

THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT ON THE LONELINESS AND
AUTHENTICITY OF SINGLE MILLENNIAL WOMEN CHURCHGOERS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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ABSTRACT

There has been a plethora of studies that have been conducted regarding the large number of millennials who are leaving the religious institution. Despite the studies that have been conducted there are a limited number of studies that examine the reasoning behind millennials leaving religious institutions. This study adds to current knowledge about single millennial women and their religious commitment. This study provides knowledge that can benefit leaders of religious institutions in reconnecting with single millennial women and engaging in conversation that could help to decrease the internal and external factors that cause disaffiliation. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there was a need for in depth conversations about biblical teachings that will result in decreased religious disaffiliation of single millennial women. Additionally, this study aimed to fill the gap in literature in regard to millennials, more specifically, single millennial women who are becoming religiously disaffiliated. Conducting this study proved to be invaluable to religious institutions, professional counselors, and church elders as they work to help these individuals remain steadfast in their faith, remain authentic to their true selves, and provide effective mentorship that can be passed from generation to generation. The research aimed to find if there was a relationship between the impact of authenticity and loneliness on religious commitment of single millennial women. The results of this study can enhance the knowledge that is needed in religious institutions in order to retain millennials, help the single millennial women population work through their internal conflicts, and enable the religious institution leaders to engage in conversation with millennials that will aid in decreasing religious disaffiliation.

Keywords: biblical, millennials, authenticity, loneliness, churchgoers, authenticity

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Paul T. Shanks II, and my daughter Emily E. Shanks. Thank you both for giving me this time to complete this dream of mine of obtaining such huge accomplishment of being the first one in my family to completing a doctorate. Also, I dedicate my dissertation to every foster child who have gone through hell and high water. This is for us. WE DO RECOVERY.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this time to acknowledge my family, business partners and everyone who invited me to be a part of their events and I had to turn them down. I want to say thank you for understanding that these 3 ½ years were set apart to finish strong. Without you guys being understanding and loving me through it all, I would have not been able to finish strong without you. Secondly, thank you to my dissertation coach and Facebook group for not allowing me to quit and give up. It has been a long uphill journey, but it has all be worth it. Thank you for all your support, encouragement, and prayers throughout this process. Lastly, thank you for my dissertation chair and readers. Special added thanks to Dr. Thomas Hudgins for believing in me at the beginning of this dissertation process. For telling me that I have a story to tell, and I have to tell it so that others who have been through what I have been through know that they too can overcome the traumas in their lives just like I have.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	1
Dedication	2
Acknowledgments.....	3
List of Tables	7
List of Figures	8
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	10
Overview.....	10
Background.....	11
Problem Statement.....	17
Purpose Statement.....	18
Significance of the Study	18
Research Questions.....	19
Definitions.....	19
Summary.....	20
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	21
Overview.....	21
Theoretical Framework.....	22
Related Literature.....	25
Summary.....	52
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	54
Overview.....	54

Research Design.....	54
Research Questions.....	55
Hypotheses.....	55
Participants and Settings.....	56
Instrumentation.....	58
Procedures.....	61
Data Analysis.....	62
Summary.....	65
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	66
Overview.....	66
Research Questions.....	66
Preparation of Scales.....	67
Results of Analyses by Research Question.....	73
Summary.....	77
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS.....	78
Overview.....	78
Discussion.....	78
Implications.....	80
Limitations.....	82
Recommendations for Future Research.....	82
Summary.....	84
REFERENCES.....	85
APPENDICES.....	99

List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Demographics Characteristics.....	67
Table 2. Reliability Statistics for Study Scales.....	70
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Scale Sum Totals of Study Scales	73
Table 4. Summary for Combined Independent Authenticity Variables Regressed on Religious Commitment	75
Table 5. Coefficients of Regression Equation for Combined Independent Authenticity Variables	75
Table 6. Summary for Combined Independent Loneliness Variables Regressed on Religious Commitment	76
Table 7. Coefficients of Regression Equation for Combined Independent Loneliness Variables	76

List of Figures

Figure 1. Importance of Religion in One's Life by Generational Group.....	37
Figure 2. Generational Replacement Drives Growth of Unaffiliated.....	39
Figure 3. Interpreting Scripture by Generational Group.....	46

List of Abbreviations

Authenticity Scale (AS)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBTQ)

Religious Commitment Scale – 10 (RCI-10)

Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

There has been a plethora of studies that have been conducted regarding the large number of millennials who are leaving the religious institution. Despite the studies that have been conducted there were a limited number of studies that examine the reasoning behind millennials leaving religious institutions. In many families the religious foundation is established during childhood, and this same foundation is challenged later in life, resulting in individuals leaving religious institutions (Pankala & Kosnik, 2018). In many instances the reasons for leaving religious institutions were never fully examined. Further examination of this population could reveal that biblical teachings within religious institutions could be the cause of individuals, specifically millennial females, becoming disengaged. The effects of biblical teachings on loneliness and the importance of being authentic to oneself could potentially lead to single millennial women withdrawing from religious institutions due to internal conflicts. Additionally, this disaffiliation could be the result of millennials being more accepting of the diversity in the world and the biblical teachings of religious institutions could potentially be the central cause of external conflict between religion and millennials.

