LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Effect of Essential Life Skills on an Adolescent's Ability to be a Productive Citizen

Submitted to Dr. Scott Edgar

In fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

the Doctor of Ministry Degree

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

Emmanuel Williams

April 28, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by Emmanuel Williams
All Rights Reserved

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Professor Dr. Scott Edgar, Ph.D., D. Min
Mentor Name & Title

Professor Dr. Dwight Rice, Ph.D., D. Min
Reader Name & Title

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

The Effect of Essential Life Skills on an Adolescent's Ability to be a Productive Citizen

Emmanuel Williams

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, April 28, 2022

Mentor: Dr. Scott Edgar, Ph.D., D. Min.

This effort aimed to research the need for adolescents to obtain necessary life skills and their ability to succeed after acquiring those skills. There is an evident absence of rudimentary people skills among contemporary teenagers that causes them to miss out on otherwise achievable opportunities. They also do not appreciate the chances that their mistakes afford them. Young people know and understand the implications of their lack of life skills; however, many lack the motivation to move forward and take advantage of occasions to better themselves. To find resolutions regarding this research, this writer interviewed experts, conducted student surveys, and established an academy. The academy aims to equip its participants with the life skills they need for success in the secular world. This study showed that all adolescents are not devoid of life skills. Some teens elect not to use the people skills they have been taught because it is not popular. The study also showed that parents and community leaders must be more intentional in ensuring teens have the life skills and use them.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 11
Introduction 11
Ministry Context 13
Problem Presented 18
Purpose Statement 20
Basic Assumptions 21
Definitions 22
Limitations 22
Delimitations 23
Thesis Statement 23
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 26
Literature Review 26
Responsibility for Adolescent Growth 27
Community and Parent Responsibility 28
Learning Institutions, Educators, and Educational Leader Responsibilities 31
Adolescents, Cell Phones, and Social Media 34
Cell Phones 35
Social Media 38
Adolescents and Communication 41
Effective Listening 43
Non-Verbal Communication 44
Adolescent Resilience 45
Perfectionism 47
Failure 48
Adolescent Needs for Essential Life Skills 50
Mindset 50
Adults in the School System 52
Gaming 53
Theological Foundations 54

The Image of God and the Fall of Man 55
Deuteronomy 6 58
Legacy 61
Servant Leadership 64
Theoretical Foundations 66
Positive and Negative Reinforcement 68
The Reasons Life Skills Are Necessary 70
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 74
Intervention Design 77
Implementation of the Intervention Design 81
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS 83
Adjustments 83
The Academy 84
The Experts 89
Student Surveys 92
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION 103
Some Knowledge Is Present 103
Lack of Motivation 105
Cell Phone World 107
More Mentors Needed 110
Humble Unbiased Look 112
Bibliography 117
Appendix A 124
Appendix B 125
Appendix C 126
Appendix D 127
Appendix E 128
Appendix F 130
Appendix G 134
Appendix H 134
Appendix I 138

Appendix J 141
Institutional Review Board 144

Figures

2.1 Growing Smartphone Ownership 35
2.2 YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat Popularity 37
2.3 What Teens Say About Social Media 40

Abbreviations

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*

LUSOD *Liberty University School of Divinity*

UL^2 Church *Universal Love and Life Church*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the Old Testament, God chose Israel to be His people.[1] Abraham's descendants were God's selection to be a "kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5-6). God intended Israel to be His example to the world of how blessed a nation that worshipped, acknowledged, and obeyed him could be.[2] If they obeyed God and His commands, they would not only remain His chosen people but also establish themselves as a nation that would be the envy of others, as God would always fight for them against their enemies.

Unfortunately, Israel did not adequately appreciate the privilege that God handed them. God had warned them not to become like the nations He had replaced with them. He had also admonished the people of Israel to destroy the Canaanites and not to make marriages with them because He wanted Israel not to be tempted to follow the way of their predecessors (Deut 7:2-4). They requested a monarchy to become like the nations around them, even though God was their king (1 Sam 8:5-6).[3] Time and time again, Israel also resorted to the polytheistic practices they knew angered their benefactor and violated the covenant that protected them.[4] Subsequently, their previously exclusive opportunity was taken away and given to the world through Jesus' sacrifice.

---

[1] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 958.

[2] Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 114–18.

[3] V. Phillips Long and David G. Firth, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 101.

[4] Longman III and Dillard, *An Introduction*, 185–86.

The Christian church is what God meant for the nation of Israel without the obligation of Levitical law.[5] The promise of Abraham is extended to all humankind who accept Jesus as the Son of God. Specifically, salvation is given to those who acknowledge His sacrifice, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of His Father, according to Romans 10:9. Before Jesus, man had to depend on the righteousness of another man or woman to approach God for him. Jesus became humanity's high priest to eliminate the need for a human middleman.

The transgression of Adam and Eve created the need for man to learn how to approach God.[6] Mosaic Law met that requirement, but it also demanded retribution for sin through a blood sacrifice.[7] In order to be pleasing to God, the sacrifice had to be pure and without blemish; it could have no defects. Jesus came to Earth as the ultimate earthly representation of the 613 laws of Moses and allowed Himself to be sacrificed to fulfill the same.[8] His sacrifice negated man's obligation to Mosaic Law and created the opportunity for man to approach God through Him.

According to the Great Commission, the previous paragraph encompasses the Gospel that all people in the Christian church are expected to preach and help expand the Kingdom of God (Matt 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:46-49, Acts 1:4-8).[9] Jesus was precise about the mission of His followers and the Christian church regardless of denomination. His followers should carry the Gospel to their communities and circles through the examples of their lives and

---

[5] MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*, The John MacArthur Pastor's Library (Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 50–52.

[6] Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2011), 87–88.

[7] Elmer L. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning, 2008), 221.

[8] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 704–5.

[9] A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 163.

testimonies.[10] Their home church should serve as their headquarters and place where they receive encouragement to recharge them to go out into the world.[11]

The expectations of the modern church have shifted, and in some cases, the makeup of churches has changed.[12] Some churches are dying because their youth population is slim or non-existent.[13] Other churches are blessed with many teenagers, and these churches must prepare themselves to equip their youth not only for ministry but for life outside of the church. Adolescents are not merely the church of the future; they are the future of society. They are the people who will lead future generations and impart the teachings from this current generation.

This effort will contain insights and an in-depth look into the plight of the youth at Universal Love and Life Church (UL^2 Church) in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Their need for basic essential life skills has been observed, but the leaders at UL^2 Church must be strategic and intentional in their attempt(s) to equip their church's youth for the future.

Ministry Context

Located just outside Atlanta, Georgia, Stone Mountain is a diverse community with a peculiar history. It is a part of Metropolitan Atlanta, a collection of communities, villages, and growing cities that make up the Atlanta metropolis. This small community is unique because it has a corporate side, called Stone Mountain Village, and an unincorporated side located outside the town but still recognized as Stone Mountain. The unincorporated side of Stone Mountain is

[10] Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 961–62.

[11] Ibid., 974–76.

[12] John D. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History Volume Two: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day the Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 819.

[13] Ibid., 821.

noticeably urban, with many commercial buildings and retail shopping spaces. The village is purposely kept and maintained as a rural area inside an area that could have readily adopted the urban look by which it is surrounded.

Stone Mountain, GA, is named for the huge granite outcropping that shares the same name. The previously mentioned rock is a former quarry and the primary entity that differentiates Stone Mountain from the rest of the communities in Metropolitan Atlanta. It is a colossal geographic monadnock that dominates the background of Stone Mountain, GA, and some other parts of Metropolitan Atlanta. It also contains an amusement park, the most visited attraction in the state of Georgia.[14] The rock contains the largest Confederate monument in the world, with Confederate Generals Lee and Jackson, along with Confederate President Jefferson Davis, engraved in one of its sides.[15] This isolated mountain was also made more famous by its mention in Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech.[16]

Shermantown, a nineteenth-century African American shantytown named for Union General William Tecumseh Sherman, is a part of Stone Mountain Village. Once, all African Americans in Stone Mountain had to live in Shermantown because of the segregation that dominated the Southern states.[17] This part of the village was where newly freed slaves searched

[14] "Stone Mountain Park," *Explore Georgia*, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.exploregeorgia.org/stone-mountain/entertainment/theme-parks/stone-mountain-park.

[15] Benjamin Powers, "In the Shadow of Stone Mountain," *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 4, 2018, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/shadow-stone-mountain-180968956/.

[16] Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream," Stanford, The Martin Luther King Research and Education Institute, accessed January 24, 2021, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/i-have-dream-address-delivered-march-washington-jobs-and-freedom.

[17] Powers, "In the Shadow."

for work after the Civil War. They often ended up working in the quarry as laborers at the base of Stone Mountain.[18] Many professional athletes can trace their roots to Shermantown.[19]

Stone Mountain's ties to the Venable family and the Ku Klux Klan are a part of a distant past that scars the village but is a significant part of the history of Stone Mountain. Even though it is responsible for a substantial amount of communal hurt, the Venable family was directly responsible for much of the early economic growth of Stone Mountain Village. The Venables purchased the quarry in 1876 for $70,000 as the Southern Granite Company. They continued to exert their influence, which culminated in the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915.[20] The mayorship of Stone Mountain Village was also a direct result of their economic influence, which lasted until the late 20th century.

The current demographic makeup of Stone Mountain is one of immense diversity and high familial transience. Many families use the area as a stopover point to survey the Atlanta Metropolitan region and find areas where they would prefer to reside. Currently, the majority of Stone Mountain is 78.1% Black or African American. The ethnicities that make up the remaining population are 18.5% Caucasian, 3.4% Hispanic or Latino, and 0.7% Asian.[21]

The median income in Stone Mountain is $44,245,[22] which is significantly lower than the median income in Georgia ($58,700).[23] The median value of the owned homes in Stone

---

[18] Powers, "In the Shadow."

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] "Quick Facts Stone Mountain City, Georgia," United States Census Bureau, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/stonemountaincitygeorgia.

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Quick Facts Georgia," United States Census Bureau, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/GA.

Mountain is $125,000,[24] which is also lower than that of the state of Georgia ($176,000).[25] The percentage of high school graduates in Stone Mountain who are 25 years of age or older (88.6%[26]) is slightly elevated compared with the state of Georgia (87.1%).[27] The percentage of people with bachelor's degrees in Stone Mountain who are 25 years of age or older is 25.8%,[28] which is slightly lower than that of Georgia (31.3%).[29]

Universal Love and Life Church (UL^2 Church) was strategically nestled inside Village Square Complex in Stone Mountain, Georgia. This complex is located on Memorial Drive, a busy section of road that stretches from Stone Mountain to downtown Atlanta. However, the ministry closed its physical doors and is currently operating over the Zoom and Band application spaces to stay operational and provide the safety that its leaders believe is necessary during this pandemic. Before closing its physical doors, it was surrounded by a variety of churches pastored by men and women of both African and Caucasian descent. As a result, UL^2 Church is affiliated with pastors and believers from every continent except Antarctica and strives to use those networks to better its global mission.

A church is often viewed as a ministry located within the four walls of a specific edifice. The church, however, is the sum of believers united in building the Kingdom of God on this Earth.[30] God wants His children to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt 10:6). He

---

[24] “Quick Facts Stone Mountain.”

[25] "Quick Facts Georgia.”

[26] “Quick Facts Stone Mountain.”

[27] “Quick Facts Georgia.”

[28] “Quick Facts Stone Mountain.”

[29] “Quick Facts Georgia.”

wants His church to be innovative and look for ways to reach everyone, not just the people in the local community. Therefore, the mission of Universal Love and Life Church is to share Jesus with the world by moving out into the fields of harvest and compelling men and women to come to Him through exhibiting love and the holistic Gospel that He has provided for all who believe in Him. The world is the stage for believers, and all who believe in Jesus must comply with the Great Commission, which is not confined to the four walls of any building.

Church leaders must view themselves as influential members of the communities in which God has placed them.[31] The comprehension and embracing of the aforementioned fact should cause leaders to understand that they are responsible for living right and helping those over whom they have been given charge to do the same. A pastor's charge does not just apply to the adults in his congregation but also to the youth. Leaders must be responsible for helping rear the youth over whom they have a charge in the right direction. Young people learn from the people they respect. Most often, the people they respect are their parents, their pastor, and the teachers who have earned their favor.

UL^2 Church does not have the same unfortunate testimony as that of so many churches whose youth population is either non-existent or seriously waning.[32] In many cases, adults and young people have outgrown many of the traditional beliefs and ways of the Christian church (no matter the denomination) and are yearning for what they feel is a new approach. They desire a methodology that speaks to the entire man/woman in a holistic, non-traditional way.[33] Young

---

[30] Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions,* 163.

[31] MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically,* 61–62.

[32] Woodbridge and James III, *Church History,* 821.

[33] Phillip Hughes, "Why Young People Are Leaving the Church," *Pointers: Bulletin of the Christian Research Association* 25, no. 1 (March 2015): 4–5.

people want to be able to ask questions about the Bible and its history. Pacifying answers are no longer sufficient for them.

Because the pastor of UL^2 Church is an educator at the local high school, God has graced him with the unique ability to catch the attention of young people. As a result, adolescents grace UL^2 Church's doors for Bible study on Wednesdays in shocking numbers. Most of the attendees at UL^2 Church are young people between the ages of fourteen and eighteen who are hungry for God. The other people who complete the makeup of UL^2 Church are the pastor and his family and some influential members of the Stone Mountain and Covington communities.

UL^2 Church is very young, and its leaders realize that it is in a unique but wonderful situation. Since most of the congregation is composed of young people, the pastor has shifted the ministry's attention to preparing and equipping the youth of his ministry for the world into which they are going. Several youths are severely unequipped because they lack the home situation(s) to prepare them for the better. The youth of UL^2 Church often come from single-family homes, and too often, the father is not in the picture. In rare cases, the mother is out of the picture, but in most cases, the father is absent and does not realize whom he is supposed to be to his child. In other situations, the youths of UL^2 Church have not received the essential basic skills they need to be successful in the world into which they will all move upon graduation from high school.

Problem Presented

The problem is that many UL^2 Church youths do not appear to have the necessary life skills to be productive citizens. Many of the skills that were previously nurtured at home are no longer cultivated because adolescent homes no longer look the way they did forty years ago.[34]

[34] Susan Golombok, *Modern Families: Parents and Families in New Family Forms* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–3.

Unfortunately, many of the parents of the youth in UL[2] Church are so busy with their personal issues that they neglect to give their children the attention they need. These parents do not realize that their refusal to prepare their children appropriately for the world presents a serious dilemma that morphs into other problems. Society—not the parents—often ends up dealing with these symptoms and issues.

The basic life skills needed for teenagers to be successful should be taught at home. Parents should be the ones to provide their children with the love, discipline, and guidance that they need to become the men and women God means for them to be eventually.[35] If the parents do not take the time to be who they should be to their children, the church, as community leaders, should be ready to pick up the slack. In fact, whether parents rear their children in a biblical way or not, the church should always be a shining example and strive to have a positive impact the youth of their community. The Christian church can no longer wait to see what other organizations will do; it must act.[36] Children and adolescents cannot be neglected, for they are the future and tend to damage society and themselves if they are ignored.

Mental health issues are on the rise because some of the families who are most at risk for such difficulties often do not engage in programs that will either prevent them or mitigate existing diagnoses.[37] Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among teenagers, according to the World Health Organization. Adolescents want answers; they need focus. Teenagers need genuine love and want to belong to something that they feel is worthwhile, something that will

---

[35] Tim Clinton, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 182–83.

[36] Ken Ham, *Six Days: The Age of the Earth and the Decline of the Church* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2013), 25.

[37] Megan Snair, *The State of Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Children and Youth in the United States: Proceedings of a Workshop* (Washington, D.C: National Academies Press, 2020), 14.

help them be better grownups when the time comes. They are not irrational in their quest(s) for attention. They want things that should naturally be given to them. However, adults now, as opposed to when this author was growing up, are more selfish than they have ever been. Too many cases of misguided youth prove that children often are not the primary focus of modern-day parents.

The difference between adolescents who have the necessary life skills to succeed and those who do not is now more evident than ever. Something as simple as an introduction will expose most teenagers' experience with necessary life skills, or the lack thereof. Many teenagers avoid eye contact and will not give a good, firm handshake because they have not been taught the importance of the same. Effective communication is an issue with adolescents because its importance is not often realized until later, and sometimes teenagers' parents are not good communicators.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Doctor of Ministry Thesis is to equip the youths at Universal Love and Life Church with the life skills necessary to be productive citizens. The pastor of a church is responsible for equipping the adults of his ministry and at least having a program in place that equips the youth of his ministry to be effective in ministry and the world. The purpose statement above is one of the essential functions of a holistic ministry.

Churches of yesterday did not have to put the time into their youth that the modern Christian church must, in part because the home situation of the adolescent thirty years ago was much different. Parents believed in making sure their children possessed the necessary life skills to succeed as part of the legacy they would leave for their own progeny. Children were better

prepared to go into the world because the rules accepted by society then were different. The rules of yesteryear were more based on family and keeping the family unit together.

Parents used to care more about how their family was perceived. Communities intentionally raised children a certain way during the time of the rearing of this author. If this writer were caught in public doing something he had no business doing, he would be disciplined by the person who caught him, followed by further discipline when he returned home because his parents would have already received a phone call from their community "friend." This type of discipline may sound disturbing to the modern generation, but it worked because children and teenagers knew that they had more eyes on them and more people to whom they had to be accountable.

Many opponents of yesterday's discipline do not understand its benefits or the difference between discipline and abuse. The purpose of discipline is to teach its recipients that pain is attached to bad decisions. Abuse arises from mental sicknesses, unresolved generational curses, and the refusal of one generation to cancel the evils with which they were violated. Some people do not appreciate the blessing of being able to have children and therefore do not adequately raise them. Others recognize the miracles that children are and give them the love that should be a natural occurrence.

Basic Assumptions

A basic assumption of this effort is that the youths who will be studied come from single-family homes where either the mother, the father, or both are not present. As the modern-day occurrence of a traditional family is a rare event, this author does not expect to have many children from typical two-parent homes to be a part of this research. Additionally, children from

traditional families often receive the gift of essential life skills from their parents. Therefore, they will likely not have the same need for this effort.

The section of Stone Mountain in which Universal Love and Life Church is situated is home to various family makeups, but most are single-parent homes where the father is not present. Many of the mothers of these adolescents want their children surrounded by mentors who will equip them with the tools they need to be successful. However, it is exceptionally cumbersome for many of them adequately to vet the people their children desire to be around because they are the sole providers in their households and must work. Because of their work schedules, such parents are often too fatigued to spend the necessary time doing background checks. After moving to the Covington area, this author learned that many youths there face the same problems with which those from Stone Mountain struggle to cope.

Definitions

In this work, it should be expected that this writer will attempt to steer away from overly complex words and phrases. This researcher will strive to use language that is both easily understood and academic at the same time. Some popular phrases with the adolescents that this author serves may be used. Every effort, however, will be made to clarify any statement or phrase that could be taken ambiguously. If there is anything else that needs more explanation, this author will attempt to do so within the text of this effort.

Limitations

Some aspects of the youths' lives will not be researchable, as this study will focus on the relationship of the researcher to the studied youths and how comfortable they are speaking about their history. It is unfortunate, but many adolescents in low socioeconomic areas have been

subjected to various abuses of their confidence by people they have trusted at different times in their lives. Many of these same youths have observed situations and circumstances that should be reserved for adults. A disturbing number of these adolescents have seen too much too early. As a result, trust and respect must be earned and not expected. The latter fact is a significant difference from times past because the younger generation was once taught to give respect to the older generation and their elders. The converse of the previous statement is now an accepted fact. If mediation is attempted before respect is earned, the intervention will not have the desired effect and, therefore, will have been a waste of time.

Delimitations

This study will be limited to the immediate area in and around the former physical location of Universal Love and Life Church in Stone Mountain and the Covington, Georgia, areas. The church is young and does not have many members who reside outside of the apartment complex within walking distance from the church and the houses that are close to Stone Mountain High School. The youths in Covington also reside close to the school at which this author teaches. Most youths who frequent Universal Love and Life Church go to the local high school where this researcher teaches or went to a high school at which this writer taught. Others are invited, but they do not represent the faithful teenagers who attend services weekly. This writer will limit his findings to those representing the Stone Mountain and Covington communities. Both are in Georgia, and teens participating in the academy are from one of these areas.

Thesis Statement

If the youth at Universal Love and Life Church learn essential life skills, then they will be productive members of society. The immediate goal of UL^2 Church is to prepare its youth to be

successful in their secular lives by cultivating the necessary skills that they need to be productive. The church must be responsible because the modern-day parent is often not able to do what is necessary. The underlying reason that many parents do not nurture the essential life skills their children need is not as important as the need for someone to step up and pick up the ball, so to speak. Otherwise, society continues in the same downward spiral that started with the gradual disappearance of the traditional family.

Everyone in the church must be taught and equipped to be effective role models.[38] The church is responsible for its youths and must establish the necessary programs to meet the needs of its teenage parishioners. In general, the corporate world does not care about the lack of mentors or parents in an adolescent's life; many managers in the corporate world are solely concerned about whether or not the person they have hired can be practical and produce the desired results. Young people with essential life skills understand what corporate managers expect and are better prepared to meet the demands of the same.

There was once a time when all adults took an active role in rearing all children and teenagers. Children were not allowed to get away with anything untoward because the watchful eyes of the community were always on them. As a result, children were better behaved and more cognizant of their actions outside of their homes. It was important how they and their family were perceived. Thus, they were watched by the adults in their community and were also helped and given tools and nuggets of wisdom by adults to help them be successful. Now, because of certain laws and the cynical nature of parents in many communities, the latitude that was once given has been rescinded. If a measure of latitude still exists, it is simply a measure.

---

[38] MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically,* 55.

All adults and parents in a community, whether they want to admit it or not, bear some responsibility for the success or failure of the teens in that community. There is a tendency for some people to think that since they are not directly responsible for young people and their wherewithal to do better, those individuals' actions do not affect them. However, everyone's actions ultimately affect the whole. The world eventually pays for the action or inaction of those who know better and those who are ignorant of the fact. Selfish actions hurt everyone, and there is no way to change that fact. All leaders and adults must find themselves doing something, no matter how big or small, to mitigate the disparities of the current generation.

