ever attended a church service? What did this experience feel like for you?
    b. Why do you think some people attend church and others do not?
    c. How would you describe the kinds of people who go to church?
    d. How, if at all, are church goers different from you?

3. Community
    a. What are some primary needs in your community?
    b. Are these community needs affected by religious or spiritual practices? How so?

4. The Future Church
    a. If you could establish a church in your community, what would it look like (emphasis, practices, purpose, use of media)?

APPENDIX E

YOUNG ADULTS DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Young Adults Demographic Data Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please complete the survey below and return it to the interviewer. Please note that the information collected in this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

1. Age Category: ____ 18-20 ____ 21-25 ____ 26-29

2. My gender is: _____Male _____Female

3. Cultural Background: ____ Lithuanian ____ Irish ____ Italian

     ____ Latin America (Hispanic/Latino) ____ African American

     ____ Other (specify) _____

4. Education: (check the one that best describes your educational level)

     ____ Did Not finish High School

     ____ High School or GED

     ____ Tech School

     ____ College Degree

     ____ Advanced Degree

     ____ Other (specify) _____

5. How many years have you lived in this community? _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your time and participation are very much appreciated.

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania to explore the opinions of young adults on religious and spirituality issues. The purpose of this project is to increase the knowledge of church leaders' perception of the spiritual needs of young adults. You are invited to participate in this study since you are one of those young adults. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Participation in this study will require approximately one to two hours of your time in an interview. This meeting will consist of questions related to your opinions and experience as a young adult in this community. With your permission the conversation will be recorded using an audio recording device. You also have the right to decline to be recorded, in which case notes will be taken by the researcher. At the end of the interview, you will be asked to provide your personal contact data for purposes of future possible follow up to confirm interpretation of statements and answers. Also, demographic data such as age, gender, cultural background, and education will be collected for statistical purposes.

The information obtained from your expressed answers and/or your written response along with approximately 29 other participants will be examined and coded for both common and unique factors on spirituality and religious issues. You will be provided the opportunity to review coded responses to ensure that your identity has been protected. The information gained from participants in this study may encourage young adults and church leaders to have a better understanding of each other's spiritual perspectives.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Your name will not be placed on the recording or on the notes from your interview responses nor will your name be associated with any of the findings or released to anyone.

Your participation in the interview is <u>voluntary</u>. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the interviewer or any other adverse consequences. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and your identity will not be shared or disclosed to anyone. Pseudonyms will be used to obscure your identity and if direct quotes are used any identifying information will be removed. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential unless you indicate a desire otherwise.

If you are willing to participate in an interview, please sign the attached Voluntary Consent Form and return it to me. I will be contacting you with the day, time and location of our meeting.

Project Investigator: Faculty Supervisor:
Brunilda Martinez, Doctoral Candidate   Dr. John A. Anderson
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This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724.357.7730).

APPENDIX G

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

Voluntary Consent Form

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are and will remain completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT):_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Phone number or location where I can be reached: _____

Best days and times to reach me:_____

To be completed by investigator:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____   _____
Date   Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX H

ADVERTISEMENT FLYER

ATTENTION
VOLUNTEERS WANTED
FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

ARE YOU BETWEEN 18 TO 29 YEARS OLD?

DO YOU LIVE IN TOWN A, TOWN B OR TOWN C

WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPRESS YOUR OPINION ON RELIGIOUS ISSUES?

Bruny Martínez, graduate student at IUP, is conducting a study for her doctoral degree. All participants' names will be kept confidential. A meeting will be scheduled soon. Pizza will be provided. Please contact Bruny at (570) 462-1509 (office) or (717) 720-4064 (IUP office at Dixon Center) if you are interested in participating.