This study sought to add to current knowledge about single millennial women and their religious commitment. This study involved the exploration of loneliness and authenticity of single millennial women with the intent of learning if these factors impacted religious commitment. The examination of this population could lead to an increased awareness as to why a portion of millennials are becoming disaffiliated from religious institutions. This study provided knowledge that can benefit leaders of religious

institutions in reconnecting with single millennial women and engaging in conversation that could help to decrease the internal and external conflicts that may be present between biblical teachings and millennials.

Background

The following section provides information on the history of religious affiliations within families leading to how biblical teachings on loneliness and authenticity has caused disaffiliation for millennials. In 2015, millennials were the largest population in the United States numbering 75 million of the population (McDonald, 2015). In the last decade, researchers have seen an increase in the number of people that are disengaged from religious institutions (Hackett et al., 2015; Hout & Fischer, 2014). Although there are various reasons for disaffiliation from religious institutions, there is a lack of research on why millennials are disaffiliated from religion as well as how loneliness and authenticity impact their religious affiliation. The disaffiliation of millennials has been occurring at alarming rates throughout the years. In recent studies it was determined that 40% of millennials were not associated with a religious identity (Packard & Ferguson, 2019).

History of Religious Affiliation

Religion has been known for being a fundamental aspect of life for billions of people around the world (Diener et al., 2011). Since its inception, religion has been used to subdue populations into their rightful positions in life, policing the internal thoughts of members, and ensuring that individuals stay aligned with religious norms (LeCount, 2017). Many years ago, religion was foundational to households and knowledge was passed from generation to generation. It was common for many individuals to be born

into a certain religion because that was the religion of their grandparents and parents (Yarhouse & Sells, 2017). The teachings of God were an important concept in the household when extended families lived together due to knowledge being passed down through the generations (Yarhouse & Sells, 2017). Biblical teachings emphasized God first then family. Religion allowed families to experience God as a close confidant (Dollahite et al., 2018).

Although families no longer remain in extended families, religion still plays a crucial role in society and families. At the local and community level religion shapes cultural schemas for what constitutes morally appropriate family relationships (Perry & Whitehead, 2016). Research has emphasized this quality about relationship between religion which has caused increasing conflict for families who are engaged in interracial and/or same-sex marriages. Religion also provides a moral influence that causes individuals to look negatively at those who do not encompass the morals that align with religious teachings while binding together those groups who share similarities in social characteristics (Perry & Whitehead, 2016). Focusing on the moral compass of religions has caused segregation, isolation, and loneliness within churches and communities. Additionally, cognitive aspects such as beliefs, values, identity, and salience has caused decreased solidarity which has resulted in religious disaffiliation. As times changed the role of religion and spirituality changed in families.

With the increased conflict in the church and the decreased acceptance of various family structures there was an increase in religious disaffiliation and a decrease in the ability of religion to bind communities together. For thousands of years religion has been a part of society; however, research has shown that the main factors which cause an

individual to leave a religion are education, logic, religious rules, and specific events (LeCount, 2017). Separation caused by religious institutions has affected family dynamics and how individuals are viewed based on the religious institutions' beliefs and doctrines. Beliefs and doctrines that are taught and adopted within religious institutions may begin with biblical teachings that are meant to provide direction and unity.

Millennials and Loneliness

One of the first stories in the Bible is that of Adam and how God created a helper for him so that he would not be alone (King James Bible, 1769/2017). In religious institutions Genesis 2:18 is also taught when speaking about loneliness. Additionally, it has been taught that God never intended for people to be alone. Religious institutions teach its members that in order to deal with loneliness they should connect with God and like-minded believers. There are many times when the information that is communicated from the Bible does not fare well with millennials causing them to have conflicts. Internal and external conflicts can cause single millennial women who are experiencing loneliness to not reach out to others for fear of embarrassment, fear of not adhering to God's Word, and/or the feeling of not being properly heard.

The Bible teaches that if a person is unmarried or widowed it is good to remain single; however, if these individuals cannot maintain self-control they should marry because it is better to be married than it is to burn with passion (King James Bible, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 7:8-9). As mentors and leaders in religious institutions that are teaching the bible, it is imperative to understand that each person will have a different interpretation and without further conversation it could lead to increased loneliness or disaffiliation for succumbing to temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has

overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (King James Bible, 1769/2017). The Bible provides instructions on what an individual should do when faced with certain situations; however, there is a need for millennials to understand that when one falls short of the glory there is forgiveness. When this population does not feel like they will be forgiven, or they attend a religious institution that judges them it can cause them to decrease their religious commitment and/or lose some of their authenticity.