Adolescents who are not prepared for the world often find themselves jobless or getting their hours cut. Depending on their home situation, they look for another job or resort to other nefarious actions to survive. Because of the disposition of modern-day society, teenagers seem to worry less about keeping their jobs than their social media accounts. Social media is their lifeblood; they are lost without it because they are nobodies without it. They do not realize that their self-esteem is tied to the status of their social media accounts. Because most things that are viewed as important can be achieved virtually through gadgets and cell phones, the essential basic skills like punctuality, manners, and effective communication are often lacking or simply viewed as obsolete. Teenagers and adults must understand that everything about the traditions of yesterday was not wrong. There is no substitute for basic essential life skills.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

In ideal cases, adolescents are nurtured and even groomed for success. Most of these young people often come from good families where both mom and dad are present, have good jobs, and understand the importance of being productive citizens. These parents also realize their responsibility to raise children who are positive members of society. These children and teenagers learn the essential life skills and receive the tools they need to be productive at a young age. In some cases, they even have mentors and communities that guarantee their success if they follow a path their parents attempted to determine before they were born. These children understand the idea of legacy and its importance. They are often employed in their parents' company at a young age and left an inheritance by their parents if they do well.

Some young people who come from single-parent homes are nurtured and groomed for success. These young people are a rarity in that the single parent must be efficient at being both parents and have someone who does not mind standing in for the absent parent. There must be an intentional effort by these parents to provide the stability that would naturally occur in a traditional situation when both parents understand their roles in the child's life. If a child is born into a traditional family, and either of the parents is not cognizant of who he or she should be to the child, the ability of that child to succeed would also be at risk.

In other cases, the plight of numerous teenagers is one of extreme uncertainty. Many come from broken homes where the mom, dad, or both parents in severe cases, are absent.[39] Other children and teenagers find themselves in foster homes where they do not have the

[39] Thomas K. Babalis, Yota Xanthacou, and Maria Kaila, eds., *Single-Parenting in the 21st Century: Perceptions, Issues and Implications*, Family Issues in the 21st century (Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2018).

expectations that caring parents would provide. Unfortunately, many of these children and teenagers do not have the pleasure of having mentors and communities that actively support their futures. These teens often receive lessons about survival for the present at a young age, not preparation for future success because the knowledge is either withheld or absent altogether.[40]

There are also many teens who are lethargic and unworried about the future, no matter their background. In such cases, if these youngsters are successful, their triumphs are not rooted in the cultivation of their foundation but in their sheer will and determination not to continue the negative cycle in which they were conceived or found themselves. This literature review covers five themes that impact the ability of adolescents and young adults to be successful.

Responsibility for Adolescent Growth

One constant theme in the literature review was adolescents' responsibility for their own success. Adolescents must learn to take responsibility for their personal growth and learning.[41] In their work, *Adulting 101: #Wisdom4Life*, the authors make a simple but powerful claim: "Winners take responsibility, losers blame others."[42] Adolescents must learn that their success is a product of those they allow to be around them at some point in their lives. Their success also stems from their willingness to take ownership of their learning and progress.[43] It can never be

[40] Megan M. Holland and Stephanie DeLuca, "Why Wait Years to Become Something Low-Income African American Youth and the Costly Career Search in For-Profit Schools," *Sociology of Education* 89, no. 4 (October 2016): 263.

[41] Mark McConville, *Failure to Launch: Why Your Twentysomething Hasn't Grown Up...and What to Do About It* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2020), 64.

[42] Josh Burnette and Pete Hardesty, *Adulting 101: #Wisdomforlife* (Savage, Minnesota: Broadstreet Publishing, 2018), 147.

[43] McConville, *Failure to Launch*, 54.

acceptable for teenagers solely to blame their communities for life's failures or allow the media to distort their perceptions of personal responsibility.[44]

The ideology that adolescents are responsible for their growth is perhaps one of the most challenging concepts to grasp. Teens love to say that they are "grown" when they are being challenged and retreat toward being a child when an obstacle presents too much of a test. Parents aid them in this pursuit when their speech further confuses their children. In one breath, they will tell their teen or young adult to "grow up." In another breath, parents confuse comforting their adolescents with treating them like children.

Teenagers and their growth depend on the support that their parents and community provide for them to grow consistently. Adolescents should be given reasonable responsibilities and be taught how to handle them properly. Teenagers will strive to meet the expectations of their parents and others that they respect. However, if there is no expectation or confusing expectations, adolescents will do what they think their parent wants. In some cases, teens will do what they want and, when questioned, tell the adult that they did not know what they wanted. Taking care of one's responsibilities is a sign of maturity, and teens will observe the standard. Parents cannot say one thing and do another, as their children, in most cases, are replicas of them and the behaviors that they practice.

Community and Parent Responsibility

As previously stated, the responsibility for the success of adolescents was once the responsibility of the community in which they grew up.[45] Every adult in the community was a

---

[44] William Damon, *Failing Liberty 101: How We Are Leaving Young Americans Unprepared for Citizenship in a Free Society* (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2011), 101.

[45] Christopher Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood--and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2016), 24.

stakeholder in the success of the young, and each gladly played his or her role. Most children and young adults were too scared to embarrass their families by being lazy or unable to keep a job. The expectation was that one would be of good, moral character and play the role that one was supposed to play. Boys learned to work and be responsible for a family; girls learned how to cook, clean, and care for the children. All adults sought to make sure children and young adults were on the "right" path.

Understandably, some of the previous paragraph is antiquated, traditional thinking. In some cases, nowadays, men and women still employ this thinking in their households. However, it is necessary to note that society does not look the way it did during those times, as some women in modern society are the breadwinners, and their husbands are stay-at-home-dads. In other cases, both parents have careers. So, children are stuck fending for themselves and learning a lot of the things they used to be taught by their parents on their own. Some learn the lessons they need from self-selected mentors who teach them the right ways to do things. Other children and adolescents learn from their friends, who mainly teach shortcuts and the wrong ways to accomplish things.

In *Empowering Black Youth of Promise: Education and Socialization in the Village-minded Black Church*, the authors assert that adolescent responsibility requires "[v]illage-mindedness that reflects child-centeredness to improve the quality of life and life chances of youth" and "is a societal-level responsibility that requires individual-level reflection and action as well as the desire and ability to identify and challenge systemic factors that stymie these goals."[46] In other words, all elders and parents in every community must embrace the idea that it

[46] Sandra L. Barnes and Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Empowering Black Youth of Promise: Education and Socialization in the Village-Minded Black Church*, Routledge Research in Education 169 (New York: Routledge, 2016), 66.

is the responsibility of all adults to help provide their young with the essential life skills that they will need to be productive. There can be no exception, as adults are responsible for leaving the world better than they found it.

The African saying, "I am because we are," expresses this sense of connection and responsibility for the group.[47] This phrase describes the ideology that all choices made in a community affect everyone in that community and others. Unfortunately, many of today's teens grow up with the false ideology that they can make selfish decisions without negatively affecting those who love them. This behavior is learned from either their parents or their guardians. Additionally, everyone who lives in a community is impacted either negatively or positively by the decisions of those who live there, whether they know each other or not. Depending on the influence of the decision-maker, sometimes people who reside outside of the aforementioned community are also immediately positively or negatively affected by those choices.

In many cases, the idea of the holistic family is non-existent, as single parents no longer have the time to see to the learning of their adolescents and young adults. The demand for the parent to work for necessities negates the ability of single parents to stay home with their children to give them the attention they need. These children's essential life lessons also often get lost in their parents' unbalanced schedules. When they get home, these parents are often too tired to teach their kids the necessary things that many feel others should.

Regardless of the complexities of life that consume the lives of contemporary parents, they must realize their responsibility to take care of their children and make sure they receive an adequate amount of healthy attention.[48] It is no secret that parents' lives now and the lives of

---

[47] Lisa Delpit, *"Multiplication Is for White People": Raising Expectations for Other People's Children* (New York: Perseus Distribution, 2012), 28.

parents when this writer was growing up are significantly different in many cases. Various adults find themselves raising children alone and navigating all of the problems that were meant for two parents. They also discover that taking care of themselves and their children is a daunting task, especially if they have more than one child. The previous fact affects the mental health of many parents in a negative way, as they try to find ways to mitigate the consistent pressure that they feel to be who they should be to their children.[49] In turn, some of these parents present a selfish outlook, for which their children suffer and are often neglected.

Numerous variables in society work against the environment in which modern teenagers find themselves. Some people who live in communities cannot be trusted to have the best interests of the young people at heart. Hence, the previously mentioned responsibility for the community discipline and mentorship element falls to a select few in most communities.[50] The positive support for structure and discipline from which many children in high- and low-socioeconomic communities once benefited is now sporadic at best. Laws against discipline, as well as overprotective, part-time parents, have frightened some would-be mentors away.

Learning Institutions, Educators, and Educational Leader Responsibilities

Learning institutions must also accept responsibility for their part in the success of adolescents and young adults.[51] In *The Forgotten Curriculum: an RTI Approach for Nurturing Essential Life Skills*, the author states:

> The first step in designing a system of supports that nurtures the mindsets, social skills, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors within students—behaviors

---

[48] Jodi Gold, *Screen-smart Parenting: How to Find Balance and Benefit in Your Child's Use of Social Media, Apps, and Digital Devices* (London: Guilford Press, 2015), 29.

[49] Babalis, Xanthacou, and Kaila, *Single-Parenting*, 78.

[50] Damon, *Failing Liberty*, 43.

[51] Emdin, *For White Folks*, 55.

> that are so critical to their success—is for educators to accept responsibility for this critical but challenging task. Parents and communities can positively shape student behaviors, and schools should complement these supports.[52]

Educators must understand that they are as much a part of child-rearing as families and community leaders. Teachers are also responsible for shaping the understandings and mentalities of their students.[53] Educators have more control over how their students think and what they learn than they often know. Students' attitudes about school and learning are affected by the attitudes and enthusiasm of their instructors. If their instructors are lethargic and irritable, students follow suit. Children and adolescents know that teachers get paid to do their jobs, but they cannot feel like teachers are only working in schools to get a paycheck. Students will react negatively if they feel they are merely the source of someone's income.

Educational leaders also must step up and fight for a curriculum that meets students where they are. Many of these leaders know and understand that America's education system is broken and drastically in need of an overhaul.[54] So many students want access to new programs in their schools that they will need moving forward into adulthood. Much attention in schools is placed on standardized tests and the resulting data. However, students do not care about standardized tests; educational leaders do. In fact, standardized test scores can be the difference between a school leader keeping his or her job and being terminated.

---

[52] Chris Weber, *Behavior: The Forgotten Curriculum: an RTI Approach for Nurturing Essential Life Skills* (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree, 2018), 6.

[53] John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 182.

[54] Anthony Muhammad, *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree, 2018), 5.

Government officials use standardized tests to determine student performance.[55] They also use reports that document attendance and discipline and teachers' and parents' feelings about the overall school environment and standardized test scores to make district and state decisions concerning education. Because of the wiring of contemporary students, government officials must learn to use a different approach concerning the positive influence of students and their desire to go to school. This knowledge cannot be obtained from the distant data that standardized tests and reports provide. This data, in most cases, is not indicative of the students whom those educational leaders are graced to serve. The previous approach is one that is reactive, not proactive. It is irrational to expect adolescents to be proactive when the adults who are their leaders are reactive.

Educational leaders and government officials must get out of their offices and spend more authentic time in schools to glean the information they need to make better decisions. By authentic time, this writer means the time not spent as "Representative So-and-so" or "Superintendent So-and-so," but as a concerned adult or parent who wants to make things better for teachers and students. New perspectives and ideas do not occur without a change in one's daily activities.

In some districts, government officials may be more involved; however, in the four districts where this author has worked as an educator, he has only seen government officials in schools fewer than ten times collectively. This is symbolic of the school policies and curricula that this author has seen employed. They reflect obsolete ideals and antiquated thinking. New laws have been put in place to repeal this kind of thinking, but many school leaders still hang on

[55] Muhammad, *Transforming School Culture,* 81.

to it.[56] However, for change to happen, genuine efforts must occur to move away from the old way of thinking and adjust to what is going on with adolescents and their mindsets.

It is also important to reiterate that educators and schools are not solely responsible for the success of teenagers. The aforementioned entities must work together to benefit adolescents in contemporary society. When one or most of the entities mentioned above are absent or do not care, teenagers suffer. Society does as well. As an educator, this writer has personally experienced the frustration that arises from some parents neglecting their responsibilities and placing them instead on their children's local schools. Parents cannot view schools as a "glorified babysitting service/one-stop-shop." All entities in an adolescent's life must view themselves as vested partners in the success of that teen.

Adolescents, Cell Phones, and Social Media

In recent years, cell phones and technological gadgets have become a serious contender for everyone's time.[57] The tempters of yesterday (rotary phones, letters, pagers) are viewed as archaic and obsolete. In fact, most teens do not know how a rotary phone looks, and they laugh at pagers. Androids and iPhones rule the day. Almost anywhere one goes, mostly everyone is looking down, scrolling through timelines or adamantly texting someone who has aroused their emotion(s) in one way or the other. Family nights out were once about family time and needed communication or parents learning and bonding with their children. Nowadays, parents and teenagers alike are primarily concerned with their Instagram profiles and TikTok videos. Parents

[56] Douglas B. Reeves, *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria: ASCD, 2020), 11.

[57] Princess Marie Chantal of Greece, Tory Burch, and Perri Klass, *Manners Begin at Breakfast: Modern Etiquette for Families* (London: Vendome Press, 2020), 43–44.

are often complicit in the cell phone habits of their children because youths emulate the behaviors that they see in those they respect and love.

Cell Phones

Mobile technology has been around for much longer than most people know.[58] These types of phones were once an exclusive privilege for the elite, as this service was extremely expensive.[59] Everyone did not have them because they either did not have the money to own one or did not know that the technology existed. In addition, ordinary people in the late 1940s had other concerns, such as bouncing back from World War II and whatever effect the war had on their families.

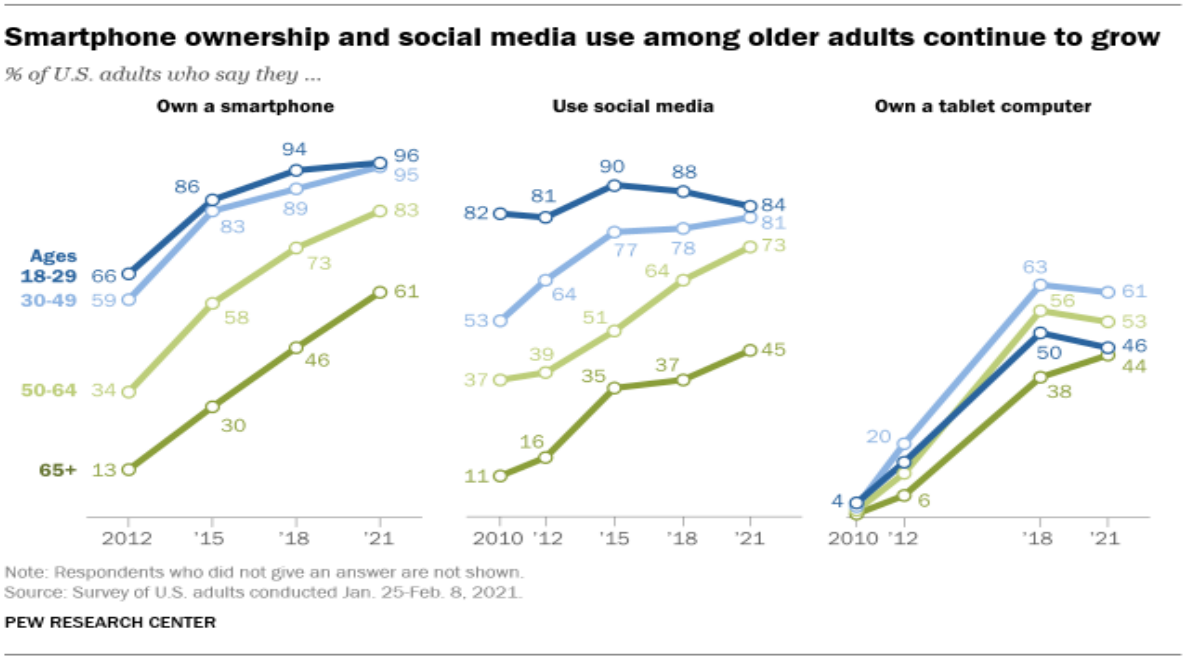

Figure 2.1 *Growing Smartphone Ownership.* "Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The opinions expressed herein, including any implications for policy, are those of the author and not of Pew Research Center." Used by permission from Pew Research Center.

[58] Guy Klemens, *The Cell Phone: The History and Technology of the Gadget That Changed the World* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2010), 45.

[59] Ibid.

As seen in the graph above, almost everyone owns a cell phone, including the sixty-five-year-old grandmother who may know how to use her telephone even better than her grandchildren.[60] Technology is a growing phenomenon amongst all age groups. According to a recent survey from April 2021, 97% of American adults own a cell phone and at least 85% own smartphones.[61] Cell phones are a staple of today's society because they are easy, convenient, and overwhelmingly popular. Everyone teens look up to has one, and they view those who do not have a cell phone as someone who does not appreciate technology. Subsequently, that person is viewed as someone who is "lame."

According to the same survey, 100% of adolescents and young adults between the ages of 18-and 29 own a cell phone, with 96% of those phones being smartphones.[62] The survey does not mention the ages of 13-17, but it is safe to assume that most of the teenagers who are not mentioned also have access to cell phones. The idea of not having a cell phone nowadays is almost inconceivable to most people because so much of people's lives are contained within their cellular devices. There is a cell phone application for practically anything that anyone wants to accomplish.

This author can attest to the fact that most adolescents who are in his classes own cell phones because they are a consistent disturbance in class. Students often have no concept of the fact that they are being rude when their teachers are trying to give them instruction and they

---

[60] Michelle Faverio, "Share of those 65 and older who are tech users has grown in the past decade," Pew Research Center, January 13, 2022, accessed February 27, 2022, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/01/13/share-of-those-65-and-older-who-are-tech-users-has-grown-in-the-past-decade/.

[61] "Mobile fact sheet," Pew Research Center, April 2021, accessed February 2022, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/.

[62] Ibid.

refuse to put their phones down. This writer has witnessed when the latter is true many times that the teenager is watching entertaining videos on YouTube or reading messages on Instagram or Snapchat, which are "the most popular platforms among teens."[63] Other times they are cheating by looking up answers to difficult questions on Twitter, Google, or other browsing services.[64] It has been disheartening at times when this writer knew that he was disseminating information that his students were going to need, and they were too busy on their phones to pay attention.

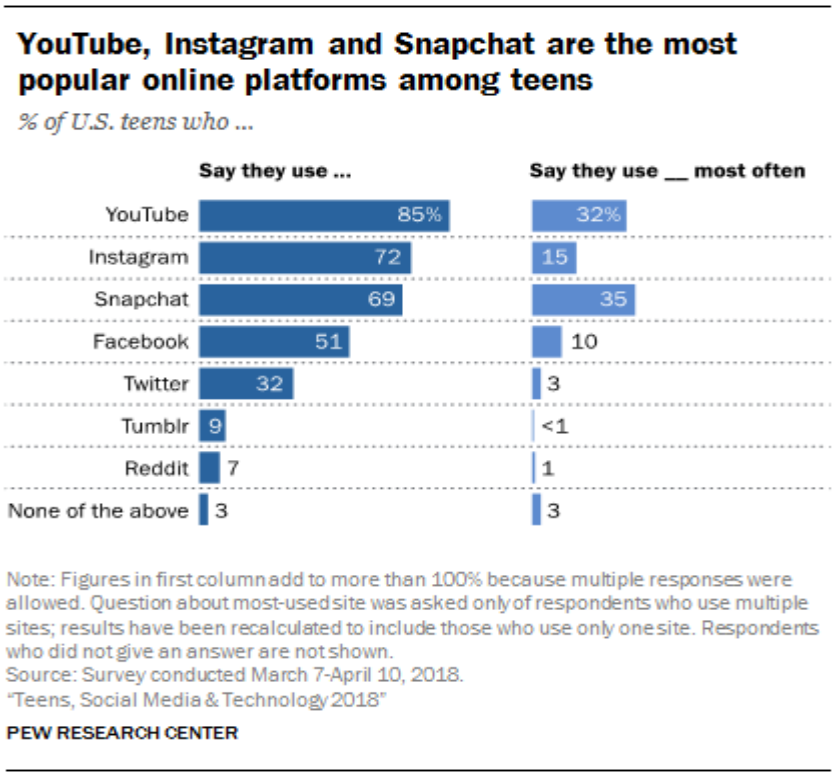

Figure 2.2 *YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat Popularity.* "Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The opinions expressed herein, including any implications for policy, are those of the author and not of Pew Research Center." Used by permission from Pew Research Center.

[63] Monica Anderson and Jingjing Jiang, "Teens, social media and technology 2018," Pew Research Center, May 2018, accessed February, 2022, http://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/.

[64] Anonymous, "Cheating the System," *Girls' Life* 24, no. 3 (December 2017 January 2018).

Social Media

The popularization of the internet and the advent of social networking opportunities have created a world that is continually supported by electricity and unlimited data plans.[65] This setting is the world in which today's teens are born and function with an efficiency that is mind-boggling to most adults who learned to communicate with paper, pen, and rotary telephones. If any of those adults were a part of this author's generation, they benefited from cordless phones and the technological advances of the internet and cell phones. However, none of the technological advances from this writer's generation remotely compare to the technology that this generation enjoys.

Social media has been described as "one of the beautiful messes in the world today."[66] There are pros and cons of different social networking sites. For instance, older users take advantage of these sites to catch up with people they have not seen for years. Social networks alleviate the necessity for people to chat in person or go through all of the sacrifices that may or may not be necessary for people to reconnect and even reconcile in some cases. These sites are also highly convenient because most are available through cell phones; desktop computers are no longer necessary. Seemiller states, "Ninety-four percent of Internet users have at least one account on a social media platform, meaning nearly all contribute to the Web 2.0 format through consuming and creating content."[67]

---

[65] Jean M. Twenge, *IGen: Why Today's super-connected Kids Are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy? And Completely Unprepared for Adulthood: and What That Means for the Rest of Us* (New York: Atria Books, 2018), 50.

[66] Tony Ryan, *The Next Generation: Preparing Today's Kids for an Extraordinary Future* (Milton, Australia: John Wiley and Sons, Incorporated, 2018), 81.

[67] Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z: A Century in the Making* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 73.