Biblical Teachings and Authenticity

John 4:24 says, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth” (King James Bible, 1769/2017). This particular verse speaks about a Samaritan woman who yearns for acceptance. In this moment God explains to the Samaritan woman that although she may be unclean or an outcast he still loves her. God makes it clearly known that an individual does not have to fit any specific demographic in order to be a true worshipper. True worship requires spirit and truth. True worship requires the ability to be honest about and with oneself. When there is honesty and authenticity through being true to oneself it can have a beneficial impact on motivation levels and inspirations to have a healthy, religious, and secure relationship (Counted, 2016). When there is doubt it can be detrimental to one’s religious authentic being. Multiple interpretations and miscommunications may make one feel as though they are not worthy of being in the presence of other churchgoers who may judge them for being true to themselves.

The biblical teachings that are taught in religious institutions have proven to not be enough to retain millennials. Dickie (2020) noted that biblical lament provides a vital way to maintain a healthy relationship with God when their experience does not equate to their beliefs. If millennials do not lament then it becomes problematic when they desire to be authentic due to their lack of self-expression and understanding. It has become increasingly harder for millennials to feel welcome in religious institutions when the pastoral leaders are not able to reach them at their level of understanding and questioning. The answers that are given by religious leaders as to how individuals should deal with loneliness, authenticity, and temptation can cause religious disaffiliation. Biblical teachings coupled with millennial use of technology has caused a significant decrease in the number of millennials who have continuously committed themselves to a religious institution throughout the years and this number has been steadily decreasing.

Millennials and Technology

Millennials were born into an age where technology has been advanced to the point that human contact has to be intentional at times. The lack of human contact is a social factor for millennials that can exaggerate loneliness. Additionally, technology has played an influential role in millennials exiting religious institutions (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2018; LeCount, 2017). With the ever-increasing use of technology there is a wealth of information at the fingertips of millennials (Gibson & Sodeman, 2014). The internet plays a positive and negative role in religion for millennials. During a study that was conducted it was noted that more information about one's religion was found online than was taught from the pulpit and the internet was a lifesaver when dealing with internal conflicts due to biblical teachings (LeCount, 2017).

The use of technology has caused millennials to question their religious leaders and their affiliation with religious institutions impacting their commitment. Research has additionally shown that with the increase of modernization and science, religion has become increasingly irrelevant in the public sphere and in everyday lives (Schnabel & Bock, 2017). With the increase of modernization and technology the Bible has been identified as the book of fables, the literal word of God, and inspired, but not literal throughout the United States (Schnabel & Bock, 2017). The three differing viewpoints of the Bible are symbolic to millennials and can be said to be one of the root causes for decreased religious commitment. Symbolic interactionism examines the meanings that emerge from the reciprocal interaction of individuals in their social environments and deciphers what those symbols mean resulting in an evaluation of their authentic selves (Aksan et al., 2009).

When individuals have decreased human interaction, it can cause symbolic interaction to come from social factors that are seen within whose symbolism of certain interactions and social constructs are staged. Three core principles in symbolic interaction are meaning, language, and thinking (Aksan et al., 2009). These staged interactions can cause millennials to have a skewed idea of religion and interpretations of the Bible. Based on the symbolic interactionism theory the interpretation of actions can be formed differently for anyone based on human experience and interaction (Aksan et al., 2009). The views of the Bible in correlation with the mindset of millennials who rely on technology are factors for religious commitment and/or religious disaffiliation.

The research that has been presented on the history of religious affiliation, biblical teachings about loneliness, millennials and technology, and the religious institutions

impact on millennials demonstrate why their needs to be a larger concentration on this subpopulation. Bringing an awareness to the events that have happened thus far to this subpopulation can help individuals increase their knowledge. The Bible teaches that we should not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewal of our minds (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Romans 12:2). However, when millennials have access to technology how should those religious institutions guide them without causing additional distress and internal conflicts? The lack of research that has been done has opened the door for additional research to be conducted that will explore the needs of the single millennial women population and their reasoning for leaving the religious institution.

Problem Statement

In 2014, millennials in the south reported that there was dissatisfaction with churches and those who attended on a regular basis did not feel comfortable with how the church was progressing (Moody & Reed, 2017). Research has indicated that millennials are simply abandoned the church due to the church not having a connection with millennials, the church is repressive, shallow, and closed off to millennials who may have questions and doubts (Lakies, 2013). Despite these claims research does not indicate all the factors that may be responsible for dissatisfaction such as authenticity and loneliness based on biblical teachings. Young people strive for authenticity within their lives which impacts multiple areas of their lives (Counted, 2016). Authenticity describes aspects of oneself that is consistent with beliefs, values, and cognitions which represent a sense of being (Counted, 2016). Further research that examines how the authenticity of single millennial women may affect religious commitment is warranted in understanding the increasing religious disaffiliation. The lack of further research could result in future

generations continuously being disaffiliated from religious institutions. Additionally, a lack of further research could increase the number of individuals who have no religious foundation in their childhood.

There is a vast amount of research on the religious commitment of millennials; however, there is a lack of research on how loneliness and authenticity affect the religious commitment of single millennial women. This is a population that is often overlooked due to inclusivity. Focusing on the single millennial women and how biblical teachings can have an effect in their lives could increase religious commitment. The problem is that current research focuses on how millennials are leaving churches at alarmingly high rates, yet there is a lack of research on the specific subpopulations within millennials and what factors may affect these subpopulations and their religious commitment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there was a need for in depth conversations about authenticity and loneliness that would result in decreased religious disaffiliation of single millennial women. Investigating the impact that authenticity and loneliness has on the religious commitment of this population can bring an awareness as to why single millennial women may be leaving religious institutions. Additionally, this study seeks to fill the gap in literature in regard to millennials, more specifically, single millennial women who are becoming religiously disaffiliated.

Significance of the Study

Conducting this study proves to be invaluable to religious institutions, pastoral counselors, and church elders as they work to help these individuals remain steadfast in

their faith, remain authentic to their true selves, and provide effective mentorship that can be passed from generation to generation. The examination of authenticity and loneliness for single millennial women will add increased knowledge to studies that have been conducted on millennials and religious commitment.

Research Questions

The following research questions are a result of the literature that has been gathered in conjunction with the gaps in literature which indicate that there is a need for increased research regarding the effects that loneliness and authenticity have on the religious commitment of single millennial women who identify as churchgoers.

RQ1: Does authenticity have a statistically significant impact on the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

RQ2: Does loneliness explain a significant amount of the variance in the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

Definitions

The following terms associated with the literature and research throughout the dissertation are defined as such:

Authenticity - An individual is self-endorsed, willingly enacted, and self-owned while behaving congruently with what he or she experiences (Ryan & Ryan, 2019).

Millennials – Individuals who were born between 1980 and 2000 (Waljee et al., 2018).

Loneliness - An unpleasant experience in which an individual perceives his or her own social network as being insufficient (Vassar & Crosby, 2008).

Religious commitment - How much an individual is involved in his or her religion (Koenig et al., 2001, as cited in Worthington et al., 2003).

Summary

Chapter one introduced the study on how the loneliness and authenticity of single millennial women can impact religious commitment. While examining the impact these factors may have on religious commitment, the study aimed to bring an awareness to the challenges that single millennial women may have due to biblical teachings not being aligned with their moral beliefs and authenticity. Although there is an increase in the studies that focus on millennials there is a lack of research on the single millennial women subpopulation that are becoming disengaged from religious institutions. The results of this study can enhance the knowledge that is needed in religious institutions in order to retain millennials, help the single millennial women population work through their internal conflicts, and enable the religious institution leaders to engage in conversation with millennials that will aid in decreasing religious disaffiliation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This study was designed to identify the effects that loneliness and authenticity have on the religious commitment of single millennial women who attend church and identify themselves as saved. Previous research has shown how millennials are disconnected from the church; however, there is limited research on how loneliness and authenticity may impact the religious commitment on single millennial women (Manning et al, 2019; Pikhartova et al., 2015). Romans 2:17-29, Jews ‘rely on’ the law, ‘boast’ in the law, know God’s will through the law, are educated in the law, have light, knowledge, and truth because of the law, are to ‘do’, ‘observe’ and ‘keep’ the law, on occasions ‘transgress’ the law, and possess the law as a ‘written code’ (Rosner, 2010). The review of literature will show that millennials have grown away from their biblical teachings, it is better to marry than to burn. 1 Corinthians 7:9, “But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry ta to burn with passion” (King James Bible, 1769/2017). Millennials are becoming more focused on their social media presences then actually showing up for their real life. The literature will also show that because it was a whole generation that dropped the ball millennials were left to tend to themselves and learn the hard way. Leaving them with no tools to learn how to deal with loneliness, depression and/anxiety. The specific effects reviewed will be the effects of biblical teachings addressing loneliness on millennials and the effects that loneliness has on millennials and their relationship with the Lord. Additionally, the literature will highlight the impact religion has on loneliness with millennials and it will identify some protective factors to help millennials navigate their feelings of loneliness, which will help them in their Christian

walk. Finally, the review will include information that will help churchgoers understand millennials and how to properly help them with their feelings of loneliness while offering insight into strategies that could assist in helping these individuals reintegrate back into the church. Loneliness has been an issue that has potentially decreased millennials from attending church, but it can be something that draws them to the church for hope that this emotion is only temporary and with support can change.