A major pro of social media is that some teens also use social media for positive reasons and avoid the ever-present negativity across their social media platforms. Bradley writes, "Much like an ocean reef, a teenager's social network provides a vast diversity of interaction, a wealthy source of learning and growth."[68] Some youngsters even create groups to which they invite their friends, and they keep up with school events, sporting events, or social events this way. They do not have to be physically present with their friends to know what is going on.

Another pro of social media is that it provides a method of communication. Cell phones and social media make it possible for a person to connect with people they know in a matter of seconds. Through different social media platforms, it is possible to send messages and even make video calls. When this author was growing up, the closest one could get to this type of communication was a letter, a telephone, or a pager. Cell phone technology had not yet reached the plateau that teenagers and adults now enjoy.

A major con of social media that adversely affects teens is that it does not encourage individuality.[69] Today's adolescents face irrational pressures to "measure up to" what is popular. Their followers on social media sites are determined by how cool they are to other teenagers. Often, young people who have no followers on social media face cyberbullying or are called "lame" by their counterparts.[70] These teens, in a lot of cases, also tend to be unhealthily withdrawn and to live in a world that is figuratively "stabilized" by their ability or lack thereof to

---

[68]Michael J. Bradley, *Crazy-Stressed: Saving Today's Overwhelmed Teens with Love, Laughter, and the Science of Resilience* (New York: AMACOM, American Management Association, 2017), 244.

[69]Amy McCready, *The Me, Me, Me Epidemic: A Step-by-Step Guide to Raising Capable, Grateful Kids in an Over-Entitled World* (New York: TarcherPerigee, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2016), 10.

[70]Twenge, *IGen*, 70.

communicate effectively over the internet. These teenagers' rooms are their safety net, the place where judgment from the outside world does not exist.

Another con is that many youths get on their social media to survey their timelines only to be deflated because their friends have orchestrated a scene that unwittingly screams, "My life is better than yours. You should be living your best life like me."[71] This side of social media significantly affects younger teens trying to discover their identity by causing them to compare their lives to those of their friends. Burnette and Hardesty, in their work, *Adulting 101: #Wisdom4Life*, tell their readers, "Stop comparing. Social media image-crafting is crushing us. Does anyone ever post an ordinary or below-average day on Instagram, Facebook, etc.? This comparison game has no winners."[72] Teenagers of today develop a habit of inaction because it is easy to prevaricate an imaginary disposition over the virtual space. [73]

---

[71]Ibid., 66.

[72]Burnette and Hardesty, *Adulting 101*, 73.

[73] Twenge, *IGen*, 175.

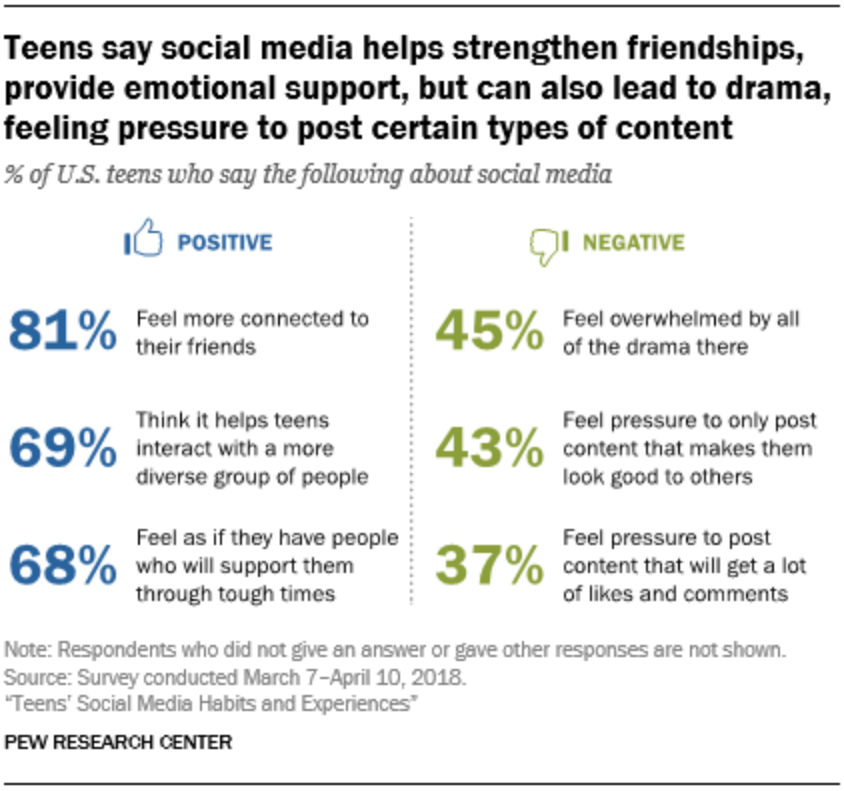

Figure 2.3 *What Teens Say About Social Media.* "Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The opinions expressed herein, including any implications for policy, are those of the author and not of Pew Research Center." Used by permission from Pew Research Center.

Adolescent communication consistently suffers because text messages and messages over social media do not often imitate the tone of their creator. It is very easy for some to take an innocent message out of context, especially if the writer is a terse person. Teens often do not try to comfort the person who took offense to their statement, and their relationships with their friends suffer as a result.

Adolescents and Communication

Another theme that is present in the literature review is adolescents and communication. Twenge states, "Eighth-graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of

depression by 27%, while those who play sports, go to religious services, or even do homework cut their risk significantly."[74] When this author was growing up, children went outside and enjoyed themselves. If a child or teenager had a bike or a ball, they played all day. The only stipulation by parents was to be "inside the house before the streetlights come on." Teens of yesterday were more outgoing than the teens of today. Teens of yesterday were happier because they understood the importance of going outside.[75]

Nowadays, vital, in-person communication is often absent because it is easier to send a text or message on social media.[76] Emphasis on face-to-face interactions is no longer present in today's society because it is easier to pick up a phone and Facetime or use an app to substitute.[77] Therefore, overall societal communication has suffered significantly.[78] The evidence mentioned above is visible when couples go on date nights or when families go out to eat. Almost everyone is texting or messaging on their phones instead of communicating with the person sitting across the table. If adults exhibit and model this behavior, it is only natural to expect teens and young adults to do the same.[79]

Weber writes, "Communication is a vital skill, and while students often have a difficult time with understanding what they are communicating and the implications of what has been perceived, adults also struggle with communication."[80] The statement, "Children and teenagers

---

[74] Ibid., 68.

[75] Ibid., 299.

[76] Ibid., 63.

[77] Ibid., 71.

[78] Ibid., 299.

[79] McCready, *The Me*, 267.

imitate the people they look up to," has been stated so much that it is cliché. One of the main reasons that the previous statement does not hold the weight it used to is that many adults may or may not acknowledge that they have communication problems. Then they nonchalantly return to their phones or proceed with whatever their priority was before acknowledging the accuracy of the statement. Often parents do not realize it, but actually, "Talking to children is a great starting point."[81] It may take some prompting depending on how comfortable the adolescent is with expressing their feelings. However, if adults listen and genuinely pay attention, teenagers will always say what is on their minds.[82]

Effective Listening

Teenagers also must understand that their ability to listen effectively and comprehend what they hear is vital to their success.[83] In fact, effective listening is important for anyone who wants to be an efficient communicator. All too often, people hear what they want to hear instead of what is actually said, and this causes counter-productive actions as opposed to mutually beneficial activity from the hearer.[84] The ability to listen to what is said and understand the same must be practiced. It is unfortunate that too many teens do not learn this from their parents or adults in general because many adults think they are good listeners until they learn differently.[85]

---

[80] Weber, *Behavior*, 70.

[81] Emdin, *For White Folks*, 28.

[82] McConville, *Failure to Launch*, 234–40.

[83] Rachel Poliner, *Teaching the Whole Teen: Everyday Practices That Promote Success and Resilience in School and Life* (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, a SAGE Company, 2017).

[84] James C. Peterson, *Why Don't We Listen Better: Communicating & Connecting in Relationships* (Portland, Oregon: Petersen Publishing, 2015), 7.

[85] Ibid., 7.

Effective listening must be a mutual effort from all parties who are trying to communicate.[86] All too often, adults are bad examples concerning the previous principle because they do not listen to other parties until some type of crisis has occurred. There must always be a genuine effort on the part of all parties involved in a communication to understand the other party's concerns. Sometimes, it is necessary to repeat what was said out loud in order for the communication to be adequately understood. Other times, if a communication is written, it may be necessary for the recipient to read the communication more than once to properly comprehend the communication.

A misunderstanding that occurs because of an assumption could lead to unnecessary conflict.[87] Many times, with teenagers, their written communications spark conflicts that could have otherwise been avoided. Teens communicate more often through text messages than face to face. Many times, they do not reread their message to see what kind of tone that the reader could assume from the communication. They do not understand that text messages do not leave a lot of room for error, but because teens often respond to whatever their first take of a message is, conflicts and drama often occur.

Non-Verbal Communication

Teens often do not understand the power of non-verbal communication, nor do they understand that these signals normally reveal their true feelings.[88] Adolescent girls love to roll their eyes when they are upset. Teenage boys smack their lips when they feel something is lame.

---

[86] Rachel Poliner, *Teaching the Whole Teen: Everyday Practices That Promote Success and Resilience in School and Life*, 97-116.

[87] Suzanne McCorkle, *Personal Conflict Management: Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 97.

[88] Brad Wilcox and Jerrick Robbins, *How to Hug a Hedgehog: 12 Keys for Connecting with Teens* (Sanger, CA: Familius, 2014), 10.

Both are non-verbal actions, and it almost seems as if teens feel they are justified since they do not verbalize their displeasure. Most of them have grown up with parents who tell them not to talk back, and depending on the parent, some type of discipline may follow if actual talking back occurs.

Some parents do not discipline their children when the previously mentioned type of non-verbal displeasure is expressed. Other parents stop the behavior in public but do not check it at home. All teaching with children must be consistent, as anything else teaches confusion. A parent or guardian who does not check disrespectful conduct in essence tells their teenager(s) that nothing is wrong with their behavior. Subsequently, the adolescent takes the erroneous belief to school and to public places and behaves disrespectfully.

Teens must understand that they can express themselves but that they must be careful how and where they do it. It is appropriate for teens to go to their room and express their displeasure. They can write about it or even scream about it as long as they are in a place that is allocated for such actions. Some teens do not understand that adults watch everything just like they do, especially in a school setting or a job setting. If they are not disciplined enough to take note of their surroundings before they express themselves in certain ways, they may suffer a consequence that they could otherwise avoid.

Adolescent Resilience

Everything moves quickly with this generation, even the vacations that one takes from his or her job or the holidays that students get during the school year. It seems as if one leaves on the day that the vacation starts, goes home, goes to sleep, wakes up, and it is time to go back to work or school the next day; in reality, however, a week has passed. Today's society is built on convenience, and it speeds things along because one does not often have to wait or work for the

things that one desires.[89] This causes a propensity to think that one should not ever have to wait for what one wants, nor should one have to endure pain or sacrifice of any sort to accomplish a dream.

When this author was a coach, it seemed that his athletes had the thought process that whatever is desired should just come to its wisher, no matter who or what is inconvenienced because of the unwillingness of the dreamer to work. It was the most amazing thing. According to them, they did not have to train to win. Somehow, they would just win because they wanted to, no matter how hard their opponents had trained. Of course, such thinking was not compatible with reality, much to the chagrin of those athletes. Those same athletes would also quit at the drop of a hat if an obstacle that they faced challenged them a little too much. This writer has never seen anything like it. Granted, this author's athletes never mouthed those words, at least not in front of him, but their actions screamed those words from Stone Mountain. He has never understood how this generation could just quit at the mere inkling of a challenge.

In *Crazy-stressed: Saving Today's Overwhelmed Teens with Love, Laughter, and the Science of Resilience*, Bradley asserts, "If Dr. Frankenstein had set out to build a creature with poor resilience (one prone to stress, depression, and anxiety), he would have told Igor to steal a 13-year-old's brain."[90] Indeed, this quote does not apply to all thirteen-year-olds. However, there is validity to the statement that implies younger children and teenagers must learn how to be resilient and value the same. The importance of resilience in the society in which adolescents find themselves is invaluable. They must understand how imperative it is to bounce back from

[89] Jeremiah T. Hoppenheimer, *How Smart Is Your Phone- Sequel* (London: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2021), 36.

[90] Bradley, *Crazy-Stressed*, 54.

disappointment(s) and continue pursuing their success and happiness, even when everything goes according to plan.[91]

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a dangerous thing to teach children because it discourages mistakes and can lead to depression.[92] One cannot learn without blunders. Children and teens must know and understand that a mistake is not the end of the world but an opportunity to learn and become a better person. Heffernan and Harrington assert, "The need to get everything 'just right' in their relationships often extends to their academic work and can lead to crippling perfectionism, fear of failure, and a lack of resilience in the face of challenge."[93] It is safe to assume in this case that the only place from which adolescents could learn such behavior is the people whom they inadvertently emulate: their parents or guardians.

Unfortunately, many children and teenagers aspire to perfection because this principle is often indirectly taught at home. Parents and teachers are often quick to correct a child who is viewed as wayward, but a child who does everything that they are supposed to rarely receives the praise they that deserve. The "good" child, as they are frequently called, is used in contrast to the "bad" child with statements like, "Why can't you be more like your brother/sister?" or "Do you ever notice that I don't have to talk to your brother?" While the aforementioned questions seem to heap praise, they are valueless if the actions of the parent or guardian do not offer positive reinforcement for the good actions as quickly as the opposite occurs for bad actions. It is a sad

---

[91] McCready, *The Me*, 199.

[92] Michael Brustein, *Perfectionism: A Guide for Mental Health Professionals* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, LLC, 2014), 8–9.

[93] Lisa Heffernan and Mary Dell Harrington, *Grown and Flown: How to Support Your Teen, Stay Close as a Family, and Raise Independent Adults* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2019), 63.

reality, but the balance mentioned in the last sentence is nonexistent in numerous homes. As a result, children and teens do not view "messing up" in the light that they should, as they are afraid of disappointing mom or dad because pain is the only thing that follows. To be clear, children and teens should not be happy to disappoint mom and dad, but they should associate "messing up" with a chance to become a better person, not solely pain but an explanation for discipline and an expectation of better.

In other cases, parents are guilty of living their dreams through their children. So, they are harder on their children about practicing for perfection than they ever were on themselves. They desire their children to be better than they were at a specific talent or skill, but do not do regular checks to make sure their children are still interested in that talent or skill.

.

Failure

Parents must be careful to model resilience and purposefully teach their children to learn from mistakes and failures.[94] Children must learn that "[f]ailure teaches us lessons about what does not work, encouraging us to figure out what does."[95] No one is born knowing the answers to all things, no matter what some people would have others to believe. Trial and error are two things that children start to learn the importance of from the moment they start to feed. Early on, a child's taste is their method of figuring out what works. Children learn to walk and run by falling. Understandably, a parent cannot let his or her child taste or try everything. However, parents fundamentally impact their child's resilience early on by reacting to their child's risks.[96]

---

[94] Emdin, *For White Folks*, 68.

[95] McCready, *The Me*, 201.

[96] Bradley, *Crazy-Stressed*, 122–23.

Children and adolescents must be as prepared as possible for a life and situations that may not be ideal as they get older. Success will not occur with every venture. A part of being human is realizing that errors and blunders are going to occur. Life does not give one a pass on obstacles. One cannot simply give up every time one faces a situation that one views as a challenge. The task is to learn to overcome hurdles with the same grace that one enjoys a period of bliss. One of the most important lessons anyone can learn is to be happy when things are going great, but that it is also not the end of the world when things are not going one's way.[97] Failure must be taken as an opportunity to learn better and hence do better.[98] Everything will not always go one's way, but not many people learn when everything is happening the way that they want it to happen.

Rejection and letdowns cause people to look at themselves and what happened, at least they should as improvements can always be made.[99] One should always look to improve oneself. Complacency truly is the enemy of progress. Almost nothing stings like being told "no" or being turned down for a promotion that one fought hard to get. It is during those times that the negativity or the "no" should compel the recipient to do everything that he or she can to become a better person. There is always reason for the "no," even if it just was not the right time or season for approval. The reason, however, is never as important as the determination to grow.

---

[97] Heffernan and Harrington, *Grown and Flown*, 182.

[98] Susan David, ed., *Beyond Goals: Effective Strategies for Coaching and Mentoring* (Farnham, Surrey: Gower Publishing Limited, 2013), 196.

[99] Susie Moore, *Stop Checking Your Likes: Shake off the Need for Approval and Live an Incredible Life* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2020), 120–24.

Adolescent Needs for Essential Life Skills

Finally, the last theme in this work is the adolescent need for life skills. Many youths graduate from high school and are technologically savvy but lack the other essential skills to succeed in the corporate world.[100] Parents must be intentional about teaching adolescents the skills they need to succeed before graduating from high school. Schools must be intentional about equipping their students to succeed upon graduation from high school and subsequent matriculation into college. Employers are often disappointed with the foundational skills of newly hired adolescents and young adults because they do not possess the skills that they need to be productive.[101]

Mindset

Often, teens graduate from high school, and financial literacy, vision, focus, manners, forward progression, entrepreneurial mindset, and problem-solving have not been emphasized or mentioned at home. Adolescents go out into the world and face rude awakenings consistently because the adults who were supposed to nurture and prepare them for the world have neglected and coddled them into oblivion. In his book, *Up the Ladder: 10 Essential Life Skills for Every Millennial to Fast Track Their Career*, Akhil Iyer states, "Role after role, I held on to the entrepreneurial mindset which in turn enabled me to achieve personal growth."[102] Mindset and

[100] Matthew Groh et al., "The Impact of Soft Skills Training on Female Youth Employment: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Jordan," *IZA Journal of Labor and Development* 5, no. 1 (May 2016): 1.

[101] Anthony Rhodes, Maurice Danaher, and Ashley A. Kranov, "Concurrent Direct Assessment of Foundation Skills for Generation Education," *On the Horizon* 26, no. 2 (2018): 80.

[102] Akhil Iyer, *Up the Ladder 10 Essential Life Skills for Every Millennial to Fast Track Their Career* (Columbia, South Carolina: Happy Self-Publishing, 2020), 77.

vision are just as much a part of success as hard work, and teens need to understand how mindset controls one's goals and priorities.

Adolescents must be intentional in doing the things that they need to do to gain the skills and abilities that they need. They need to learn early to accept responsibility for their actions. The people who aid in the acceptance of this mindset are their parents and the people who are graced to influence their life. If an adult listens to a teenager, he/she would feel that they have the mindset that they need to succeed, but adults need to model actions for adolescents. Word play is something at which most teenagers and young adults excel. Actions, however, tend to fall by the wayside. In fact, young people tend to be into their social media profiles and games more than taking the actions they need to take to be successful. Almost all their attention is focused on the here and now and feeling good in this moment.

Young people must take responsibility for their futures and realize how critical their own actions are for their success. Ryan advises, "The core benefit is to develop initiative and personal responsibility, and a belief in their capacity for making things happen."[103] Too many young people grow up in situations where everyone but the person with whom the fault lies is responsible for failures. The aforementioned teenagers grow up watching the adults in their lives blame everyone else for their mistakes instead of accepting responsibility. In most cases, one cannot be expected to exhibit behaviors they have not learned or seen modeled by the adults they respect. So, these adolescents repeat the behaviors that have been modeled for them.

There should also be an intentional effort on the part of educational leaders to change the negative mindsets of the teenagers that they are graced to serve. Too many teens are slipping through the cracks because so many administrators do not see their complicity in adolescents

---

[103] Ryan, *The Next Generation*, 121.

from their school failing or dropping out. Every teen cannot be helped, but this author has witnessed several situations where an act of kindness may have been all that was needed to impact positively the life of a teenager who thought no one cared.

Adults in the School System

School systems play a vital role in cultivating young people who understand and appreciate rewards for working hard.[104] Educational leaders must accept their role in preparing teenagers for life after graduation, not just with lip service and optics but real action. Real curriculum changes must occur. Critical thinking, initiative, communication, and time management skills should be accented and emphasized in high school. These abilities are some of the primary life skills that all teens will need to be successful.[105] In fact, the previously mentioned abilities are some of the skills that managers feel teens should have when they are hired.

School administrators cannot be so quick to give up on young people. Change can begin when they understand that respect is no longer given by adolescents because of a position that an adult has. Respect must be earned by all people. Afterward, the adult who took the time to earn the teen's respect will have the opportunity and influence to affect the adolescent's life positively and minister to the needs of that young person.

Oftentimes, respect is earned by simply learning the young adult's name. Too many administrators do not know the names of the young people they are graced to serve. Most of the time they know the names of the "bad actors," but the children who are seen as good need to be

---

[104] Damon, *Failing Liberty 101*, 58.

[105] Nikki Giant, *Life Skills and Career Coaching for Teens: A Practical Manual for Supporting School Engagement, Aspirations and Success in Young People Aged 11-18*, 15th ed. (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2019).

acknowledged as well. In fact, this writer can attest to the fact that even most "bad actors" can be reached if an honest attempt is made by educators and educational leaders to develop a healthy relationship with them. Before the relationship piece can be addressed, however, names must be exchanged and remembered. When adults take the time to remember a teen's name and actually learn about that young person with fidelity, the mindset of that adolescent begins to change because they know that they matter to someone.

Gaming

It is increasingly rare to run into a teenager who does not play "the game" as they term it,[106] referring to either a gaming system or competitive activity of any sort. This writer would be remiss if he did not take some time to note that gaming plays a huge part in the life of almost all teenagers.[107] They spend a significant amount of time on games when they are not on their phones because many parents actually encourage gaming by buying their adolescents whatever they need to play "the game." Some parents limit the time that their teens spend gaming while others do not.[108] Other parents even spend time gaming with their teens. Sadly, some parents could view gaming as way for their teenagers not to bother them, while they get time to do some things that they like doing.

One of the concerns with the previous mindset, however, is that gaming can further the gap in the relationship between parents and their children.[109] When parents allow their children

---

[106] Sarah M. Coyne et al., "Game On. . . Girls: Associations between Co-playing Video Games and Adolescent Behavioral and Family Outcomes," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 49 (November 2010): 160.

[107] Lawrence A. Kutner et al., "Parents' and Sons' Perspective on Video Game Play: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 1 (January 2008): 76–77.

[108] Ibid., 85.