Theoretical Framework

Biblical teachings for millennials are rules that have been put in place to teach them all of what they can and cannot do. The Ten Commandments are a set of laws that were identified to help Christians stay in the right fellowship with the Lord. According to Romans, 2: 17-29, Jews ‘rely on’ the law, ‘boast’ in the law, know God’s will through the law, are educated in the law, have light, knowledge, and truth because of the law, are to ‘do’, ‘observe’ and ‘keep’ the law, on occasions ‘transgress’ the law, and possess the law as a ‘written code’ (King James Bible, 1769/2017; Rosner, 2010). When it comes to millennials, many have not been taught to obey such law, and they look at that law as a punishment not as a guide to help them live a happy productive life.

This study identifies how symbolic interactionism is foundational in working with millennials as they navigate their walk with the Lord and their commitment to the church despite feelings of loneliness and inauthenticity. Human group life and human conduct are studied using the approach that is referred to as symbolic interactionism (Mason, 2014). It is a sociological theory that better understands how individuals interact with one another to create symbolic worlds, and in return, how these worlds shape individual behaviors (Dennis & Martin, 2005). The symbolic interactionism theory suggests that

there is a correlation between how one acts with who is teaching them and between themselves that affects their outcome (Dennis & Martin, 2005). Symbolic interaction is based on three core principles: meaning, language, and thinking (Aksan, 2009). Language provides meanings through the use of symbols and thinking changes the interpretation that individuals assign to symbols (Aksan, 2009). Research shows that humans attribute meaning to objects, events, and phenomenon (Aksan, 2009). It is believed that meaning is a physical attachment that emerges as a result of interaction between people which enables people to produce facts which consist of their personal interpretation (Aksan, 2009). It is important to note that the meaning that is given to certain events, objects, and phenomenon does not require accuracy. When meaning is giving to an object, event, or phenomenon it then influences the individual's responses and can be modified as time and people change (Mason, 2014). Additionally, this theory does not take into consideration outside forces such as activities in the communities and the functioning of society as a whole (Dennis & Martin, 2005). The symbolic interactionist theory stresses the freedom of the individual and the limited role of society (Aksan, 2009). The interactionist approach does not focus on what one has as the powers that be, it focuses on the inequality of the patterns (Dennis & Martin, 2005).

Researchers began to study interactionist work after the success of the movie, *The Outsiders*. *The Outsiders* was a movie that displayed disobedience and deviances. Millennials are known to be the most defiant generation based on the perception and identification of their behavior. The literature review on interactionist approach has been influential in leading other researchers to look at the why instead of the what.

The study of interactionist works has been able to marginalize, give a great appreciation to the stigmatized, and the disadvantaged. This research has caused a contribution to political and institutional reform, which is exactly what millennials are saying and needing the world to do. It has been suggested by some that behavior is an attempt to meet a need and therefore has meaning (Dennis & Martin, 2005). Millennials not going to church and not connecting themselves to a religious community is not them being defiant. Their absence says more and speaks volumes. The absence of millennials says that the judgment and the ridicule need to be eradicated. The absence of millennials says that the religious institutions are not doing all that they can to connect with the millennials on a level that makes them want to be there willingly. Religious organizations have a disconnect with their members due to the leaders' responsiveness to concerns which impact member relationships within the church (Waters & Bortree, 2012). The key to increasing millennials' involvement in the church is dependent on an increase of feelings of trust and satisfaction between the leadership and millennial (Waters & Bortree, 2012). These individuals believe in the Lord, and they know He is all powerful but if it comes with all the do nots and what they cannot do instead of the do's and what they can do, there is the potential of leaving the systems and intuitions to find solace in being alone. The symbolic interactionism theory will aid millennials in understanding how they interact with each other and the world around them through the use of authentic meaning, language, and thinking while learning how it shapes their behavior (Aksan et al., 2009; Dennis & Martin, 2005). In addition to the use of authentic meaning, language, and thinking it is imperative that the single millennial woman understands the role of social interaction in forming meaning when it comes to religious commitment, loneliness,

and authenticity. Assigning meaning can be constrained by time which requires a greater emphasis to be placed on helping the single millennial woman to connect with human life groups that will assist her on her spiritual journey. A greater understanding and awareness can aid these individuals in fostering a connection to God through the mentorship and leadership of the elders in the church.

Related Literature

Millennials

Millennials are those who were born between 1980 and 2000 (Nelson et al., 2017; Waljee et al., 2018). Studies shows that over 40% of millennials adults are people of color (Apugo, 2017). Millennials have such a wide wealth of knowledge and know that if is used in the right way, it will benefit generations to come. Research shows that millennials are politically and socially conscious, achievement oriented, and diverse (Nelson et al., 2017). Millennials are known to be more progressive and liberal than the generations before them and unlike many other generations societal pressures influence many aspects of their lives (Nelson et al., 2017). Millennials are characterized as deeply empowered, collaborative, innovative, impatient, distracted, and entitled (Waljee et al., 2018). Millennials have been influenced by a number of life events that have shaped their perspectives on life. This generation has experienced the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, mass shootings, and advent of technology (Gianfagna, 2017). The times and teachings of the formative years have caused millennials to be optimistic about the long-term future, have uncertainties about short-term future, uncertainty about the country, close relationships with their parents, and revere the wisdom and experience of their

elders (Gianfagna, 2017). Millennials have been engaged in culture wars where secular values, beliefs, and religious values struggle against one another (Boehme, 2013).