[109] Daniel L. King and Paul H. Delfabbro, "The Natural History of Problematic Internet Use and Gaming: Recent Findings, Challenges, and Future Directions," *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Technologies and Mental Health* (October 2020): 4, accessed February 27, 2022, http://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190218058.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190218058-e-6?print=pdf.

to spend too much time on "the game," it becomes the source of comfort and empowerment that parents should be.[110] The same is evident with cell phones and social media. Then, when parents try to pull their teens away from their comfort zone so they can be who they should have been, their children are no longer interested in building the relationship that should have been important to the parent. Parents must step in and regulate their children's technological use to prevent their children from becoming addicted to the same. There should be an intentional effort in forming the bond that a parent should have with their child, before "the game" has the opportunity.

Another problem with parents allowing their children to play games too much is that they have been found to attribute to teens' lack of focus and internet gaming disorder.[111] When teens spend the majority of their time having fun on games, it is hard to ask them to do something that is strenuous or challenging because it is not fun. It also requires them to focus their attention when they have grown used to the challenges that games provide, which are simpler because they involve minimal thinking and a controller. It is just easier for them to go back to their comfort zone, "the game," and deal with the consequences later.

Theological Foundations

God has always been concerned with His creation's ability to be productive in the world in which He placed them. In Genesis 1:28, Jehovah made His intentions clear for the crown of His creation when He told the first man and first woman to "[b]e fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." God's intention for man was to enjoy the privilege of his

---

[110] Ibid., 5.

[111] Daniel L. King and Paul H. Delfabbro, *Internet Gaming Disorder* (London: Elsevier, 2019), 1–2.

moral status with God and show his appreciation by his obedience and worship. Unfortunately, the simplicity of God's intention was not enough for the man and woman He created, and hence the Fall of Man ensued. Through Adam and Eve's disobedience, many sicknesses and problems came into a world that God meant to be the epitome of holiness and righteousness. God never meant for man to experience sickness or death, but man let his curiosity get the better of him.[112]

The Image of God and the Fall of Man

Since the beginning of time, man has had a dire, emotional need for two things. These two things are love and a sense of belonging. Initially, God supplied both of these needs, as he treated the crown of his creation with the utmost tender, loving care. After creating man, He placed him in a garden with every fruit tree imaginable and gave him dominion over all living things. The only two things God wanted man to do was to tend to the garden and not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If man ever transgressed the latter command, he was destined to die.

When God saw that man needed a companion, He created woman for man from man and the two became one (Gen 2:21-24). The first man was extremely blessed as he not only had dominion over all earthly beings, but he was given right status with God simply because he had been created for the expressed purpose of praising and glorifying God through his mere existence and obedience to the same.[113] Through his God-given status, Adam did not have to seek a mediator when he wanted or needed to speak with God. Before the first sin, man was always in the physical and spiritual state needed to approach God.

---

[112] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 107.

[113] Lee Pham Thai, "Can God Create Humans with Free Will Who Will Never Commit Evil?," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 1 (2020): 4.

Man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden created a void not only for himself and the first woman, but every human being that would be born in their image afterward.[114] This void further attributes to the yearning for the needs that this author previously mentioned. Love and a sense of belonging were automatically given to the first man and woman because of their status with God, but their disobedience costed them a lot more than being expelled from the garden. Their willful defiance caused the elimination of their permanent right status with God, a need for them to be more dependent on each other than ever, and a whole host of other deficiencies that contributed to the aforementioned void. In addition, the first sin caused the need for mankind to pursue the fulfillment that can only come from a close relationship with his creator and the salvation that is available through His only son, Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 1:26, when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," He created man in a way that was different from the rest of His creation. Genesis 2:7 declares, "Yahweh formed man from the dust and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God's care for man and intentional separation from the rest of His creation gave man a dignity that does not otherwise exist.[115] The other creatures that were created were also formed from the ground by God, but they were not given dominion over all living beings as the man was.

Yahweh gave man numerous gifts that differentiated him from the rest of His creation. Of the many previously mentioned gifts, three stand out among the rest. The first gift, right standing, was something that was necessary for man to be in constant communication with

---

[114] David E. Garland, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 123.

[115] John Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text ... To Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001), 134.

God.[116] Yahweh is perfect. He can never learn more than he already knows, grow bigger than He is, or gain more power than He already has.[117] God hates sin; no man could ever approach Him in such a state. In order to approach Yahweh, man had to and still must have right standing with Him, and God gave this to Adam so that they could always be in close proximity to each other. As previously stated, this gift was mitigated when man committed the first sin.

The second entity that distinguished man from the rest of His creation is that he is a living soul. When God made man, He breathed the "breath of life" into him (Gen 2:7). No other part of God's creation could make this claim as they were not created in His image. After the fall of man, the condition of the soul became extremely important because his choices became more important than they had ever been. Before his fall, all man had to do was be and dwell in the space in which God had created him to prosper. However, man's curiosity and desire for the "Knowledge of Good and Evil" led to a much harder life than God meant for man and woman.

The final gift that will be mentioned in this effort that God gave man was free will.[118] Man had been given instructions from God personally concerning His expectations, but man always had the option to either abide by God's command or fulfill his own desire(s). It is unfortunate that man chose to willfully disobey his creator in an effort to "be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). By not realizing that he already had the best that God could give, man settled for less in believing that he could somehow obtain better. This choice made life much

---

[116] Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, eds., *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives* (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 191.

[117] A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978 c1961), 78–79.

[118] Lee Pham Thai, "Can God Create Humans with Free Will Who Will Never Commit Evil?," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 1 (2020): 3.

harder for Adam's and Eve's posterity, as humankind was sentenced to struggle to survive and ultimately die.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave man the opportunity to have a relationship with God through Him through righteousness.[119] Mankind no longer has to depend on the status of a high priest with no eternal standing to approach God for him. Jesus Christ came to Earth and became the sacrifice that humankind needed to reconcile with God. The acceptance of Jesus Christ into one's life is the only way to once again obtain life and right status with Him. It is also the beginning of man once again living in the image that God intended for man. Ultimately, men and women who accept the salvation of Jesus Christ will obtain all of what God meant for mankind and more once they get to heaven.

Yahweh did not intend for His creation to live as wayward individuals who aspire to savagery and sinful desires. Jehovah desired His creation to live on His Earth in a world free from the ugliness of sin and death. God wanted man to love Him and to know His love without needing a mediator. Teenagers who can appreciate the advantages of acquiring the life skills that they need are closer to existing in the image which God created man to exist. The previously mentioned adolescents strive to be individuals who observe principals that God wanted humankind to exhibit from the very beginning. Jehovah wanted man to be good stewards over His creation, be loving to one another, and be productive.

Deuteronomy 6

Deuteronomy 6 is a chapter in the Bible that emphasizes the importance of adults exhibiting their love for God by obeying His laws and teaching their children to do the same.[120]

---

[119] David E. Garland, *Romans*, 125–26.

[120] Michael A. Grisanti, Tremper Longman III, and David A. Garland, *Deuteronomy: The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2012), 145.

The nation of Israel in this passage of scripture receives instructions regarding them explaining the importance of Jehovah and His accomplishments to their posterity. Parents are admonished to train their children to remember the 613 laws of the Torah and observe them on a consistent basis to retain their right standing with God. The purpose of the instructions is to make future generations remember to worship and serve Yahweh only and to never take their ideal situation and status for granted (Deut 6:2).

One theme that Deuteronomy 6 stresses is that children are impressionable and must be taught about Jehovah from a young age (Deut 6:7).[121] All adults are responsible for teaching their children the right ways to do things. In a day and age where most actions and ideologies seem to be acceptable, adults who are believers must take pride in teaching their children how to behave and giving them the life skills that they need to be productive. There must always be a clear difference between right and wrong. It is up to the believers to show the world that God expects those who believe in Him to be sanctified. Christians cannot relegate themselves or their children to wrongdoing because the latter is convenient. There must always be an effort on the part of believers to do the right thing because the latter is mandated by God.

Another theme that is prevalent in Deuteronomy 6 is the need for God's chosen people to keep His laws visible (Deut 6:8-9).[122] God wanted his people to make sure that they kept his laws in places where they would have to see them on a consistent basis so they could not be enticed to transgress them. Yahweh wanted Israel to understand that He had graced them to be in a unique situation if they understood that it would take sacrifice to stay in His good graces. Israel would

---

[121] Ibid., 147.

[122] Michael A. Grisanti, Tremper Longman III, and David A. Garland, *Deuteronomy: The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2012), 148.

have to work daily to stay sanctified. Learning His laws because they were to be visible would help Israel to remain God's chosen people. He also wanted them to understand the implications of not working to keep their right status with Him (Deut 6:12). The consistent and persistent observation of His law allowed them to stay close to Jehovah and for Him to elevate them above all other nations.

For the purposes of this effort, the final theme from Deuteronomy 6 is the need for adults who are believers to tell their children about Yahweh, and the miracles that he has performed in their lives (Deut 6:20-25).[123] There must always be an effort on the part of believers to remind their children who God has been to them. The reminders serve to help adults and children stay grounded when great things happen and not forget that He made it possible. They also serve to remind believers of who God is and how good He has been to them. Children and young adults are sponges and will not forget the actions of the people that they love and respect; they watch everything. So, adults must exemplify the behavior that they expect their children to emulate.

Parents must realize how important that it is for them to ensure that their children learn the life skills that they need to be productive. God clearly instructs the nation of Israel through Moses to care for their posterity by giving them the tools that they needed to remain God's chosen people. The distinction between Yahweh's people and those who did not acknowledge was and is meant to be glaring and evident. Teens can learn to be productive and gain life skills without their parents, but it was never the intention of God for children to have to do so. Parents are responsible for their posterity and must take an active role in caring for and properly raising the same.

---

[123] Ibid., 155.

Legacy

Despite man's willful disobedience and subsequent fall, God has always desired not only to reconcile man back to himself but also for man to cultivate and provide for his posterity. Legacy and posterity are essential to God. Children, because of their hearts and youth, are impressionable. In Mark 10:14, Jesus encourages His disciples, "Suffer the children to come unto me and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God." Jesus also taught his disciples, in Matthew 18:3-6, that their hearts had to become like those of children in order to "[e]nter into the kingdom of heaven." In the previous scripture, He also instructs His disciples to be careful about how they receive and treat children with whom they would come into contact.

Moses became aware of God's concern for man's legacy in Exodus 34:6-7. In this passage, God announced Himself as "The Lord, The Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." God could have included anything in His announcement to Moses when He was about to show him His hind parts, but He made sure to speak about the impact of a generation's sins on subsequent generations. God intended for people to understand that their actions have consequences and that their children could be held responsible for their actions.[124]

Many adults do not understand that the principle surrounding generational curses, and that they are always at work, not just in their own lives but also in their children's lives. Later in life, many people will acknowledge that they are going through the same things they watched their parents experience, especially in areas where social and economic growth are not

[124] Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 534.

encouraged. It is unfortunate, but many families will spend several generations affected by generational curses until at least one person understands that they must be the one to break the curse.

God meant for parents to give their posterity a head start, as believers are encouraged to leave an inheritance for their children (Prov 13:22). Yahweh has always meant for each present adult generation to secure provisions for the future generations of their families.[125] The purpose of this ideology is the financial security and the spiritual well-being of future generations. There should always be an intentional effort by adults to leave a better world for their children by giving them a head start. Not only should the head start be one of financial means, but it should also be a head start with biblical teaching and wisdom.

Further proof of this principle is evident in Genesis with Abraham's example. Legacy was of the utmost importance to him as he did not want to leave his estate to his steward (Gen 15:2). Abraham wanted a son, a child who came from his bowels. Despite Sarah getting ahead of God and enticing Abraham to have a son with her handmaiden (Gen 16:5), God still blessed Abraham with Isaac (Gen 25:5), the son to whom he left everything. Abraham did have other sons and daughters through his marriage to Keturah, the woman he married after the death of Sarah (Gen 25:1-2). The children from this union received gifts and were sent away from Isaac (Gen 25:6).

In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul writes that men who do not provide for their wives and children are "worse than infidels." It is deplorable that some men in society do not understand that their life is no longer about them when they have children. It is even more telling that these same men

---

[125] Lindsay Wilson, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 173.

do not understand that by "shirking their responsibilities" to their family, they deny one of the most basic principles of the Christian faith.[126] Men are to provide for their families. To deny this implies a break in the necessary teaching from father to son and the inability to care about the plight of their children. This conduct by men and, in rare cases, women, also continues the wrath of a debilitating generational curse. This behavior by men in the church also damages the reputation of the same.[127]

People who do not feel they have anything to lose make different decisions than those who do—children who learn to embrace their family legacy act differently from those who lack such teaching. This is one reason why God wanted Hebrew history to pass from generation to generation. He wants children to embrace their heritage and be motivated to make better life decisions (Josh 4:21-24). All believers have a proud heritage, for they are "a chosen generation, members of a royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9). People who are regal act differently and should learn the importance of being set apart.[128] Their status should never be taken for granted. One who is set apart for God and His purpose will always come out better than those who choose selfish gain above God's agenda (Rom 8:28).

According to biblical obligations, parents have genuine responsibilities to their children to nurture them and raise them to be productive members of society through proper discipline (Prov 22:6).[129] Structure for children is invaluable.[130] They must learn that pain is attached to bad

---

[126] Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 343–45.

[127] Ibid., 345.

[128] Craig S. Keener, *1 Peter: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 30d–f.

[129] Ken Ham, *Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World: Leaving a Lasting Legacy* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006), 65.

decisions. At a young age, youths must learn to take responsibility for their actions and strive for perfection (Matt 5:48). Countless adults have learned to use the statement, "Nobody is perfect," as a crutch. While it may make them feel better about indiscretions for which they do not want to suffer the consequences at the time, they do not realize that they are planting the same inability to be responsible into their children and teenagers, as they see everything, even the things that adults do not think they see. Children and adolescents also retain memories of misdeeds and recall them at the most inconvenient times.

God means for believers to raise their children in a way that exhibits His holiness to the world.[131] Many people's impressions of others depend on what they think of how they raise their children. Believers always have a mission to win souls to Christ with the gospel message and their lives as examples.[132] The premise is that unbelievers should see the example set forth and desire to be a part of the Kingdom of God. Many believers often do not understand that every action is a seed, and unbelievers are watching for mistakes. Child neglect is a mistake that no believer can afford to perpetuate. Parents secure their legacy by ensuring their children are equipped with the necessary life skills before they leave home.

Servant Leadership

Young people must see the type of life that they are expected to live exhibited in the adults who are blessed to raise them. Adolescents must also receive adequate support from home and will meet the expectations set forth from their parents or guardians.[133] Parents must exercise

---

[130] Wilson, *Proverbs,* 243.

[131] Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, 233-235 ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

[132] Todd Wilson, *Real Christian: Bearing the Marks of Authentic Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 135.

putting the needs of their dependents above their own if they expect their protégés to exhibit the same behavior.[134] With children and teenagers, every action must be as reasonably intentional as possible because every action is a seed (Gal 6:7-8). Children, in most cases, resemble their home situation and will emulate the behavior they see from their parents or guardians. Leaders must also realize that children watch them and imitate them as well.

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity and the Word of God (John 1:1-3), was and is the perfect model of servant leadership. During His time on Earth, He picked twelve disciples and lived the life that He expected them to live. Christ also put the needs and desires of others before His own, as long as their intentions were not tainted (Matt 16:4).[135] In some circles, there are proponents for youths being able to make decisions about desiring things that should not be left up to them. The aforementioned decisions should not be left up to children and adolescents not necessarily because their intentions are impure but because they are not old enough or experienced enough in some situations to make such life-altering choices.

In order to be effective in equipping the youth of the church and impactful in a holistic way, church leaders must embrace the servant leadership model.[136] The latter has been shown positively to affect follower performance, organizational performance, and societal impact.[137] Positive outcomes from all three of the aforementioned entities would undoubtedly maximize positive influence not only in church communities but also the areas in which churches reside.

---

[133] W. Berliner and J. Judd, *How Succeed at School: Separating Fact from Fiction What Every Parent Should Know* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 12.

[134] Ibid., 175.

[135] T. Cochrell, *Slaves of the Most High God: A Biblical Model Servant Leadership in the Slave Imagery of Luke-Acts* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018), 18.

[136] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2013), 230–32.

[137] Ibid.

Undoubtedly, this would increase the overall growth of the church and thereby increase the Kingdom of God.

As one of God's primary arms in the earthly realm, the Christian church bears responsibility to the youth of the communities in which they exist, as all Christians young or old are responsible for carrying out the Great Commission.[138] Members of the church are supposed to edify the church's adults and its adolescents (Rom 14:19). As representatives of God, the emissaries of the church must feel a personal obligation to not only the community where the church is but also the communities in which they live. Adolescents are not just the future of the church; they are the future of the world. They must receive the essential life skills they need to be productive from the people that they respect. Besides their teachers, the only people they admire are those whom their parents respect, church laypeople, and pastors.

Theoretical Foundations

Church leaders must understand their complicity in the world's view of the church. There must be a purposeful effort by all church leaders to inspire everyone who goes to their church to be members of the Kingdom of God and to act accordingly.[139] Within the same purposeful effort, church leaders must also strive to inspire adolescents to acquire the essential life skills necessary for productivity. Anything other than the church adequately preparing teenagers for the world into which they are going is unacceptable because the church must lead the charge to equip

---

[138] Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions,* 163–64.

[139] Andreas J. Kèostenberger and Terry L. Wilder, eds., *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville, Tenn: B&H Pub. Group, 2010), 174–75.

everyone within its doors to be who God called them to be. God has not called the body of Christ to be complacent and ineffective; he has called the church to be progressive and impactful.

Each church cannot be only a pinnacle of the community in which it resides but an example of the Kingdom of God.[140] It must also be very active in doing everything it can to impact and serve its home community positively.[141] If churches took this approach, their surrounding communities would have no choice but to change for the better. Many of the problems that currently exist in various communities would disappear because people's mindsets would change. Many teenagers who engage in a life of nefarious actions would think about taking a different path for success.

The Universal Love and Life Church has committed to the change that needs to occur with its young people. The essential life skills that the youths of UL^2 Church need can be acquired if the appropriate amount of effort, time, and patience are invested in the church's teenagers. It will first be essential to survey the community to ascertain what skills the youths' parents would like to see manifested in their children.

Once the survey results are known, church leaders must make a genuine effort to interfuse the essential life skills with those the parents have communicated that they desire their children to have. The community around UL^2 Church must feel as if it had a part in the improvements that will take place. This action will be the best way to get parents to take ownership and encourage their children to participate because they will feel vested in the future process.

---

[140] Ibid., 173.

[141] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 986.

Many youths who frequent Universal Love and Life Church have not previously encountered the ideology that adolescents must embrace education and life skills. Dropping out has been an option for many of them because they have needed to work to help pay bills and put food on the table for their younger siblings.[142] It unfortunate, but many of them have been catapulted into the workforce before they were ready. Unfortunately, many teenagers lack the essential skills to succeed in the corporate world, and they find this out the hard way.

Positive and Negative Reinforcement

When children and teenagers do well, they should be praised. However, when they do something that they have no business doing, they should receive discipline of some sort. There are proponents and opponents for whipping children. Proponents tend to lean more toward the biblical teaching for discipline. Proverbs 23:13-14 declares, "Withhold no correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver him from hell." Some proponents for biblical discipline do not feel that the traditional whipping is "sacrosanct within the biblical text."[143] They use the word "hitting" to describe whipping children as if to prescribe a negative connotation to those who feel a whipping is necessary. However, all proponents of biblical teaching agree that children and teens must learn understand that some type of pain (discipline) will be attached to a bad decision.

Opponents to the ideology of whipping often cite scientific studies that back their thinking.[144] Opponents of this type of negative consequence often view whippings as abuse. This

---

[142] Lee Vukich and Steve Vandegriff, *Disturbing Behavior: 53 Alarming Trends of Teens* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: Academx Publishing Services, 2009), 143–44.

[143] Valerie E. Michaelson and Joan E. Durrant, eds., *Decolonizing Discipline: Children, Corporal Punishment, Christian Theologies, and Reconciliation*, Perceptions on Truth and Reconciliation 3 (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 84–85

author has heard or read the challenges of opponents to whipping a child, and to them there is no difference between whipping a child and abusing him or her. Whipping a child is termed as "hitting" to add an abusive connotation to this type of correction. Even the synonyms for whipping sound harsh (i.e., lashing, beating, flogging). Opponents also claim that "hitting" children is an ineffective, counter-productive way of teaching children and teens against certain behaviors. In fact, this group feels that whipping children teaches them to abuse other people by hitting them.

Even though it hurts, children who have leaders and parents who love them enough to discipline them tend to make more responsible choices and obtain an overall good, moral character.[145] In most cases, these children have a moral guide and compass that pushes them toward the right thing(s). Even if they venture off toward the wrong things as adults, their training helps to inspire them back onto the right track. Also, adolescents who are "trained up in the way they should go" tend naturally to acquire life skills that motivate help them to be more successful than teenagers who do not gain such skills. The more successful group of teenagers realize that their futures are not the only ones at stake. They will understand legacy and its importance.

If the youths at Universal Love and Life Church will adhere to the current effort of their church leaders, they will gain the essential life skills they need for general success in life. They will also prepare themselves to be productive in the world into which they are going. As previously stated, it is of the utmost importance that church leaders embrace their responsibility

---

[144] Catherine A. Taylor et al., "Parents' Professional Sources of Advice Regarding Child Discipline and Their Use of Corporal Punishment," *Clinical Pediatrics* 52, no. 2 (November 2012): 147.

[145] Franziska Fay, *Disputing Discipline: Child Protection, Punishment, and Piety in Zanzibar Schools*, Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 59.

to give back to their community and remember that they cannot force young people to be receptive to their help. The youth must eventually buy in totally to the opportunity that is offered for maximum learning to occur.

It is this author's experience that many times adolescents do not, at first, respond favorably to teachings that are different from what they know. They do not respond because it is uncomfortable for most people to look in the mirror. Most adults do not like being told that something is wrong with them or feeling like something is wrong. Adolescents require the same consideration that adults need when confronted with information that is difficult to accept: time. When those adolescents have understood that this writer was giving them the information they needed, they have been more receptive to complex information but wanted more because they realized that sometimes awkward information could be beneficial.

Adolescents who lean toward the acquisition of necessary life skills understand that consequences exist for all actions. As a result, they tend to make better decisions because they desire to be productive citizens. The latter entity also recognizes that growth, in many cases, hurts but does not often occur until after some type of fall or indiscretion. These teenagers also know that the consequence, whether good or bad, for their action(s) may not be immediate but may come at the most undesirable time. So, while they may not embrace discipline as a pleasurable entity, if necessary, adolescents who desire to be the best versions of themselves appreciate the lesson(s) learned from bad choices, no matter when the consequence occurs.

The Reasons Life Skills Are Necessary

Essential life skills are necessary because teens who have them are noticeably different from those who do not. These skills include things like manners, customs and courtesies, chivalry, communication, and resilience. There are many subcategories under each of the

aforementioned skills, and while those proficiencies are attainable, they are often not offered in the places and spaces that teenagers frequent. Too many young people have grown used to going into their rooms and closing the door. So many of them have a routine at which this author and his generation would balk because it only includes going to school, going home, going to the refrigerator (several times), and going back to their rooms. There is almost no effort toward face-to-face communication, visiting the local youth center, or learning about new things.

So many adolescents are only concerned with the notion of having fun, no matter how that "fun" looks or how dangerous it is. Recently, there was somewhat of a movement nationwide for teenagers called the "devious licks" challenge. The ultimate mission of this trend was to damage public property, including damaging and stealing various things from school bathrooms (i.e., toilets, soap dispensers, tissue holders, etc.). When students who engaged in this behavior were asked why they participated, their replies often confused and baffled school administrators and parents because their reasoning revolved around "fun." There was no logic involved in their reasoning.

There is another element involved in the behavior of these students that is also worth mentioning. Young people will often do anything to be popular. They will often also do anything to obtain money. The previously mentioned challenge offers teenagers the opportunity to have not only what they view as fun but also to gain popularity by doing something against the grain. Additionally, if their video(s) of them doing something that irritates school leaders goes viral, they view their efforts as a win, much to the chagrin of their parents and school administrators.

Parents must also understand that it is not the job of educators to raise their children for them. This author has witnessed and experienced parents' desire to have help from educators on the parenthood front but refuse to back the educator when their children refuse to comply with

reasonable requests. A good example of this occurs on a day-to-day basis when a teenager's cell phone is taken during class because the child refuses to focus or do work. When the parent comes to the school, the entire staff including administration is assumed to have been picking on the student and "doing too much" because the child's phone was taken. Parents cannot pick and choose when to reiterate the message that they know their teen needs to hear.

Fights are more commonplace in schools because adolescents view them as a way of earning "street cred" or a reputation that they are not to be messed with.[146] Students who inform school authorities that they are having problems are known as "snitches," even though they are the ones being bothered.[147] Many youths no longer view education or even appearing intelligent as the way to get what they want out of life because that type of language is not what many of them are depositing into their psyche daily.[148] Teenagers do not want their peers to view them as "soft," so they are willing to do almost anything at school to solidify their reputation. It is scary, but this author has seen the smiles that seem to radiate the faces of teens after a fight occurs. All that can be seen is the lights from the cameras on their phones as they all scurry to the scene of the fight to catch a glimpse of who will win and who will lose. It is disturbing to learn after some the fights have occurred that many of the parents knew that their children were going to fight at school if the person who was agitating them said anything to them the next day. In fact, the parents, in some cases, have cosigned on their children fighting because they are tired of the other teen "bullying" their child or "beefing" across social media.

---

[146] Edward W. Morris, *Learning the Hard Way: Masculinity, Place, and the Gender Gap in Education*, The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 152.

[147] Ibid., 153.

[148] Vukich and Vandegriff, *Disturbing Behavior,* 193–94.

It is unfortunate, but many youths who frequent UL^2 Church have not been exposed to soft skills before attending the church. Some of them are street children who have not been taught the importance of saying "please" and "thank you." Other adolescents' parents or guardians have taught them proper behavior and manners, and they elect not to observe them in public because they will not have a "cool" reputation if they display the behaviors that they have been instructed to exhibit.

Some young people and adults have not previously learned that entitlement is not just an ideology that is popular with the rich, but it is prevalent in all classes, races, and groups of people. Almost everyone feels that they deserve a certain type of treatment or some type of retribution for a centuries-old offense. Whether the ideology is properly founded or completely irrational, adolescents must learn what is right and true from the adults who are graced to be their teachers. Appropriate behavior must be modeled for teenagers, and the adults in their lives, whether parents or guardians, must understand how important their example is.

The attitude of entitlement must cease to exist, and the effort must start with the church and the young people. They must learn that no one owes them anything and that they need to develop the mindset that will allow them to be productive. Teenagers must learn that real fun can occur without being at the expense of someone else's peace or destruction of government property. They must likewise understand they do not need validation from social media or other people. Their confirmation by God is more than enough. If the youths of UL^2 Church embrace this ideology and the acquisition of life skills, the surrounding community will change for the better, and more productive teenagers will be the result.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Universal Love and Life Church and its members should be beacons in the communities in which they reside. The church is to be a light that positively impacts every person who graces its doors and internet space—not just the adults but the youths also. The youth ministry at every church must receive the same amount, if not more energy than other departments, because so much of the future depends on the mindset(s) of the teenagers. If the Christian church elects not to invest time in its youth members and the youth of the community, the church will not have the effect on the community that God expects.

There is a holistic side to ministry that often goes wanting because so many pastors are only concerned with the spiritual side of the members they are graced to serve. The spiritual fulfillment of one's members is essential, but the fulfillment of the entire person is crucial, as any one-sided approach to ministry creates an unhealthy imbalance. An imbalanced individual can only be partially effective because they cannot model or help produce a balance that they do not possess. God wants all of His children to have the proper balance and show the world how true fulfillment looks through Him.

Jesus ministered to the physical and spiritual dimensions of His followers during His earthly mission. He fed the hungry (Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44), healed the sick (Matt 8:14-15), raised the dead (Luke 7:11-17), and restored the social outcasts (Luke 17:11-19). He also ministered through parables designed to provide spiritual fulfillment upon comprehension (Matt 13: 1-9, 18-23). Jesus purposely made people think about their lives and who they had been up until they were graced to have met Him (John 4). The previous examples all show different types of fulfillments that Jesus provided to His followers at their specific times of need.

Holistic ministry ministers to all dimensions of the human being.[149] Pastors must emphasize balance in that spiritual fulfillment is necessary. However, one must also have one's physical, social, and psychological needs met to embrace holistic ministry truly. Young people are looking for this approach before investing their time in a church. They do not want the typical run-of-the-mill experience because it normally does not minister to all of their needs.[150] The modern church must be one that ministers to the whole being. Believers should not be so spiritual that they cannot be effective in the world outside of the church. Some unbelievers will not hear or associate with someone who projects the ideology that they are better than everyone else. Too often, people receive salvation and act as if they forgot who they used to be, but Christian ministry is more effective when one is balanced and transparent about whom they used to be.

Sadly, when ministering to the social side of their members, many pastors only stress finance stewardship and giving to the church. Too often, they do not stress familial balance or effective communication in marriage and relationships. In terrible situations, some pastors encourage sexual purity and financial freedom of the church members they are graced to serve and cannot control their urges toward perverted carnalities and improper use of the church's funds. In these situations, pastors cultivate confusion instead of clarity because they encourage one thing but practice another.

Pastors must seek God for clarity and work consistently to avoid scandals. Whether a pastor is accused of stealing the church's money, some sexual perversion, or other impropriety,

---

[149] Patrick Yankyera, Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, and E.T Jonathan, "The Church as a Spiritual and Social Being: A Holistic Approach to Ministry in the Contemporary Ghanaian Society," *E-Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences* 1, no. 5 (October 2020).

[150] Steven C. Argue and Tyler S. Greenway, "Empathy with Emerging Generations as a Foundation for Ministry," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (January 2020): 114.

they hurt or destroy people's overall view of the Christian church. A scandal hurts the guilty pastor, but it makes all pastors look bad. It also helps those who are looking for a reason to debase the Christian church, no matter the denomination. Pastors must be aware that everyone under their care is watching them, including the most impressionable members, their teenagers.

Church leaders must learn to be transparent and teach an adequate amount of balance to the church members they are graced to serve through their personal experience. Transparency allows church members to see their pastor as a human being. Most pastors wait until scandal to humble themselves and highlight their human characteristics. Suppose truthfulness about one's past exists before a distasteful event occurs. In that case, that candor aids in preventing scandal and helps the leader to remember their indiscretions and strive to model the balance that he/she expects to see.

There must be an intentional effort by pastors to preach and model balance not only to the adults but especially to the adolescents in the Christian church. Youths in the church often do not get the attention they deserve, and there is an assumption by adults that children and teenagers do not comprehend enough about life to understand the indiscretions they may see. While the latter may be true to an extent, youths understand enough to pay attention when someone is hurt or know when they are not being paid the attention that is crucial to their spiritual and secular growth. The youth members are essential because they are the future of the community and the church. They must have essential life skills to be productive in the world into which they are going. Without essential life skills, young adults will have difficulty finding success because their foundation will not propel them to victory. They will find themselves in positions in which they have not received the tools they need.

The adolescents in the Stone Mountain community often lack skills such as manners, customs, courtesies, punctuality, responsibility, and resilience. The lack of such skills often prohibits them from being successful on jobs, and they end up moving on because they find their work hours minimized. It is unfortunate, but a lot of the teenagers from UL^2 Church only get jobs in the first place to help their parents make ends meet. So, when they lose their jobs or their hours get cut, there is immense pressure for them to get another job or resort to other nefarious actions.

Many teenagers in the Covington community also lack manners because many of them have the same mindset that the adolescents in the Stone Mountain community have. Many of these teenagers also come from families where one or both parents have died, and the child resides with the grandmother or in a foster situation. This author has observed more teenagers in Covington that have been taught the right ways to do things. However, because of the lack of practice and reiteration, these teens resort to the behaviors of those that they view as cool. This author has also heard many students mention that they have been diagnosed with a variety of mental health conditions. Stone Mountain teens rarely mentioned mental health.

Intervention Design

The intervention plan is to start an academy that will minister to the specific needs of the teenagers who attend Universal Love and Life Church or one of the schools as at which this author has taught. A teen might not elect to come to Bible study or church, but they have no choice concerning school. If they can be reached, the church must be willing to do what it can to do so. The church must also be willing to offer classes and assistance to all who need and want support as a help to the community(s) that they are graced to serve.

Another part of the intervention plan will be to interview educational experts to obtain their perspectives and thoughts concerning the modern generation of teenagers. The experts are or have been school leaders who have been teaching or leading in schools for over twenty years per expert. One of the experts has over forty years in education and was a turnaround specialist who was called out of retirement three times. The reason for this part of the intervention plan is not only to gain the perspectives of these experts but also to understand more about how to be effective with this generation of youths.

Lastly, the most valuable part of the intervention plan will be the student surveys. This author currently works at Eastside High School in Covington, Georgia, as a tenth grade English Language Arts instructor and has access to over one hundred students daily. If one has the opportunity to survey a group of people whom they plan to help through an intervention, the best way to discover how to be effective is through those people. Teenagers, in most cases, are blatantly honest and want to help those who want to help them.

The academy will consist of classes that will be an hour long per session and will occur twice a week. The sessions will be interactive and engaging so that the youths will maximize their understanding of the lesson. A previous survey was taken by this author at Stone Mountain High School to query adolescents as to what kind of classes they would like to take if such an opportunity were offered. The survey that is a part of this study is similar but not the same. The previous survey will be the basis for the considerations taken in creating the classes that will be offered at the academy. Including the students' suggestions will make them feel vested in the process.

A tremendous amount of effort will occur to ensure the teens from the Stone Mountain community keep coming to every session to maximize their learning and understanding of the

concepts that will be taught. Commitment is often a misunderstood, lacking quality in the Stone Mountain community. The community overall is very transient. It is unfortunate, but the people there are used to moving around when things get tough. Too often, they do not understand that the growth of their resilience is tied to their ability to persevere when faced with hardship.

The Covington community is one in which the youths also struggle with commitment and finishing what they start. The same amount of effort that will be necessary in the Stone Mountain community will also be required in the Covington community to keep the youths motivated to finish the academy. More youths in the Covington area come from privileged situations. There was an assumption by this author that privileged youths would not need as much inspiration to finish the academy as the adolescents from challenging situations. However, after some research, this assumption was dismissed because the teens in Covington, while not as transient, still suffer from many of the same daily struggles that adolescents in Stone Mountain do.

Quitting has become a habit for many of the subjects in this project. Some subjects have suffered personal tragedies that make commitment to any entity difficult. Other participants in this project do not have a stable home life and do not receive the support from their parents that they should. As a result, it is expected that a lot of patience and effort will keep these participants inspired to finish the academy.

It is also important to note that several of the project's subjects possess the quitting characteristic because they have acquired their parents' inability to adapt to change or complexity. In essence, some of their parents have passed their bad habits down to them. At the beginning of the project, the participants must understand that quitting is a contemptible characteristic that hinders growth. One cannot grow if all one ever does when presented with a

challenge is quit. Growth occurs when challenges that were previously thought to be permanent inhibitors are overcome.

The intervention plan will include six weeks' worth of essential life skill lessons aimed at equipping the youths of UL^2 Church to be productive in the world into which they are going. Their progress will be monitored by their attendance, disposition, and attitude toward their social efficacy. A survey will be taken at the end of the six weeks to determine the plan's effectiveness. All teenagers who complete the program will be given a certificate and participate in a rite of passage ceremony.

The intervention will change the problem by equipping the teenagers at Universal Love and Life Church (UL^2 Church) and in the surrounding communities with essential skills to succeed in life. The community around UL^2 Church will gradually begin to change as the youth become more responsible and influence their parents to do the same. The change in the youths and their parents will revitalize the community and turn it into one where the people make good decisions. Additionally, they will begin to understand and care that their decisions do not just affect them personally; their decisions affect everyone in the community.

As the mindset of the community shifts, the types of businesses within the area will begin to vary and flourish because the people therein will make better choices. They will understand why prominent companies cut their losses and move on. Teens will get jobs instead of robbing the businesses that add value to the neighborhood. The people in the community will become less transient as well because property values will increase significantly.

Upon their completion of the program, the youths will receive a certificate recognizing their achievement. The certificate will remind the adolescents that they can achieve anything they set their minds on accomplishing. It will also serve to inspire them to finish other programs

that promote social efficacy. The rite of passage ceremony will fulfill their need to belong. All people have two basic needs: they want to feel loved and to know that they belong to something or someone.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Once the participants' permissions have been obtained, they will be asked what days they can attend the academy. Their responses will determine the days and the start date of the project. A valiant effort will be made early on to get the participants to accept responsibility for their futures and acknowledge their need for life skills. The previous actions will be necessary for the project's participants to develop a stakeholder mindset and take ownership over their ability to embrace the program as a necessity for personal growth and productivity.

The project will be explained to the participants as an opportunity to learn skills that will broaden their horizons and give them the abilities that they will need to be successful in life. The project will not be described as a guarantee of success upon completion of the classes but as a way to get one step closer to success in life. The project will also be described as a chance for its participants to gain the essential life skills needed to be productive members of society.

A fair trial period to evaluate this writer's intervention will be six to eight weeks. The intervention(s) will make such a difference in the participants' lives that the impact will be noticeable in a relatively short period. Once the participants learn essential life skills, their lives will change because their mindsets and perspectives will change. When the epiphany occurs, not only will the participants' mindsets and perspectives change, but their countenances and outer appearances will also because they will understand the power of the first impression and the possibility of their positively impacting every room and situation in which they find themselves.

The specific tool that will serve to gather data and measure the effects of the intervention will be a survey that this author will give to the participants. A different survey will be given to the parents. The survey for the participants will contain a variety of questions that will be answered on a 1 to 5 rating gauging the participants' understanding of life skills and how much the classes have helped them. The parents' survey will gauge their satisfaction with the program and change(s) observed in their teens.

The criteria used for evaluating a successful outcome in this intervention will be two separate surveys and efficacy questions. One survey will be given to the participants, and the other will be given to the participants' parents. The criteria for evaluation will be questions that gauge positive change in the mindsets and dispositions of the participants. The teens' perception of the effect of the classes will show on their survey. Their parents' perceptions will also appear on their survey.

The teens' opinions on their personal growth from the classes will be necessary, as they are the subjects of the project. Their positive feeling about their social efficacy and the ability of this project to improve the same is of extreme importance for the success of this project and subsequent projects on the same matter. The capturing of the parents' perceptions will also be of some importance, as it will be another method of verifying the success of the intervention.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The goal of this study was to determine the ability of teenagers to be successful if there is an intentional effort by the church and community leaders to equip adolescents with essential life skills. The period in which change was expected to have occurred enough to be observed was six to eight weeks. Academy classes occurred every week on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

There was also a purposeful effort during this project to speak with experts to determine what skills they believe teenagers lack, as well as to ascertain the root cause(s) for the absence thereof. Experts were also asked to offer resolutions they felt would be effective in mitigating the deficiency of essential life skills.

As previously stated, this author also has access to 138 students at the local high school in which he is employed. The aforementioned students were queried to gain their perspective(s) on their plight, and their ability to negotiate the obstacles that will present themselves in their near future with their current skillsets. An academy was established as an ongoing effort to equip teenagers with basic essential life skills. This effort was one in which this writer attempted to research all angles that impact the equipping or lack thereof of adolescents in modern-day society.

Adjustments

It is of some importance to note first that the initial parameters of this project were adjusted because of conditions beyond the control of this author. Because of COVID-19, this writer lost access to some participants whom he projected would participate. This author also resigned from one school district and gained employment in a different school system, giving this author access to students in a more rural area. Despite this move, this author still managed to

maintain some participation from Stone Mountain participants and gained other participants from the Covington area.

After the first meeting, the building in which the project was scheduled to take place developed a massive water leak. Subsequently, the project was paused to wait for the building's repairs. It was eventually determined that repairs would take longer than expected, and the project took place virtually using the Zoom application instead of focusing on the in-person angle. It was this author's belief at the time that Zoom would be more beneficial because participants could join the sessions from home and not expose themselves to other people, thereby minimizing the possibility of participants contracting COVID-19 from in-person meetings.

The Zoom application made participation possible for teenagers from the Stone Mountain, Georgia, area as well as from Covington, Georgia. This author was able to develop influential relationships with teens from the latter area after his move as a classroom teacher to another school district. The participants from Covington, Georgia, are from the current school at which this author is employed.

The Academy

The initial project research occurred on Tuesdays and Thursdays for a period of six weeks. The meetings occurred over the Zoom space for one hour per session. This author established an academy tasked with equipping the participants who volunteered with the essential life skills for success. The covered skills were financial literacy, customs and courtesies, communication, and resilience. The subtopics covered under financial literacy were credit, social security, insurance, entrepreneurship, budgeting, and investing. Under customs and courtesies, the subtopics covered were appearance, chivalry, interviewing, interviewing apparel,

responsibility, punctuality, and character. For communication, the subtopics that were covered were listening, body language, parental communication, and tone control. The subtopics that were covered under resiliency were proactivity vs. reactivity, failure, and self-reflection.

Ten participants started the program within the first two weeks. Five of the initial participants attended only one session and discontinued participation afterward. One participant joined the third week of the project and continued with the other five participants until the end. It is also of some importance to note that the results of the academy project mostly represent the opinions of female adolescents who participated in the project. Three males started the project, but none of the males who started the project from the first meeting finished. Two of the females who started the project also dropped out, but most who started the project finished. Because of the convenience of the Zoom application, a couple of participants joined one session but discontinued after a short period of time during the same session.

Only one of the males who participated in the project finished. The other males who started the project only participated in the first couple of sessions and dropped out thereafter with no explanation or communication as to their reasoning why. This information is symbolic to this author as his experience has shown that it is hard for young men to follow through on receiving the tools that they need to become responsible men. In public, they acknowledge that they need assistance but will not follow through when the actual opportunity presents itself. This author witnessed evidence of this when several young men said that they wanted to participate and even that they needed the tools that would be offered but did not follow through.

When the dates for the academy were released, an overwhelming majority of the young men who said they would participate offered excuses or said that they had to work. Others did not show. Other young men started the program and dropped out before finishing, as previously

stated. For whatever reason, it does not seem that young men feel that they need essential skills badly enough for them to participate in programs that offer them instruction to develop such skills.

This writer also noticed while researching that some of the ideas and concepts that were introduced to participants during the project were ideas they had previously heard, especially during the sessions on customs and courtesies. Several of the adolescents expressed that they knew that they were supposed to say “thank you” when pleasant things are done for them. Additionally, they could not understand why so many of their teenage counterparts do not observe basic customs and courtesies. Most of the participants, when queried during the academy, stated that they had been taught customs and courtesies, and that other teenagers choose not to be who they were taught to be by their parents when they leave home. It is not a popular concept amongst teens to be courteous because they often do not see those behaviors from their popular peers.

This author also found that the most engaging sessions were those in which the adolescents were learning about financial literacy. The participants were extremely interested in the sessions that covered credit, social security numbers, investment, and entrepreneurship because this was where they acknowledged that they needed the most growth. During these sessions, they were extremely inquisitive. Often this writer had to make sure these sessions only lasted an hour because the curiosity of the students would have easily caused the sessions to last longer than the allotted time.

The sessions on customs and courtesies served more to reiterate what the participants had previously learned at home. This author previously assumed that most teenagers lacked this type of teaching because the behavior is almost never exhibited in their daily interactions with adults

or each other. This author has held the door at school in the mornings and afternoons on several occasions for many students and received only a minimal number of thank yous from students. The reasoning for this apparent lack of gratitude was also queried, and the determination is that most of the teenagers who do not express thanks for nice gestures are tired, do not feel like talking, or feel it is “lame” to be nice to those who are nice to them.

The most interesting of these sessions occurred when appearance was discussed. Because most of the participants were females during this discussion, it hinged on what is acceptable attire when one leaves home. Quite a bit of debate occurred as to whether it is acceptable or not for one to leave home with pajamas and house slippers on. Several of the female participants tried to defend leaving the house wearing a bonnet. This ideology was readily countered with the fact that every time one leaves the house is an opportunity. The participants did not know how to respond when they were asked how they would feel if they missed an opportunity because they left the house unprepared.

The communication sessions held a moderate level of interest for the participants as some information that was presented was new and some they had heard previously. One of the ideas presented in this session that piqued the interest of the participants was listening and how important it is to listen effectively. Non-verbal language (body language) and its importance was discussed in reference to being an impactful type of communication. The participants were mostly receptive and taking notes during these sessions. Periodically, they would ask a question or make a comment for the benefit of the entire class.

During the resilience sessions, the participants received information about learning how to bounce back from a mistake. They were taught not to view mistakes as failures but as opportunities to learn why they were not successful that time. The idea of self-reflection was also

broached during these sessions. Although much of this information was not new to the recipients, they were receptive and attempted to understand how it impacted them. They were visibly taking notes and commenting when information was presented that affected them.