The life events that millennials have experienced has caused them to reshape their adulthood and change their perspectives on how they choose to live their lives.

Millennials have the mindset of getting the bag. Meaning that becoming more financial stable than the generations before them and to be more money focused than anything else. The need for financial stability and the increase in technological devices has caused them to be removed from the idea of family and community. Millennials see the importance of getting married; however, in 2010, it was 69% of them between the ages of 18 to 25 unmarried (Manning et al., 2019). In comparison to other generations, millennials have the highest rate of loneliness. Studies shows that 48% of millennials have been lonely, compared to 38% of baby boomers. Additionally, over 5% of millennials admit to being lonely often (Cimino, 2019). The effects of loneliness to millennials have not stopped them from thinking and growing rich as they have put their mental and spiritual well-being on the back burner. Millennials are aware of who God is and His power, yet they have been removed from His presence. The effects of maintaining authenticity have the potential to result in loneliness as millennials work to maintain their personal and professional relationships as they navigate through life. Authenticity coupled with loneliness will be discussed further as it is necessary to ensure that millennials are able to be authentic, decrease loneliness, and increase their religious commitment allowing them to have a life that is filled with a positive mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

Meaning of Authenticity

When one thinks about being authentic there may be a number of thoughts that might come to mind. Regardless of the thoughts that come to mind being authentic requires the realization of who a person is and how they identify themselves in any given situation. When a person experiences his or her actions or communications as being true to their self-identity, they are considered authentic (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). Authenticity requires an individual to be self-endorsed, willingly enacted, and self-owned while behaving congruently with what he or she experiences (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). In addition to being authentic an individual must display genuineness. Genuineness in conjunction with authenticity reflects an individual having abiding values and sentiments. Ryan and Ryan (2019) noted that in when an individual is inauthentic, that person does not reveal his or her true self. Research has shown that inauthenticity is considered an individual trait or difference that individuals face as they face their quest to gain authenticity. In many settings where an individual's authentic self may be faced with judgment, negativity, and nonacceptance gaining authenticity may be difficult to obtain and display (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). This quest to gain authenticity can result in an oppression of self-expression and have social cost. It has been noted that there are social contexts that facilitate and support authenticity while there are others that inhibit or oppress it, specifically when one's attitudes, opinions, or identities are likely to be socially devalued or stigmatized (Ryan & Ryan 2019). Having to oppress one's authenticity can result in that individual isolating themselves from the individuals or institutions that are not accepting of their authenticity.

Characteristics of Authenticity

Authenticity is said to have three aspects; the inevitable mismatch between the conscious awareness and actual experience, the congruence between experience as consciously perceived and behavior, and the extent to which one accepts the influence of other people and the belief that an individual has to conform to the expectations of others (Wood et al., 2008). Characteristics of authenticity include positive feelings, being self-reflective, self-awareness, vulnerable, gratitude, and developed ideas about their purpose and values (Cooper et al., 2018). Authenticity can be seen in several aspect of one's life. When an individual feels like they are being authentic they show job satisfaction, increased self-esteem, positive well-being, satisfactions within a given role, and psychological adjustment (Cooper et al., 2018).

When you have authenticity, you are genuine to yourself. It is not about trying to duplicate or resemble anyone else; it is about being the true version of yourself; however, getting to self-actualization is hard during this time for young people. The media says they have to like certain trends and history says they do not want to be like their ancestors. These conflicting influences cause individuals to struggle to really find the true authenticity of who they are. Individuals may struggle with getting to the true meaning of why they were created, what is their purpose on the Earth, and if they have what it takes to fulfill their purpose. That is a lot of pressure on our young people. The Bible teaches us that Jesus came so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. The issues lie in how understanding and teaching millennials how they can be authentic if they have not been taught by generations before them to do that.

Authenticity and Well-being

It has been noted that authenticity is the most fundamental aspect of well-being (Wood et al., 2008). Research has also indicated that millennials are technological beings. Based on the research that has been provided on millennials it is imperative that religious institutions understand how technology plays a role in the lives of millennials. There is currently a lack of research that has been conducted on the understanding an individual has in regard to the significance of technological influences and intimate relationships (Dalessandro, 2018). Millennials are identified as those young adults who were born into a timeframe of rapid technological advancement (Dalessandro, 2018). Examining this generation can reveal how young adults navigate, and make sense of, the cultural tensions that are manifesting in intimate life due to rapid social (and technological) change (Dalessandro, 2018). Current research shows that millennials do not have any social interactions with others due to their use of technology (Dalessandro, 2018). The authenticity and wellbeing of millennials have the potential of being formed through the lenses of technology. Millennials have taken technology at face value, instead of understanding that everything that is on it, is not real. Technology today has been a blessing and a curse for millennials in today's society resulting in enhanced knowledge, decreased social interaction that could lead to loneliness, and the potential for their authenticity and wellbeing to be jeopardized. If left unattended, loneliness can cause serious consequences for cognition, emotion, behavior, and overall health (Taube et al., 2017). Let us face it, they cannot go anywhere or do anything without some sort of technology in their hands. When it comes to understanding the influences of technology with our millennials, they are learning more and more how to be removed from people. Their devices have been more of a support to them than actual human contact. The

information that they are getting and storing in their brains are coming from people and may not be true to their authentic self. This generation can be considered as made-up individuals who are portraying an image, a dressed-up life just to get people to buy into the facade they are selling. In today's climate, there are social media influencers, who live their lives in front of a camera, at least the part of their lives that they want the world to see. Authenticity and well-being of millennials will come when they step out of virtual reality and start living in what is the present. Their lives and the future generations to come is depending on it. Although it appears publicly that they are doing better than their ancestors spiritually emotionally, and mentally they have lost that spiritual and mental connection to reality and their Higher Power.

What is Loneliness?

Loneliness is something that most people have dealt with, in their live time. Not just single woman, but all people have experienced loneliness at some point. One must understand that loneliness and isolation are very different. When one might want to strengthen their relationship with their Higher Power, they might want to isolate in a quiet environment so that they can hear clearly. However, loneliness has been defined in various ways. In order to highlight the variations of loneliness the following provides definitions of loneliness used throughout the world. The Webster dictionary defines loneliness as sadness because one has no friends or company and the quality of being unfrequented and remote, isolation. Loneliness has been defined as an unpleasant experience in which an individual perceives his or her own social network as being insufficient (Vassar & Crosby, 2008). An individual can also consider themselves by a state of mind to be lonely. Loneliness is complex due to it being a universal emotion.

Millennials have considered themselves lonely even though they are centered around their peers and/or family. Loneliness can happen with anyone. It does not specify amongst groups. Rather you are male or female, rich or poor, healthy, or unhealthy, and even a believer or non-believer. Loneliness is a state of mind. The people that are at the greater risks of loneliness are people who socially isolate themselves from others, people who distant themselves from their family and friends, people who experience or have been diagnosis with mental disorders (Cacioppo et. al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2016).

Characteristics of Loneliness

Despite the various definitions of loneliness there are some characteristics that they all share. Loneliness is said to be associated with depression, somatic complaints, suicidal ideation, and poor physical health (Vassar & Crosby, 2008). Loneliness entails an unpleasant experience, depressions, and it can take a toll on one's health. There has been research done to show the correlations between loneliness and depression. Even though the findings were that depression and loneliness are separate, it was found out that loneliness does increase the risk of depression (Cacioppo et al., 2015). The characteristics of loneliness can manifest themselves in individuals who may seem to be happy from their outward expressions. In order to understand loneliness, one must identify symptoms in addition to characteristics. In the religious institution having the ability to recognize the characteristics and symptoms of loneliness can help elders and congregational leaders began to have the difficult conversations that are needed in order to help those suffering from loneliness foster a connection with God.

Instability is a factor of one feeling abandoned by God, which causes fear and anxiety. It can cause one to feel alone (Ryan & Francis, 2012). Research has shown that

being lonely is considered totally unhealthy. If left unattended, loneliness can cause serious consequences for cognition, emotion, behavior, and overall health (Taube et al., 2017). Studies have shown that being alone or isolated for long periods of time can increase death rates by 50%. Studies have shown that having a social relationship is a very fundamental aspect of human life and human health. While a lot of evidence has been published on how positive human interactions is good for health, there has been evidence that says no social interactions has adverse effects on health (Ge et al., 2017). Signs of loneliness can be attributed to a number of factors in young adults and millennials. Millennials who may be experiencing periods of transition or establishing a new identity can be considered factors that help others identify the onset of loneliness (Wright-Bevans, 2018). Additionally, factors such as poverty and inequality can be signs of loneliness in both younger adults and older adults (Wright-Bevans, 2018). The factors that research has associated with loneliness and the increased risk with millennials requires immediate attention within society and religious institutions.

Loneliness and Society

Loneliness is not just being around others, but more about having others around that can be trusted. Our single millennials are in search of more than just being a part of a group. In recent years loneliness has not only been deemed a health issue, but also a social issue that is affecting all generations (Williams & Braun, 2019; Wright-Bevans, 2018). They are looking for someone to help them identify goals for their lives, and help plan out their futures, work together with and also, prosper with. Without that social aspect or connection, which is causing the majority of them to experience loneliness (Cacioppo et al., 2015). The Research Center showed that 19% people between the ages