The sessions on insurance seemed to be the most challenging for the project participants because many of them do not yet understand why life insurance is necessary. Many of them felt they were too young to talk about death and the fact that they are not immune from the same happening to them. As a result, this author found participation to be relatively low during the insurance session of financial literacy. There was not as much of an effort on the parts of the participants genuinely to understand insurance and why it is necessary.

Overall, in their surveys the students who participated in the academy showed a minimal gain. They voiced that the academy was beneficial to them, as it gave them the opportunity to voice their opinion on some issues in which they feel they are not heard. They also indicated that the financial literacy classes were the most beneficial to them because this was the part of the academy where they learned the most regarding matters they want to know about. Because the academy was only six weeks, there was not much room for them to grow, as the sessions were only an hour. They did concede that mindset is a major issue with their generation and perhaps one of the main reasons for their lack of motivation to be the best that they can be.

It is of some importance to note that parental participation in their surveys was marginal. Most of the parents of the teens who participated were minimally involved in the process. Parents in both communities exhibit a sense of entitlement that suggest they expect community leaders to intervene and be who they (the parents) are supposed to be. The parents who did participate felt good about the academy and what it has to offer adolescents in the future. They affirmed some of the concerns the teenagers had about mindset. Parents were thrilled about the

financial literacy classes and acknowledged that they wished they had the opportunity to take those classes when they were younger. Overall, the parents who participated were excited about the progression of their teenagers.

The Experts

In an effort to discover the viewpoint of educational leaders concerning the plight of today's adolescents, this author interviewed four principals who collectively share over one hundred years of experience in education. Two of the experts are current principals, one is an assistant principal, and the other one is a recently retired principal who was a turnaround specialist for failing schools. Their viewpoints about the teenager of yesteryear and the youth of today offer an insightful look into the changes that have occurred in the mindsets of modern teenagers and the challenges that churches and community leaders face while attempting to equip today's teenagers with essential life skills. It is important to note that the experts this author asked to participate in this project were extremely accommodating and excited about the opportunity to offer their expertise about the plight of today's adolescents. They also unanimously acknowledged that today's churches and community leaders face a new set of obstacles that have not previously been encountered.

When asked what skills that they believe teenagers lack, the experts agreed that many of the soft skills this writer's generation were equipped with at home are deficient in this generation of youth. When asked, "What are the main life skills that you see absent in our youth when they graduate?" Ms. Phalanda Perriman of Rise Academy stated that "communication, interpersonal, work ethic, time management, decision-making, creative thinking, problem-solving, self-esteem/self-awareness, and empathy" are all found wanting (see Appendix E). Ms. Perriman highlighted the cell phone and limited or absent training at home as reasons for the lack of

previously mentioned skills. She stated as well that some adjustments need to be made to most curriculums to allot for the addition of life skills courses.

Jeff Cher, principal at Eastside High School, offered a different perspective on where the disconnect between teenagers and adults is taking place (see Appendix F). When asked whether or not he believed that the lack of parenthood is the reason that teenagers are so unequipped for the world into which they are going, Cher replied, “I don’t know if home life is any more or less regulated than it was previously, but I think the relationship and attachment to the cell phone is more, more unregulated. So, they almost have two different worlds, the real world that they exist in and the virtual world that their cell phone connects them to.” This author has witnessed this temperament daily from teenagers, even before the pandemic, and did not understand why they were so disengaged from school and failing to gain the perspective and life skills they need to be effective in the world. Existence in two worlds for anyone is a problem, especially when everything is available in the virtual world, and the physical world presents limitations that teenagers feel are unreasonable.

Mr. Cher also alluded to educational leaders keeping a healthy balance of day-to-day operations and proactive resolutions. The two previously mentioned actions were mentioned as the heads up/heads down strategy. Often, educational leaders are not incompetent. They just do not have enough information to make an effective decision for the whole because they do not have an adequate amount of balance. The latter could possibly be obtained by spending time “in the trenches” with their teachers and principals to gain more of the perspective that actually pertains to their teachers and principals before making a decision. This perspective could very well be the difference between an impactful decision or a choice that leaves all of their employees puzzled as to what they were thinking.

In his interview, Dr. Michael Okpah highlighted cell phone usage as being the major reason for the lack of necessary life skills in today's teenagers (see Appendix G). He attributed the inability of adolescents to communicate effectively because of cell phone usage and alluded to texting eroding youth's proficiency in adequate grammatical skills. Dr. Okpah stated, "Teachers teach the skills that are needed; however, the influence of technology and instant gratification has made it impossible for some of our students to translate what they learn in class to real life situations." He contended that previously excluded rudimentary skills need to be reintroduced to school curriculums in order for necessary changes to occur.

This author had to adjust his last interview as the last expert, Ms. Betty Jordan, experienced some unexpected health issues and could not participate in a formal interview. Her vast experience in the classroom and as an administrator cannot be negated as she is the most experienced educator this author had the opportunity to interview. As Ms. Jordan does not live in Georgia, an in-person interview was not possible. She did, however, speak candidly over the phone about what she sees happening in this generation of teenagers. Ms. Jordan acknowledged the fact that teenagers are attached to their cell phones, are apathetic, and are reluctant to participate in school. She also agreed that students are not graduating with the life skills they need to be successful. Ms. Jordan, however, offered a unique take on a resolution for adolescents. She feels that if the school day and week were shortened, young people would be more willing to go to school with a better attitude. According to her, the school day should start at ten a.m. and end at two p.m. The school week should run from Monday to Thursday and only cover core classes. Electives should be offered on Fridays or Saturdays for the students who want to attend.

Student Surveys

A point of view that has frequently been ignored is that of teenagers. In the minds of their parents and family members, they exist as little versions of themselves until they are out of the house and have their own responsibilities. The truth of the matter, however, is that many times the purest resolutions come from those who do not often get to voice their opinions on different matters. By the time they are asked their opinions, they feel as if they have nothing to lose since they assume their opinion will not otherwise matter.

Teenagers cannot be ignored as they see and understand much more than the adults around them realize. All too often, the only time that adults care to listen to adolescents is when some type of crisis has occurred. When teenagers do destructive things, whether it be to themselves, to others, or to their surroundings, the adults who have neglected them then decide to pay attention. Their ideas are often discounted because adults in many cases say that they have not lived long enough for their opinions to matter. Adults must understand, however, that teenagers often offer answers from a different perspective that adults may not have entertained. Their answers may not contain tainted agendas, as well. Therefore, adolescents may provide more pure resolutions aimed at solving problems and not creating other ones.

As a high school teacher, this writer has access to 159 teenagers daily. So, he took the opportunity to survey his students on three different occasions to measure their disillusionment with public education and learning in general. This author's students were also asked about improvements they would make to public education to resolve their apathy in relation to school. Finally, this writer's students were queried about classes that they feel needed to be added to the county's curriculum in order for them to receive the skills they want to have upon graduation from high school.

Overall, high schoolers do not like going to school (see Appendix H). They are often apathetic, lethargic, and irritable because they feel their opinions do not matter. Thus, their attitude about learning also suffers because they do not view school as an opportunity to gain the essential life skills that they need to be successful. They view it as something that is forced upon them by adults who do not know them or value their opinion. Teenagers know and understand that they need a high school diploma to be successful, but they expect the adults who are in charge to take notice of their negative disposition, ask questions, and listen to them. They want to know that their opinions matter, and that the adults whom they trust not only listen to them but also work on their end to make a difference.

Teenagers are angry about going to school early in the morning. They hate waking up at seven a.m. to ride a bus with other teenagers that they do not like to go to a school that they do not like to deal with teachers that they do not like. By the time they are disciplined by an administrator or a teacher for dress code or something that they feel is pointless, they are done and ready to go home, even if they have only been at school an hour or less. Students do not care for the length of the traditional school day, or that it has been accepted for so many years. They feel that the norm should have been changed when COVID-19 became a problem.

Young people are very cognizant of the fact that their mentalities were changed when the only thing that was possible, school-wise, for almost a year, was a virtual model. During this time, they adjusted very quickly to being able to stay at home and check in on their classes when they got ready. Some students would turn on their cameras and be very attentive during class. Others slept and played games. Regardless of what teenagers did when they were expected to learn from home for almost a year, they learned that adults could make changes if they had no

choice. As a result, students want effective modifications to the daily school schedule and week that would make each of them significantly shorter.

Adolescents want school to be more interesting and for school leaders to be more innovative in creating a school environment that students embrace and want to attend. With respect to the recent occurrence of COVID and all of its variants, students do understand the complexities involved in school leaders' decisions. However, they feel that their desires were not considered when the latter occurred. Students find no pep rallies and no group activities during the school year to be unacceptable and that school leaders need to do something, anything they can to mitigate the current restrictions. In their minds, learning should be fun regardless of what is going on in the world.

As prefaced earlier, young people feel that they are forced to go to school, and they resent the fact that they do not have a choice in the matter. This author and other teachers have stressed to their students that today's teenagers are not experiencing anything that previous generations did not encounter, much to the chagrin of their students. As well, adolescents have heard on many occasions from this author that school was more difficult when he and their parents attended the same. The latter point did not help the discussion as adolescents do not like to hear about the difficulty or lack thereof of older generations. Their opinion on the matter is that adjustments need to occur for today's youth, and the talk of yesterday's students needs to cease as it is no longer relevant.

Adolescents want modifications to occur, but they do not always know the correct ways to go about effecting the changes they want to see. This author has instructed them on several occasions to create petitions and go to board meetings to inspire change. Teenagers, however, feel that the latter approach is too much and requires them to become familiar with processes

about which most of them could not care less. They tend to shy away from formal processes that would require them to change their mindset and approach to certain issues. Perception and optics are huge factors in the decisions of teens because they do not want to “go out bad” or do something that makes them look like an “opp” in front of their classmates or peers.

Teenagers care more about mitigating policies, such as the dress code, that have been the same for years by complaining to people who have no power to change them. Again, this author has instructed them to get their parents involved in the county board of education meetings to no avail. As it turns out, many of their parents would rather complain to the principal about a teacher taking their child’s cell phone or something that is of no consequence to the student body as a whole. The previously mentioned parents also do not care to find out when the board of education meetings are. The behavior of the parents is symbolic as it explains the demeanor of their children.

Because of their disillusionment with school, teenagers, in a lot of cases, act out. School leaders have noticed that discipline problems are abundant, some of which are different from any that have ever occurred. Many of them are oblivious as to how to alleviate students’ lethargic mindsets and cause them to focus more on the reasons that they should come to school and focus on graduating. As a result, numerous school leaders are scrambling to stabilize their schools and prevent negative behavioral occurrences. Damage control has become an everyday or every week consideration as school leaders work to stay out of the news in relation to student behavioral problems.

Social media has also taken the discontentment of teenagers and given it a cause in those who would not normally act out. In recent months, there have been several “challenges” to teenagers to misbehave and do things at school that they knew would get them into trouble if

they got caught. One such challenge involved students removing soap dispensers and rearranging toilets in school bathrooms. Another challenge was for adolescents to walk up to a random teacher and slap him or her. Teens do not care about the resulting trouble because rebelling is fun and the video recording of their defiance may go viral.

The only thing that many of those students who act out understand is that they are tired of school and that they do not want to be there. They feel eight hours is too much of their day to be somewhere that they do not want to be and that the people they feel are forcing them to be there should pay for their inconsiderate "discretion." As a result, many students act out and do not care about the consequence(s). In essence, many of them hope that their actions give way to their voice. They want to truly be heard and for meaningful actions to occur afterward.

Teenagers do not realize or even care, for that matter, that the adults whom they are expecting to make adjustments are in a new period of their lives as well. School leaders, teachers, and students were all out of school in most districts for almost a year because of COVID-19, while superintendents and politicians worked to navigate a situation that no one has seen in over a hundred years. Spanish flu, the last such pandemic, occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century, and there are no experts from that time who are still living. So, school leaders, teachers, and politicians are all traversing circumstances they have never faced, just as students are. The request that is the same for adults and teens is that latitude occur from all parties, as the environment in which all parties now find themselves is new.

When students were asked why they waste so much time, an overwhelming majority of them replied that they feel like they will have time to make up for their mistakes when they get older (see Appendix I). They want to have fun and be allowed to make the mistakes they feel like their parents were allowed to make. Most teenagers realize their cell phones and social media are

problems, but many of them lack the motivation to break away from them and focus their attention and adequately prioritize their time. Adolescents also acknowledge that they are indifferent toward focusing on the things that adults feel are important because they simply lack the desire to be responsible. Many teenagers only want to be responsible when involved in something that interests them.

Students who have a troublesome home life are also among those who waste a disturbing amount of time. Their reasoning is that if adults who are supposed to care for them are too wrapped up in their own problems to do so, they do not have anything to lose by acting out and wasting time. They feel that if their life is not important to their parent(s), then they will never get the attention that they want and need. There are also some teens in this group who feel that acting out will get them the attention that they so desperately desire, even if it is negative. To these teens, some attention is better than none at all. All teens who come from an abusive background do not act out. There are a select few who do not want a spotlight placed on them and their familial issues, so they comply fully with all rules and even excel in school.

Time is something that is of no consequence to many teens, as they feel they are too young for it to matter right now. Students feel that they will have more than enough time to make up for the time that they waste. Games and social media are more important to them, and often by the time they discover that they have wasted a substantial amount of time, it is too late. So, most times they are nonchalant about the punishment that occurs afterward because they had fun wasting time. Other times, they feel like the adults who are responsible for the negative reinforcement should just understand, as they were once young, too.

Some students waste time because they are more concerned with drama that exists in all schools and numerous situations outside of school. The extent which the latter affects the student

population depends on the demographic and their dependence on drama and fights. This author has worked at prominent schools and schools in low socioeconomic areas. It is a sad fact, but it seems that fights and drama are more coveted in low socioeconomic situations than ideal. The fact of the matter, however, is students who are raised in such situations adjust to the environment in which they are placed. Drama becomes more important if the surrounding environment cultivates it.

There is a considerable number of teens who are quite adamant that today's adult should give them a little more latitude with matters of responsibility and time. Adolescents, in many cases, are resolved that today's adults do not appreciate technological advances enough to understand their problems. They want the adults in their life to work harder to comprehend their struggles and help them without fussing so much. In their minds, today's adults are too aggressive and dwell on their past experiences too much.

Parents and teachers want teens to understand that time is not as prevalent as they think. Adults want their children to understand that they once used to think of time in the same light, but that they were wrong to do so. Modern teenagers do not have the time graces that yesterday's generation enjoyed. Parents want their children to fully comprehend the dangers of a nonchalant attitude and mindset regarding responsibilities, time management, and resilience.

During another survey, students were asked to offer suggestions for elective classes that they would like to be offered or what classes would make them want to attend school if they were on their schedule (see Appendix J). This generation of young people desires more control over their destiny than previous generations. This author remembers when he was in high school that more students desired to go to college. Nowadays, fewer and fewer teens raise their hands when the question, "Who wants to go to college?" is asked. It was apparent from the survey that

students would like to be able to take specialized classes at the school that they attend and not have to take a bus to another school. They feel their home school should have more options than just the basic, expected classes.

The obvious favorite of this writer's classes was financial literacy. Students recognize the importance of understanding money, credit, and investing. Teens recognize that they need more than what they have been taught at home to survive when they graduate high school. Overall, students want to have a more knowledge of money and how to manage it. They want their financial situation to be better than that of their parents. As a result, adolescents feel that school leaders and politicians should not just acknowledge the same but actually do something about it.

Several students also mentioned entrepreneurship and the fact that they would like to start a business. Owning a business is a concept that is very popular with modern teens. They want to run their own business, in many cases because they understand that doing so comes with a variety of bonuses if their business is successful. Many of them do not want to work for someone else because they have already had the typical jobs teenagers have in high school. However, when asked what type of business they want to own, numerous teens do not have an idea what sort of business they want; they just want to be successful and make their own hours.

Art was also extremely popular because so many students love to doodle. In fact, the students who love to draw view it as a way to deal with stress. Many students mention this subject as being necessary because of the mental health problems that have become more apparent with teenagers in recent years. From time to time, this author has witnessed students doodling in class when they should have been working. However, this writer did not know that those students were probably doodling to calm their anxiety or attempting to settle their minds with something at which they knew they were skilled.

It is also interesting to note that many students want an opportunity to take a culinary class as a part of their regular schedule, not just from a career academy standpoint. It seems that more students nowadays cook or desire to learn to cook than when this writer was in high school. This year alone this author discovered that numerous male teens that he has surveyed desire to be chefs not only because they like to cook, but they also love to eat. When this writer was in high school, there were not as many male students who wanted to be chefs because they wanted to play professional sports.

Many students want the opportunity to take a variety of foreign languages. In most of the high schools in the Southern United States, only two language classes are offered, Spanish and French. Some students mentioned that they want the opportunity to take Russian, Japanese, Mandarin, or Arabic classes. This desire from several students in this author's classes represents a longing to satisfy the cultural void that affects many teens. Overall, adolescents desire to get out of their houses and neighborhoods to go different places and experience different things. In the school setting, they love field trips away from the school to learn about new things.

The elective choices of this author's students show that they would like to be more well-rounded and prepared for the world into which they are going. Teenagers recognize their inability to be effective in certain scenarios because they do not have the skillsets to do so. Young people, regardless of their bad choices, would like to help create a better world, and evidence of this fact can be seen in their class selections. They want to take financial literacy classes because they do not want to make the mistakes that they have seen their parents make with money and credit. Adolescents want to take entrepreneurship classes because they know that they may not possess the people skills necessary to be successful in the corporate world.

Teenagers desire to keep their art classes because they want tools to help them deal with their stress.

In a less formal survey, this author asked students, “How would you change Eastside High School if you were the principal?” To this, numerous students replied that they would change the dress code. Students feel that they should be able to wear pajama pants to school because they do not show skin and they are comfortable. Adolescents also expressed discontent with some students receiving dress code violations and others being allowed to violate without repercussions. Students feel that the current dress code policy does not take all students into account and that some are allowed to do whatever they want to do while others are made to comply.

Several students also complained about school lunch and their inability to accept the types of lunch they are offered, even though it is free. They say that the food is horrible and sometimes expired. Teenagers want more lunch choices and are upset with the current situation because they feel that their opinions do not matter. They feel that they should be able to eat whatever they want for lunch and that free lunch should not mean undesirable food. Many students throughout the year try to get meals through Door Dash or Uber Eats, only to find out that they cannot do so while they are in school.

It is rare to find a student nowadays who is not disillusioned with institutional learning. Most teens only care about the changes that they feel need to occur, regardless of the effect that their change would have on other students. There is next to no consideration for others in this generation concerning other people because adolescents are in survival mode most of the time. They feel that other people’s problems belong to them and not the whole. Teenagers in a lot of

cases do not care that everyone is affected by the action(s) of one, even if the effect is not shown immediately.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to discover the ability of teenagers to be successful if there is an intentional effort by the church and community leaders to equip adolescents with essential life skills. The youth at UL^2 Church must learn essential life skills to be impactful in the world into which they are going. The adolescents at Universal Love and Life Church must not only learn essential life skills to be successful in the secular world, but they must also learn to employ those skills. It is not enough simply to have information. Anyone can read a book and obtain knowledge—the information only becomes useful if it is applied. Otherwise, the knowledge is just there.

Some Knowledge Is Present

The first takeaway from this author's research is that many of today's teenagers have received some instruction concerning the necessary life skills that seem to be absent. Teens are not completely devoid of the learning that many adults feel is lacking. It is evident that adults at some point in the lives of those youths have attempted to impart the wisdom that they knew those adolescents would need to be the best version of themselves. While a number of teens do not display any characteristics of having been taught basic life skills, there are others in whom the knowledge of the previously mentioned skills is evident. These teens, however, solely elect to display their life skills only when their situation mandates it.

After surveying the teenagers in this writer's classes and academy, he has found that many teenagers have been taught customs and courtesies. They just do not use them. As well, many have been taught how to behave in public and other protocols. It is just more important to them to practice living the opposite way(s) that they have been taught. When asked why manners

and proper etiquette are not observed by them as much in today's society, the adolescents quickly replied, "The people who do are lame."

It is disturbing to think that one behaving in the proper way(s) that one should is viewed as "lame" or not being cool. It is also harrowing to contemplate the idea that there is an intentional effort by teens to maintain and promote a "thug-like" mentality. Disturbingly, this mentality has been allowed to infiltrate society as a normal way of thinking for many teenagers, whether they are from well-to-do areas or low socioeconomic areas. The overall objective for most adolescents who display this demeanor is to be left alone or feared by their counterparts so that they will not be bullied.

It can be hard to fathom that such a disposition would be allowed to exist until one meets the parents of such adolescents. The parents and guardians of these teens and children in many cases encourage and even model the previously mentioned behavior. The ideology behind this conduct is that it is no longer popular or safe to be nice because being nice makes one a "mark" or an "opp." One who is termed as either of the last two faces the possibility of being picked on or abused on a consistent basis. In other words, cynicism is a way of life because children and teens are taught that they can trust no one and offer respect only to those who offer it to them first.

Many times, this writer has encountered disbelief when he told his students in a class setting that he loved them all and wanted to see them become the best versions of themselves possible. A couple of students even responded negatively. In some cases, students have come up with colorful ways to voice their skepticism at the previous statement because of the letdowns they have incurred under the guise of parents, family members, leaders, and teachers who told them something similar but showed them something altogether different. Adults often forget that

children and teenagers watch everything and forget nothing. People who are graced to have influence in the lives of teens must learn to say what they mean and mean what they say.

When asked, adolescents are passionate about their desire to have opportunities to take courses that will better prepare them for the world into which they are going. This author's students were adamant about the reason(s) they abhor the current educational curriculum model. They simply do not feel that their needs are being met in the public-school setting. Adolescents want change, but they do not understand how to make it happen. They are apathetic because they are upset and feel like the adults who have the influence and power to help are not hearing them. In their minds, school is lame and the powers that be are not doing anything about it. Adolescents feel that adults should not be so quick to talk badly about their generation if they refuse to do anything to help them get better.

To mitigate the unwillingness of teenagers to display the life skills that some of them have been taught, this researcher recommends that parents and respected family figures, in general, display the behaviors that they expect to see. Nowadays, many parents do not observe the skills that their parents taught them because they feel that their parents were too hard on them. They must understand, however, that young adults, in many cases, are photocopies of the adults who raised them and the famous people whom they admire. Adolescents often do not have the wherewithal to set the example regardless of what the adults around them are doing. If the influential adults in their lives make them feel certain behaviors are acceptable, teens ascribe to those behaviors. Parents have more influence than they realize.

Lack of Motivation

The second takeaway from this writer's research is that teenagers will say that they want help with the skills that they lack, but their follow-up is absent. One of the main issues for future

research is to discover how to motivate adolescents to move past temporarily making themselves feel better only to quit before they ever get started. Teenagers know the perfect things to say to convince adults that they are willing to do what is necessary to become positive members of society. Many of them also know what skills they need to acquire; they just lack the motivation and inspiration to do so. They also do not understand that many of the adults who love them enough to listen want to see the action that solidifies their words.

Countless teenagers understand that they need help in many different areas. They will readily admit that they do not feel that they have the tools they need to be successful. Many teenagers will even offer suggestions as to the classes that they need to be positive members of society because they do recognize the importance of the latter. The problem, however, is that too many of them do not follow through when opportunities are offered to help them remedy their issues. Too often, teenagers and young adults lack the motivation to do the things that will help make them better. In their minds, getting better would be good, but the process that it takes to become successful is "doing too much."

Throughout this project, adjustments had to occur as many different variables are present in the lives of adolescents. This author found that some of the participants have jobs and could not attend sessions because they had to work. It was disturbing as well to find out that some of the teens who could not make the sessions because they had to work are expected to help pay the bills where they live. Some teens could not make some of the academy sessions because they lacked the necessary support from their parents to attend.

It is telling that only a couple of the parents of teens who attended the academy offered their thoughts concerning the progress of their teens. The parents of the other teens have never reached out to this writer or sent a message through their children, even though they knew that

this author was offering a program designed to help their children. Parents must be more involved in the lives of their teens and understand that their relationship with their children directly affects all aspects of their children's ability to be successful. This author noticed during his research that teens have no problem committing to an effort that is for their betterment. As stated previously, however, they need adequate support from the adults in their lives. Too many adolescents are called on to make grown-up decisions to help their parents with things that are not their responsibility. The efforts of the youths are not often reciprocated because the adults in their lives cannot afford to or just will not do so. It is also probable that the lack of inspiration on the part of the parents is the reason for the absence of motivation in their teens.

Teens want to be the best versions of themselves, but many of them do not realize the importance of formulating a plan and goals and sticking to them. To resolve this problem, this author recommends that schools and parents incentivize teenagers to follow through. Querying youths to discover the items that they would like to be rewarded upon the achievement of their goals would be ideal as it would meet their need to be heard. Rewards must be within reason and agreed upon and observed by both parties. The adults in this situation must do their part as reneging would foster angry teenagers and an unproductive, cynical environment.

Cell Phone World

The third takeaway from this effort is that the cell phone is a major problem with today's youth. The aforementioned thought is consistent with all of the experts and even some of the students. It is a disturbing fact that so many young people who have yet to discover themselves are graced with a contraption (cell phone) that gives them access to any piece of information that they desire to learn within a matter of milliseconds. Many of them do not use their smartphones to capacity or even understand everything that their phones can do. All many of them want their

phones for is to listen to music, to play games, to take pictures and videos, and to engage with social media. The only times some teens use their phones for anything educational is to cheat on tests by looking up the answers.

Cell phone usage by teenagers should be regulated by those who pay the bill for them. In most cases, the culprit is the parent, but the cell phone provides a way for parents to have some time by themselves and for their teens to stay busy with their own lives. The virtual world in which teens find themselves most often negates their need to have essential life skills while they are engulfed. Disillusionment occurs when they emerge back into reality because they need skills that they do not have for the world in which they actually exist.

The world has drastically changed since the inception of this project. This change has created new norms and further corrupted the minds of many adolescents after they were sent home for almost a year beginning in March 2020. The change is that cell phones have become even more of a comfort to teenagers who already did not know how to put them down. When teachers and students were out of school for almost a year in most districts because of COVID-19, students were at home with their games and their cell phones. This author experienced students during this time who checked into class but then started playing their video games.

When questioned by this author in class as to why they will not put their phones down and listen to instruction, so many students have responded with the phrase, “I heard what you said. I can do both at the same time.” Shortly after a statement like this, students must admit that they did not hear everything that was said. This acknowledgement can be inferred from their next question that normally asks this writer to repeat something that was said when they were concerned with whatever was on their phone. Much to the dismay of this writer, many

instructions are not heard and must be repeated. Teenagers do not understand that doing two things effectively at the same time is extremely difficult.

It is a difficult matter to separate any person from a world in which anything they desire to see is at their fingertips. One's cell phone allows one to be anywhere one wants to be and appear to be whomever one wants to be. This author knows that the virtual world that emanates from one's cell phone is extremely addicting, as this writer checks his own cell phone several times in a day. The truth, however, is that virtual worlds are not reality, and one's timeline is set by an algorithm that allows them to see things that they like. Their friends' posts are full of things that they want their social media friends to see, not necessarily the truth.

Teenagers must learn to focus on the things that are important. Many of them graduate with the hard skills they need to be successful but find it frustrating that they do not have corresponding life skills. By the time many of them realize that they are lacking soft skills, they have already built a terrible business reputation. So many of them do not grow up with a healthy understanding of the importance of relationships and networking. As a result, the same teenagers and young adults end up in trouble, without a job, or angry at the world for not holding still while they acquire the characteristics that they need.

This writer suggests that parents monitor their youths more and regulate their cell phone usage to mitigate this problem. A person's mindset is essential in most situations, especially when learning is supposed to occur. Cell phones have become an object of comfort to most people, not just teenagers. Adolescents are not the only ones who retreat to their phones when they are uncomfortable; adults and parents do too without regard for the fact that their children are watching their every move. This researcher's suggestion in this instance also lends credence

to the idea that parents must be the example for their children. In most cases, parents still have the most influence on their children.

More Mentors Needed

The fourth takeaway from the research is that people who are viewed as leaders by teens should value their influence enough not only to model the appropriate behaviors and dispositions in public but also mentor teens who look up to them. As stated previously, adolescents learn from those whom they respect, those whom they feel have it together. Teens do not understand that the perceptions of their idols are often created by the public relations firms that are working behind the scenes to create the captivating façades to which youths aspire. The aforementioned idea may or may not be true, and that in and of itself may be worth exploration in a separate effort.

There are not enough men and women out in the trenches working with the young generation to alter the state of society. Modern society is one in which clichéd statements are more important than the actions that should predate or follow the same. Most adults in society have no problem speaking their minds but do not exhibit the same energy that is captured in their opinions. This author is not the only person who has observed this behavior as it is prevalent in society. The scary issue at hand is that teens have also seen adults say one thing and do another. Adolescents no longer care that an adult is their elder because they have learned that age does not make one apt to lead. Respect is no longer commensurate with age and prestige but with actions.

There are other adults whom teens admire who can, in some ways, have more of a positive effect on young people. Teachers and church leaders can only effect change to the extent that they have time and opportunity. Every adult can appeal to the masses on the basis of their

busy schedule and argue that they do not have the time. There is almost never a convenient time to help someone else. Sacrifice is one of those things that often starts with reluctance and ends in incomparable fulfillment.

The issue at hand is that teenagers see the unwillingness of their idols to prioritize them and teach them the better ways to operate in the world. Teenagers understand that people prioritize the things that are important to them. To a young person, one of the most hurtful things is for an adult that they admire to refuse invest the time to help them to be better people. Other damaging situations include making appointments with their children that they never intend to honor and trying to make up for lost time by spending money. Teens do not receive the amount of credit for being as wise as they are. If they do not feel like they matter, teens make decisions that are just as destructive as the ones adults make. They may not receive the type of the attention that they want, but to them some attention is better than none.

Many times, adults make the same mistakes that teens do when they assume there will be time to make up for missed appointments and a refusal to be who they should be. However, Geoffrey Chaucer's quote, "Time and tide wait for no man," is one that consistently manifests itself as a fact. Time is an entity that keeps moving, regardless of the irresponsible mindsets of its stewards. Regardless of the constraints on the time of adults, they must show the appreciation that they have for the youth in their care by spending meaningful time with them. It is a genuine honor for any child or young adult to revere an adult so much as to want to spend time with them. Over the years that previously mentioned honor is one that many adults have taken for granted. Evidence of the latter can be seen in the actions of adults who refuse to make time for their children and those who pawn their children off on others.

To negate the results from the problem named above, this author recommends an intentional effort by leaders to mentor and develop the same. Mentorship is invaluable, but those who excel at this skill must cultivate and equip others who are willing to do the same. One of the ways that positive ideologies and mentalities spread is that those who are efficient and competent intentionally work to persuade young adults to adopt their thinking. However, the latter idea requires a humility that leaders must embrace to be effective. They would have to meet the teens where they are mentally and work to bring them up to where they want them to be.

Humble Unbiased Look

This author's final takeaway for this effort is that change will begin to occur with teenagers and young adults on a substantial scale when all leaders and adults look at themselves and are honest about who they are and have been. A complete, humiliating conversation with everyone is unnecessary, but positive actions to correct mistakes are. Too many egotistical, narcissistic, selfish people have been allowed to be at the helm of leadership. They may never suffer the consequence of their inadequacies and insecurities; however, the people they are graced to lead do because decisions are made for one, not the whole. Leaders must realize that their decisions directly affect everyone they are graced to serve and even some people outside of their purview.

Significant shifts in technology occurred between the time that millennials embraced their adulthood and the adolescence of "Gen Z." Pagers and two-ways ruled when this author was in high school. When this writer was a teenager and wanted to see someone, he had to jump in his car and go see them. Nowadays, the same effort is unnecessary because video calls are available from one's cell phone. Teenagers do not have to expend much energy doing what they want to do. Almost everything they desire to do is available through an application on their

phone. The only exceptions are eating, sleeping, and in some cases, things that they have no business doing or being concerned about at such a young age.

Children and teenagers will overcome their stagnation when the adults around them do the same. Many fingers have been pointed at Generation Z for their selfish ways and lack of motivation to take action. Previous generations have expectations that are not important to Generation Z. While accusations toward Generation Z may or may not be true, Millennials must acknowledge their complicity in not modeling the behavior(s) they expect to see. The fact of the matter is that teens witness the adults in their lives do things from which they attempt to discourage them. This idiosyncrasy makes no sense to adolescents or adults when they think about it. It is counterproductive to tell youths, “Do what I say do, not what you see me do.” In almost every situation where this statement occurs, young people do just the opposite.

Teenagers care more about today than tomorrow. It is disturbing that so many young people do not get the opportunity genuinely to enjoy their childhoods because their survival, in their minds, is always at stake. As a result, they learn to be selfish, and their lack of motivation often comes from not feeling prioritized. Parents cannot mitigate the responsibility that they have to their children and expect them to be inherently good or productive. Almost all people move in a direction in which they are interested and toward people who accept them. Most often, the latter mentioned youths move toward street life because others who embrace street life are the first to embrace them for who they are.

Band-Aids have been attempted by some educational leaders when they have purchased whatever the new, popular program is, applied pressure on their subordinates to use it, but did not obtain total buy-in. Bandages never heal problems. Solutions are only as effective as the diligence and fidelity of the application. Optics can never take precedence over the real issue.

This author has witnessed leaders who care about how things look instead of what exists. The only time he has genuinely witnessed good things occur is when people matter more than optics.

Adults love to say, “The children are our future,” but their actions say something different. The changes that must occur revolve around humility, acceptance of responsibility, and mutual respect. Teenagers are constantly watching the adults in their lives and hoping that they will be whom they are supposed to be, especially if they have previously failed them. Adults, however, must understand the previous point that time is continually moving and do their part to help their posterity. Great things do not happen solely because of a dream or wish. Meaningful, impactful actions must follow.

This researcher recommends that leaders implement meaningful resolutions to effect positive change. The resolutions that are employed must be specific to the leader’s situation and designed with the teenagers in their care in mind. Young people almost always notice change and will ask questions about why the modification was made. Their questions will give the leader an opportunity to explain the change and the effect that they hope it will have. Young people appreciate candor, and depending on the alteration, will feel vested enough to work towards the leader’s desired outcome.

This effort is the beginning of an ongoing project for this author because the problem that was researched in this endeavor did not just develop in the last couple of years. This writer has been an educator for just over eight years now and has watched this problem fester into what it is currently. The solution to the problems that exist is not one-fold, and perhaps many projects must occur before suitable answers surface as to how to equip as many young people as possible with the life skills they need. This author believes this effort was somewhat successful because valuable information was gathered from successful adults and teenagers discovering themselves

and the world. Both sides were forthcoming about their perspectives. It was an eye-opening experience to witness how candid teens are about their plight and the problems they believe affect their ability to succeed.

At the start of this project, this author was quite discouraged to learn that there was not much literature concerning this project. However, the status of young adults and their ability or inability to be successful in corporate America is a subject that is gaining traction as academicians attempt to learn why the teenage workforce is so deficient. A growing number of scholars recognize the absence of soft skills in this generation of teens as being a prevalent problem. This author expects that more research will occur because this problem is not specific to the teens of UL^2 Church, Stone Mountain, and Covington, GA. This author also witnessed this problem in the Shreveport, Louisiana, school district in which he was employed.

For future research, this author recommends that prospective researchers of teenagers work to make sure that their participants are vested in the research process. Perhaps a query of teenagers and the research participants may guarantee the latter. Future researchers may also explore the question, "How can researchers make teenage research participants feel vested in the research process?" If they know that they are part of the process and that their opinion matters, they will be more likely to participate and finish the research process. Teenagers who do not feel that they are part of the process will likely quit when they feel the least bit uncomfortable.

Another recommendation for research with teenagers is that cell phones be disallowed while participating if they are not a part of the research. Cell phones are counterproductive for research because they provide a virtual kingdom for their users. In this kingdom, all that is needed is their fingertips and attention. Research and learning require attention. So, researchers will compete for their participants' attention if cell phones are an issue.

Finally, this writer recommends that future researchers of teenagers provide some motivation for young adults to finish the program. For example, a future researcher might explore the question, “How are teenagers best motivated to finish the things they start?” Most teenagers want to receive something desirable to them for doing anything, even things that help them to be better versions of themselves. They need to feel like they are getting something for nothing. Researchers who consider this recommendation should be highly successful because their participants will likely finish their program.

Bibliography

Anderson, Elijah. "The Devolutions of the Inner School." *The Annals of the American Academy* 673, no. 1 (September 18, 2017): 60–79.

Anonymous. “Cheating the System.” *Girls' Life* 24, no. 3 (December 2017 January 2018): 56–57, 77.

Argue, Steven C., and Tyler S. Greenway. “Empathy with Emerging Generations as a Foundation for Ministry.” *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (January 2020): 110–29.

Babalis, Thomas L., Yota Xanthacou, and Maria Kaila, eds. *Single-Parenting in the 21st Century: Perceptions, Issues and Implications*. Family issues in the 21st century. Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2018.

Barnes, Sandra L., and Anne Streaty Wimberly. *Empowering Black Youth of Promise: Education and Socialization in the Village-Minded Black Church*. Routledge Research in Education 169. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Berliner, W., and J. Judd. *How Succeed at School: Separating Fact from Fiction What Every Parent Should Know*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Bharathi, A.V. "Communication Skills-core of Employability Skills: Issues and Concerns." *Higher Learning Research Communications* 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 1–12.

Blanchard, Ken, and Mark Miller. *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*. 3rd ed. A BK business book. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014.

Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. 233-235 ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Bradley, Michael J. *Crazy-stressed: Saving Today's Overwhelmed Teens with Love, Laughter, and the Science of Resilience By*. New York, NY: AMACOM, 2017.

Bouchard, Leah M., Sarah Kye Price, and Laura E.T. Swan. "The Role of the Contemporary Christian Church in the Rural American South: Philosophical Approach to Operationalizing Religion in Research." *Social Work and Christianity* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 47–64.

Brustein, Michael. *Perfectionism: A Guide for Mental Health Professionals*. New York: Springer Publishing Company, LLC, 2014.

Burnette, Josh, and Pete Hardesty. *Adulting 101: #Wisdom4Life*. Savage, Minnesota: Broadstreet Publishing, 2018.

Clark, Jeramy, and Jerusha Clark. *Your Teenager Is Not Crazy: Understanding Your Teen's Brain Can Make You a Better Parent*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016.

Clinton, Tim. *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009.

Cochrell, T. *Slaves of the Most High God: A Biblical Model Servant Leadership in the Slave Imagery of Luke-Acts*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018.

Coyne, Sarah M., Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Laura Stockdale, and Randal D. Day. "Game On. . . Girls: Associations Between Co-playing Video Games and Adolescent Behavioral and Family Outcomes." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 49 (November 2010): 160–65.

Damon, William. *Failing Liberty 101: How We Are Leaving Young Americans Unprepared for Citizenship in a Free Society*. Hoover Institution Press publication 611. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2011.

David, Susan, ed. *Beyond Goals: Effective Strategies for Coaching and Mentoring*. Farnham, Surrey: Gower Publishing Limited, 2013.

Delpit, Lisa. *"Multiplication Is for White People": Raising Expectations for Other People's Children*. New York: Perseus Distribution, 2012.

Emdin, Christopher. *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood-- and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*. A Simmons College/Beacon Press race, education, and democracy series book. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2016.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

Faverio, Michelle. "Share of Those 65 and Older Who Are Tech Users Has Grown in the Past Decade." Pew Research Center, January 13, 2022. Accessed February 27, 2022. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/01/13/share-of-those-65-and-older-who-are-tech-users-has-grown-in-the-past-decade/.

Fay, Franziska. *Disputing Discipline: Child Protection, Punishment, and Piety in Zanzibar Schools*. Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021.

Garland, David E. *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

Giant, Nikki. *Life Skills and Career Coaching for Teens: A Practical Manual for Supporting School Engagement, Aspirations and Success in Young People Aged 11-18*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2019.

Gold, Jodi. *Screen-Smart Parenting: How to Find Balance and Benefit in Your Child's Use of Social Media, Apps, and Digital Devices*. London: Guilford Press, 2015.

Golombok, Susan. *Modern Families: Parents and Families in New Family Forms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Grisanti, Michael A., Tremper Longman III, and David A. Garland. *Deuteronomy: The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2012.

Groh, Matthew, Nandini Krishnan, David McKenzie, and Tara Vishwanath. "The Impact of Soft Skills Training on Female Youth Employment: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Jordan." *IZA Journal of Labor and Development* 5, no. 1 (May 2016): 1–23.

Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Downer's Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2011.

Ham, Ken. *Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World: Leaving a Lasting Legacy*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006.

———. *Six Days: The Age of the Earth and the Decline of the Church*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2013.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Heffernan, Lisa, and Mary Dell Harrington. *Grown and Flown: How to Support Your Teen, Stay Close as a Family, and Raise Independent Adults*. New York: Flatiron Books, 2019.

Holland, Megan M., and Stefanie DeLuca. "Why Wait Years to Become Something?" Low-Income African American Youth and the Costly Career Search in For-Profit Schools." *Sociology of Education* 89, no. 4 (October 2016): 261–78.

Hoppenheimer, Jeremiah T. *How Smart Is Your Phone – Sequel*. London: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2021.

Hughes, Phillip. "Why Young People Are Leaving the Church." *Pointers: Bulletin of the Christian Research Association* 25, no. 1 (March 2015): 1–8.

Hughes, Richard L. *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience*. 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2012.

Iyer, Akhil. *Up the Ladder: 10 Essential Life Skills for Every Millennial to Fast Track Their Career*. Columbia, South Carolina: Happy Self-Publishing, 2020.

Keener, Craig S. *1 Peter: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

Kèostenberger, Andreas J., and Terry L. Wilder, eds. *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*. Nashville: B&H Pub. Group, 2010.

Klemens, Guy. *The Cell Phone: The History and Technology of the Gadget that Changed the World*. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2010.

King, Daniel L., and Paul H. Delfabbro. *Internet Gaming Disorder*. London: Elsevier, 2019.

———. "The Natural History of Problematic Internet Use and Gaming: Recent Findings, Challenges, and Future Directions." *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Technologies and Mental Health* (October 2020). Accessed February 27, 2022. http://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190218058.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190218058-e-6?print=pdf.

Kutner, Lawrence A., Cheryl K. Olson, Dorothy E. Warner, and Sarah M. Hertzog. "Parents' and Sons' Perspective on Video Game Play: A Qualitative Study." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 1 (January 2008): 76–96.

Lee Pham Thai. "Can God Create Humans with Free Will Who Will Never Commit Evil?" *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 1 (2020): 1–7.

Long, V. Phillips, and David G. Firth. *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Longman, Tremper. *How to Read Genesis*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Longman, Tremper, III, and Raymond B. Dillard. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Madueme, Hans, and Michael Reeves, eds. *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*. Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2014.

MacArthur, John, and The Master's Seminary Faculty. *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*. The John MacArthur Pastor's Library. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

Manson, Mark. *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2016.

McConville, Mark. *Failure to Launch: Why Your Twentysomething Hasn't Grown Up...and What to Do About It*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2020.

McCorkle, Suzanne. *Personal Conflict Management: Theory and Practice*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

McCready, Amy. *The Me, Me, Me Epidemic: A Step-by-step Guide to Raising Capable, Grateful Kids in an Over-entitled World*. New York: TarcherPerigee, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2016.

Michaelson, Valerie E., and Joan E. Durrant, eds. *Decolonizing Discipline: Children, Corporal Punishment, Christian Theologies, and Reconciliation*. Perceptions on truth and reconciliation 3. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2020.

Moore, Susie. *Stop Checking Your Likes: Shake Off the Need for Approval and Live an Incredible Life*. Novato, California: New World Library, 2020.

Moreau, A. Scott, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee. *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical and Practical Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Morris, Edward W. *Learning the Hard Way: Masculinity, Place, and the Gender Gap in Education*. The Rutgers series in childhood studies. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2012.

Muhammad, Anthony. *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*. 2nd ed. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree, 2018.

Northouse, Peter G. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2013.

Peterson, James C. *Why Don't We Listen Better? Communicating &Connecting in Relationships*. Portland, Oregon: Petersen Publishing, 2015.

Poliner, Rachel. *Teaching the Whole Teen: Everyday Practices That Promote Success and Resilience in School and Life*, 97–116. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, a SAGE Company, 2017.

Princess Marie Chantal of Greece, Tory Burch, and Perri Klass. *Manners Begin at Breakfast: Modern Etiquette for Families*. London: Vendome Press, 2020.

Reeves, Douglas B. *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results*. 2nd ed. Alexandria: ASCD, 2020.

Rhodes, Anthony, Maurice Danaher, and Ashley A. Kranov. “Concurrent Direct Assessment of Foundation Skills for Generation Education.” *On the Horizon* 26, no. 2 (2018): 79–90.

Ryan, Tony. *The Next Generation: Preparing Today's kids for an Extraordinary Future*. Milton, Australia: John Wiley and Sons Australia, 2018.

Seemiller, Corey, and Meghan Grace. *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2019. Originally published as, *vol. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon*.

Snair, Megan. *The State of Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Children and Youth in the United States: Proceedings of a Workshop*. Washington, D.C: National Academies Press, 2020.

Taylor, Catherine A., William Moeller, Lauren Hamvas, and Janet C. Rice. "Parents' Professional Sources of Advice Regarding Child Discipline and Their Use of Corporal Punishment." *Clinical Pediatrics* 52, no. 2 (November 2012): 147–55.

Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006

Towns, Elmer L. *Theology for Today*. Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning, 2008.

Townsend, John. *Boundaries with Teens*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Tozer, A. W. *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

Twenge, Jean M. *IGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy? And Completely Unprepared for Adulthood: And What That Means for the Rest of Us*. New York: Atria Books, 2018.

Vukich, Lee, and Steve Vandegriff. *Disturbing Behavior: 53 Alarming Trends of Teens*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: Academx Publishing Services, 2009.

Walton, John. *Genesis: From Biblical Text ... To Contemporary Life*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001.

Weber, Chris. *Behavior: The Forgotten Curriculum: an RTI Approach for Nurturing Essential Life Skills*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree, 2018.

Wilcox, Brad, and Jerrick Robbins. *How to Hug a Hedgehog: 12 Keys for Connecting with Teens*. Sanger, CA: Familius, 2014.

Wilson, Lindsay. *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 17. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2018.

Wilson, Todd. *Real Christian: Bearing the Marks of Authentic Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Woodbridge, John D., and Frank A. James III. *Church History Volume Two: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day the Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Yankyera, Patrick, Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, and E.T Jonathan. “The Church as a Spiritual and Social Being: A Holistic Approach to Ministry in the Contemporary Ghanaian Society.” *E-Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences* 1, no. 5 (October 2020): 185–93.

Appendix A

Initial Essential Life Skills Evaluation

Please rate your ability with the following skills from 1 to 10, with 1 being "I need help" and 10 being "I can help teach others." Circle the corresponding number.

1. **Communication**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. **Time Management**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. **Budgeting**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. **Resilience**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. **Customs and Courtesies**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. **Listening**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. **Decision-Making**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. **Interpersonal**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. **Self-Awareness**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. **Constructive Criticism**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Appendix B

Final Essential Life Skills Evaluation

Please rate your ability with the following skills from 1 to 10 with 1 being “I need help" and 10 being “I can help teach others.” Circle the corresponding number.

Communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Time Management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Budgeting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Resilience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Customs and Courtesies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Listening	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Decision-Making	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interpersonal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Self-Awareness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Constructive Criticism	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Appendix C

Participant Efficacy Questions

For the integrity of the project, please respond honestly to the following questions.

1. How much have you learned through this project? Give an example.
2. Do you believe that mindset (focus) plays a part in one's success or failure?
3. Were there any skills in which you thought you were proficient but learned that you were not? If so, name them.
4. Has this project helped you to feel more confident about your ability to be productive in the world?
5. Has the acquiring of these new skills helped you build a better relationship with your parents?
6. Describe your understanding of short-term and long-term goals.
7. Why is it important to write goals down after setting them?
8. How will you use what you have learned to accomplish your newly acquired goals?
9. Was there anything that you hoped to learn but did not?
10. What is one's “circle” and how does it impact one’s mindset?

Appendix D

Parental Evaluation of Project Survey

1. Have you noticed a change in the disposition of your son/daughter during their completion of this project/academy? If so, what?

2. Do you feel more confident about the ability of your child to be a productive citizen?

3. Are there skills that you wished your child would have learned from this project? If so, what skills?

4. Please provide any further feedback that you have for the betterment of this project/academy.

Appendix E

(Interview Questions and Responses from Ms. Phalanda Perriman Rise Academy Principal)

1. **What are the main life skills that you see absent in our youth when they graduate?**
   The main life skills that I see that are absent in our youth today when they graduate are:
   - Communication
   - Interpersonal
   - Work Ethic
   - Time Management
   - Decision-Making
   - Creative Thinking
   - Problem Solving
   - Self-Awareness/Self-Esteem
   - Empathy

2. **What do you think is the cause(s) for the absence of these skills?**
   I think our youth lack these skills due to several reasons such as:
   - Excessive dependency on technology and smart gadgets (i.e., cell phones)
   - Excessive social media usage
   - Life basic skills not taught enough in schools
   - Limited or absence of training in the homes
   - "Me, myself, and I" mentality

3. **Do you believe that public education allows educators the proper time and space to help teenagers gain these skills?**
   - I think this is a work in progress. Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to shut down in March 2020, awareness was heightened to address the needs of students beyond academics. More attention and emphasis have been placed on the need for Social Emotional Learning. During this pandemic, educators began to see and understand the lack of focus on these skills. Now, it is evident that school systems are working strategically to place more importance on these skills to address the needs of the whole child.

4. **Can you think of any resolutions that will help society equip our youth with the essential life skills that they need to be successful?**
   - Yes, school systems need to revamp some of the courses offered in schools. In addition to required curriculum classes, schools should incorporate basic life skills courses. It would be ideal to have 9th-11th grade students take a required basic life skill course each year and 12th graders take a require basic life skill course each semester prior to graduation.
   - Not only should life basic skills be taught in schools but also in homes. Parents are their children's first teachers. Teaching students life skills will help them understand who they are, what they want out of life, and how to become productive citizens.

- It would be great for employers to have students complete some type of life skills training course (communication, interpersonal, collaboration, empathy) prior to the students beginning a job whether part-time or full-time.

Appendix F

In-Person Interview with Jeff Cher (Principal of Eastside High School)

Interviewer: What are some of the main problems that you see with our teenagers now? Like, what are some of the skills that you see missing?

Cher: I think because they have grown up in a social media/cell phone generation that they are on a temporary timeline, meaning it's the here and now, the immediate, and it's hard for them to really plan or execute things on the long scope of time. It is very immediate and that things are a big deal at the moment but then pass much faster than for me in what I grew in. I would have big events occasionally, maybe once a month, maybe once every two months. They (teenagers) have big events moment by moment, but they pass and are getting ready for the next big event. So, I think for them it's just the temporary lifestyle caused by social media and by cell phones. They network together really well, but they think they all agree and don't all agree. So, they can cause themselves to be in groups but not really know exactly what the group really believes or have consensus among the group, but they are grouped up. Still think the creativity is actually much better than years past.

Interviewer: Really?

Cher: I do. That's what I have seen out of it. Is that when they choose to be creative, they think that because they are exposed to so many more possibilities than students previously, but I just don't know how hard working they are because again it's temporary. They are not really interested in the long haul of time of the investment of energy. So, that's the biggest thing. They still have as much need for love and attention and security and structure as any kids previously. That is not going to change, but just their time, their internal clock is much faster.

Interviewer: So, as far the home piece, what difference do you see now as opposed to, say, what we grew up with because we are right around in the same—

Cher: Right. I don't know if home life is any more or less regulated than it was previously, but I think the relationship and attachment to the cell phone is more, more unregulated. So, they almost have two different worlds, the real world that they exist in and the virtual world that their cell phone connects them to. I think the difference is not that parents are less involved or more involved than in the past. I think that parents are still doing things the way they are raised, but I think that what is happening now is that the cell phone is not being regulated. And so, when kids are going into that universe, it is unregulated, no real rules, no SEC controlling communication. An so they are able to see, be exposed, communicate, interact, access things that we never were able to. I never had money until I became a junior in high school and that's where I got ten dollars a week, five dollars for gas and five dollars for lunch. That's what I got in order to survive. Students now, they have access to funds. They start their own—

Interviewer: CashApp.

Cher: CashApp. Yeah, they're doing their own—So, it is just beyond what I would have when I was there, but that's that unregulated cell phone virtual universe, essentially. And when I say cell phone, I think that is all encompassing of social media, internet, computer, just being able to access the internet in an unregulated manner.

Interviewer: Got you. So, do you think from a high school level that there should be an avenue to give them the skills, maybe the soft skills that they're going to need because a lot of them graduate with hard skills. They can get on a computer. They can work the phones better than us. They can do a lot of things that we maybe didn't have to deal with, but as far as the people element, as far as the customer service element, communication . . .

Cher: Relationships? Well, just being able to interact with—I mean, they interact with people by text message, and not by formal email, not by a conversation. They are either going to video chat, or they are going to text message, or they are going to post on social media. There are no rules for grammar, no rules for punctuation, no rules for abbreviation, and they lose that formal aspect which we all kind of know. They also lose that relational aspect of tone and of approach, so that's something. Absolutely, I think we should be doing more soft skills. It comes down to society having to transition at this point and time with no negotiating that students can find any answer to any question that they want on their phone. So, knowledge is accessible, but as you are talking about now it's skill development and acquisition of that knowledge and consumption of that knowledge and synthesis of that knowledge. Education is slow to adapt to that because we love the knowledge that we have of Shakespeare. We love the knowledge that we have of doing a proof in Geometry. We love that knowledge, and we think that we are holding tight to it because it is what we more familiar with as adults and as educators, but students can access that on the phone now. The phone can do it for them. So, now we are going to have to grapple with what is essential for humanity, knowledge-wise, and what is essential for success in the future skill-wise and be able to merge that together some way. Right now, the time in the calendar limits us to knowledge and doesn't necessarily have a lot of extra time for skill. The assessments and accountability are still toward knowledge and not necessarily toward skill. So, it's a conversation we need to have as a nation, as a school system, as a school in order to blend those two things together.

Interviewer: In your opinion, do you think that sometimes the—maybe the knowledge or incompetence of some of the higher-ups gets in the way?

Cher: I don't know if it is necessarily incompetence. I think it is more just being able to relate to the boots on the ground of what is happening in the day-to-day classroom and the day-to-day school efforts, a combination of leadership of "heads down and heads up." This came from a book that I read by Truett Cathy from Chick-fil-A where he said, "Leaders need to have both 'heads down' leadership managing the day-to-day, moment-by-moment decisions, but also 'heads up' leadership to where you see the oncoming problems, situations, goals, achievements in the future, and be able to balance the two." So that you are not too day to day, but you are not too forward thinking, that you are balanced in guiding, the same as captaining a ship where you have to have the right momentary setup for the vessel to move, but also the directional force so that you arrive at your destination. The more complex different organizations become, the more removed the leader is from the actual day-to-day operations. So, knowing that, I really try to make sure that I am in the hallways, in classrooms. I'm trying to get more in classrooms, and I have been more in classrooms than I have previously this school year, not as much as previous school years, but certainly around the students so that I see them, and they see me. Visibility allows me to still have an understanding, I think, of some of the obstacles they (teachers and staff) face and some of the obstacles the kids face. So, I think it would serve all people in leadership well to, maybe not all the time, but enough that they get a representative sample or that they spend time in the actual day-to-day operations so that they get a representative sample of what's happening to be able to make decisions for that "heads down" and "heads up" leadership at their level.

Appendix G

(Interview Questions and Responses from Dr. Michael Okpah, Assistant Principal at Stone Mountain High School)

1. **What are the main life skills that you see absent in our youth when they graduate?**

The ability to write in complete sentences and to articulate their positions without using "texting" lingo.

2. **What do you think is the cause(s) for the absence of these skills?**

Lack of proper writing skills as a result of the introduction of short forms of writing due to cell phone usage.

3. **Do you believe that public education allows educators the proper time and space to help teenagers gain these skills?**

Yes, teachers teach the skills that are needed; however, the influence of technology and instant gratification has made it impossible for some of our students to translate what to learn in class to real life situations.

4. **Can you think of any resolutions that will help society equip our youth with the essential life skills that they need to be successful?**

The reintroduction of the "3 R's": reading, writing and arithmetic into the curriculum.

Appendix H

Student Survey #1

This survey represents this author's students and the class discussions that have occurred as a result of each student's addition to the survey. As previously stated, this author is an educator who is currently responsible for the English Language Arts education of 138 students. The students are spread out over seven periods with third period being a study hall. Fourth period will not be mentioned during this survey because it is this author's planning period. The students' ages range is from 14-18 and are in grades 9-12. Some of these come from high-socioeconomic situations, and others come from low-socioeconomic situations. There are also a healthy number of students whose parents are middle class. The diversity end of the spectrum suffers as the number of students represents 55% white, 42% black, 2% biracial, and 1% other.

In this survey students were asked, "Why do students not want to be at school?" They were also asked to respond in 100 words or more and to observe proper grammar and punctuation. All students who were present participated. Some were not present because of COVID, some have elected to attend school virtually, and others have elected not to attend school because of other unspecified reasons.

During first period, a variety of reasons were given for students' detestation of school. Several students indicated being lazy as a reason for them not wanting to come to school. Some students mentioned they do not want to attend school because it is boring. A large number of learners stated that they do not see a need for the subjects they are offered in school. They do not see how they will apply what they are being asked to learn when they graduate high school. Because of this thinking, many students in this class do not see school as an adequate use of their time. Several of these students also feel that waking up so early to go to school is unnecessary.

During second period, the reasons for not wanting to attend school were mostly a repeat of first period. Many of the students in second period cited waking up early as their main reason for hating school. Learners also stated that school should not last eight hours. Many said that school is boring and that teachers give too much work. In rare occurrences, students mentioned the laziness of their cohorts, or their displeasure with the dress code, and stated that many students feel that their time could be used better elsewhere. Some students in second period indicated that they have jobs and that school attendance and working a job is difficult because they do not have the time that they need to complete their homework. Other students mentioned the presence of drama and fights as being a major deterrent to coming to school.

This writer's fifth period students' sentiments mostly mirrored those of the previous classes, with emphasis on school being boring and not feeling like what is being taught will be useful in the world into which they are going. In a lot of cases, they felt that school is a waste of time and that they would rather be at home sleeping. Students do not like the pressure of having to make the grade, and they do not like getting up in the morning. A couple of students in this class did, however, highlighted a new reason, which was the lack of positive relationships between the students and teachers. Some students feel that teachers "do too much." This class also emphasized anxiety as a reason for not wanting to attend school. The safety of students was mentioned as a con of coming to school. In an interesting twist, one student out of the twenty-nine in this class mentioned that she likes coming to school.

This author's sixth period's students mentioned being lazy and just not wanting to come to school. Several students in this class mentioned that their mental health is suffering from having to attend school because they feel overwhelmed. Bullying is a reason that some of these students abhor school. This class overwhelmingly feels school is boring and lame and that the

environment is made toxic by students who come to school with the wrong intentions. However, this class differs in that several of these students cited the need for a high school diploma. One student even declared his need to push through to make his mother proud.

Seventh period's students introduced the idea of feeling forced to go to school and consequences for themselves and their parents if they do not meet their attendance obligation. This class also overwhelmingly mentioned added stress from feeling forced to go to school as a major reason for feeling apathetic toward school. These also expressed an interest in shortening the school week or at least having a discussion with the powers that be about a schedule that would be more effective than the current one. Several of these students said the school day is much longer than it should be, and they do not see the point in the classes and work that they are assigned.

Appendix I

Student Survey #2

This survey represents this author's students and the class discussions that have occurred as a result of each student's addition to the survey. As previously stated, this author is an educator who is currently responsible for the English Language Arts education of 138 students. The students are spread out over seven periods with third period being a study hall. Fourth period will not be mentioned during this survey because it is this author's planning period. The students' ages range is from 14-18 and are in grades 9-12. Some of these come from high-socioeconomic situations, and others come from low-socioeconomic situations. There are also a healthy number of students whose parents are middle class. The diversity end of the spectrum suffers as the number of students represents 55% white, 42% black, 2% biracial, and 1% other.

In this survey students were asked, "Why do teenagers waste so much time and feel that it is okay?" They were requested to respond in 180 words or more and to observe proper grammar and punctuation. All students who were present participated. Some were not present because of COVID, some have elected to attend school virtually, and others have elected not to attend school because of other unspecified reasons.

This writer's first period class mostly stated that adolescents are lazy and have no responsibilities at home. Many of these students said that they waste time because they feel like they will have time to make up for it later on. Phones, social media, and drama were also mentioned as distractions to teenagers. Some students also declared that a lot of youths waste their time because they are spoiled and have everything handed to them. Home problems and lack of parental discipline were cited by some students a reason for some of their cohorts'

apathy. One student said that teens do not realize that they are wasting time. Another student said that she loves moving on her own time and that teens do not like feeling pressure to act.

The general consensus during second period was that teens feel that adults are too serious and should allow them to be young. They understand that they need to prioritize their lives and that cell phone usage and drama is hurting their generation, but most of them cannot pull themselves from the lure of being enticed toward social media. Teens in this class feel that this generation's abuse of drugs and vaping inhibit their ability to understand the impact of the time they waste on the outcome of their lives. Some of these adolescents also felt that having fun is more interesting than school and that there would be time for them to make for the time that they have wasted later on life. One student in this class introduced COVID-19 as having affected the mindsets of students in a negative way. Lack of discipline was also mentioned in this class.

Fifth period's students mentioned a lot of the same reasons that previous classes mentioned for wasting time. Lack of motivation and a desire to do nothing were mentioned. Cell phones and social media were overwhelmingly mentioned in this class as major distractions. One student introduced the idea that the stability of their parents can make some teenagers feel as if they do not have to do anything because everything has been provided for them. Some of these students also realize they should not waste time, but they lack the will to do anything about it. Other students in this class claim that students would rather be anywhere else other than school and determine to focus their time and attention on fun activities and places that they would rather be.

Most of this author's sixth period students concurred with students in his other classes by mentioning cell phones and social media as being major inhibitors to students prioritizing their time in a positive way. Some students in this class mentioned that a lot of teenagers do not take

anything seriously, and that this mindset makes it easy for students to waste time. A couple of students in this class stated that laziness and the desire just to sleep are problems with the current generation of youth. One student introduced the ideology that so many adolescents waste time because they have so many outlets to do so. Another student proposed the thought of school being viewed as a prison that holds “inmates” from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. with the sole purpose of making the lives of teenagers harder. The idea of lack of attention at home was also stated by several students in this class.

Appendix J

Student Survey #3

This survey represents this author's students and the class discussions that have occurred as a result of each student's addition to the survey. As previously stated, this author is an educator who is currently responsible for the English Language Arts education of 138 students. The students are spread out over seven periods with third period being a study hall. Fourth period will not be mentioned during this survey because it is this author's planning period. The students' ages range is from 14-18 and are in grades 9-12. Some of these come from high-socioeconomic situations, and others come from low-socioeconomic situations. There are also a healthy number of students whose parents are middle class. The diversity end of the spectrum suffers as the number of students represents 55% white, 42% black, 2% biracial, and 1% other.

In this survey students were asked, "If you could choose five electives that were offered here, which subjects would you choose? Why? Of the five, which is your favorite? Why?" They were requested to respond in 120 words or more and to observe proper grammar and punctuation. All students who were present participated. Some were not present because of COVID, some have elected to attend school virtually, and others have elected not to attend school because of other unspecified reasons.

First period mentioned a variety of elective classes that they would add to the choice bank for Eastside High School. The electives that received the most votes from the students in this class were: language, financial literacy, medicine, and entrepreneurship, respectively. These students did not want the typical language classes that are offered. They want languages like Japanese, Mandarin, and Russian to be offered. Other suggestions included piano, swimming, gym, drugs, mechanics, welding, sewing, survival, agriculture, archery, SAT/ACT, childcare,

scholarship, home appliance, R.O.T.C., real estate, grammar, yoga, psychology, photography, teaching, communication, resumé, taxes, architecture, woodworking, filmmaking, pottery, and cosmetology. One student was indifferent and said he would leave course selection up to the school.

The top four electives that second period mentioned were different language classes, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and survival classes. Other possible elective choices were cosmetology, cursive, law, cooking, coding, robotics, driver's education, self-defense, journalism, time management, R.O.T.C., swimming, welding, taxes, gym, mechanics, astronomy, design, boxing, and psychology. This class had the first students that expressed the desire to have an African American history class. One student in this class specifically mentioned Arabic as an offered language instead of the typical offerings of Spanish and French.

Fifth period is this author's biggest class and offered the most suggestions for electives of any other class. The top three electives in this class had the same number of votes, and they were culinary, financial literacy, and gym. The fourth top elective could not be decided as there was a three-way tie between art, entrepreneurship, and psychology. Other electives that were mentioned were law, music, gun, acting, weight training, mechanics, coding, R.O.T.C., fishing, creative writing, woodworking, cursive, teaching, boxing, psychology, home economics, forensics, survival skills, engineering, language, dance, violin, piano, softball, medical, communication, sign language, animation, graphic design, and photography. This was the first class where a life skills class was specifically mentioned by a student. A couple of students in this class were also the first to mention a world culture class where students would learn about different world cultures. Some students elected to keep the same classes that the school has now.

The students in this writer's sixth period class also chose a wide variety of elective classes; however, the top three were financial literacy, cosmetology, and language, respectively. The students in this class who selected language as an elective were not specific about any languages other than the typical Spanish and French classes that are already offered. The other elective suggestions were real estate, clothing design, nursing, art, gym, babysitting, driver's ed, boxing, healthy living, video production, R.O.T.C., engineering, family and consumer sciences, agriculture, culinary, communication, welding, mechanic, sports medicine, information technology, marketing, teaching, job preparation. This class had the only student to mention a stock/cryptocurrency class as an elective.

Seventh period's students top three electives were financial literacy, nursing, and engineering. Financial literacy was the clear winner in this class, with nursing and engineering tying for the number two spot. The other elective suggestions in this class were culinary, computer programming, veterinarian, surgical services, forensics, dance, photography, agriculture, language, government, sports training, mechanics, R.O.T.C., cosmetology, survival skills, psychology, law. This class also had some new suggestions in zoology, aerobics, aerodynamics, profiling, and pilot classes.

Liberty University

Institutional Review Board

June 16, 2021

Emmanuel Williams
Scott Edgar

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-829 The Effect of Essential Life Skills on an Adolescent's Ability to be a Productive Citizen

Dear Emmanuel Williams and Scott Edgar,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason: Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

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

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office