of 18 and 29 expect that they will be lonely when they will be older compared to 23% of those between the ages of 30 and 49, and 31% in the 50 to 64 age group (Pikhartova et al., 2015). There have been recent concerns that societies are getting lonelier, and that the emphasis placed on individualism within contemporary culture increases peoples' sense of insecurity (Kearns et al., 2015). Loneliness is not a new phenomenon in society; however, loneliness is affecting a new generation more so than any generation in the past. In the past those individuals who were in their 20's and 30's spent a good portion of time outside and around others unlike millennials. The social interaction of millennials has been decreasing and it requires intentionality on their behalf in order to interact with other humans. A decrease in socialization can lead to isolation which results in mental health deterioration. When individuals feel socially isolated because of unpleasant experiences or unmet needs it can cause loneliness in either their quantity or quality of social relationships (Ge et al., 2017). However, some women remain single by choice and have ostracized by their decision making. The single woman who is single by choice and living her past life is often times looked at as discontented because there are images of the lonely desperate to find love single girl blasted all over the media.

Prevalence of Loneliness Among Millennials

Millennials may experience loneliness based on the generation that they were born into and the fact that their generation is more attuned to technological interaction as opposed to human interaction. During a study that was conducted by Cigna insurance it was found that younger generations experience more loneliness than older generations with 22% of millennials having no friends and 30% feeling lonely (Yao & Hunt, 2020). Further research noted that loneliness was twice as common among millennials as among

elderly, social media increases loneliness for lonely people, and the overall mental health of United States adolescents and young adults has increasingly deteriorated (Yao & Hunt, 2020). Additionally, the loneliness that is experienced by millennials is different than the loneliness that is experienced by elderly people (Yao & Hunt, 2020). Loneliness experienced by millennials can be caused by shyness, social anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, homesickness, isolation, existential worries, emotional isolation, and interest that differs from others (Yao & Hunt, 2020).

Women who attend church have higher levels of guilt associated with sexual behavior and more salient amongst women who perceive sex as contradicting religious teachings (Abbott et al., 2016). 47% of men and 18% of religious women endorse sexual intercourse as acceptable (Abbott et al., 2016). It was noted that religious women lack a desire for casual sex and oppose sex that is not procreative (Abbott et al., 2016).

Millennial females are said to be more pro social than men but also, they have more social anxiety than men (Coccia & Darling, 2016). Studies have shown that millennial females have more stress than men (Coccia & Darling, 2016). The increase in stress has resulted in some millennial women changing their outward appearance. Research has shown that some millennial women change their dress, talk, and sometimes take on masculine traits in order to be deemed competent (Worth, 2016).

Effects of Loneliness on Millennials

Research has shown that loneliness affects millennials and how they may perceive their life personally, professionally, and spiritually. It has been noted that 39% of millennials have reported to be stressed out, even though they are the group who is said to have the most fun (Coccia & Darling, 2016). Despite being more advanced socially

than other generations millennials still feel the effects of loneliness. On a personal level the loneliness that millennials may feel affects their college attendance and their desire to finish their schooling. Millennials have a 25% college dropout rate (Coccia & Darling, 2016). The rate at which millennials are dropping out of college could additionally affect their employment status. The Bible states in Hebrews that we should drop every weight that is so easily besetting us so that we can run this race. The feeling of loneliness is weight that has hindered millennials for years. It has caused them to give up on themselves and live. Due to millennials having a decline in in their employment rates, not being married, and/or parenthood, they have been perceived to live a different lifestyle then generations before them (McDonald, 2015).

Untreated loneliness in millennials can leads to suicide ideations or even suicide attempts. The effects of loneliness in millennials can cause suicide ideations and or attempts. The Bible states that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Studies have shown that suicide attempts have risen amongst young adults in the last ten years. In the past decade, rates of death by suicide have increased tremendously, however it is unclear which age group is the cause of the spike. (Twinge et al., 2019). Another thing to look at that is suggested by researchers is the early onset of depression from their childhood. It is known that if one has any untreated mental illness as a child, and it is carried over into your adulthood, you more than likely at a greater risk of suicide ideations, attempts, and death by suicide. Other things to take into concertation is relationships that they are in, social economic status, race, religion, and gender. Unresolved trauma in childhood can affect the single millennials woman's life for years to come and with the absence of

inclusion in a church family the unresolved trauma could be exaggerated. It has been noted that religious affiliation is associated with better mental health.

Spirituality and Religious Identification

Spirituality is defined as a dimension of human experience that encompasses bio-psycho-social-spiritual interactions (Walsh, 2010, p. 331). Spirituality is a genuine connection within the self, which includes ethical values and a moral compass and transcends the self (Walsh, 2010). Researchers have suggested that the millennial age group are uncertain of their spirituality (Bahan, 2015). In an effort to increase religious commitment it is essential that millennials feel comfortable going to religious institutions to receive help and guidance. The church is a place for millennials to come to find support both spiritually and emotionally to help with finding reassurance of who they are and who they belong to, as well as social support. Being a part of the church can help millennials with their self-efficacy, self-esteem, confidence, optimism, purpose in life, and coping which are of major importance for healthy ageing.

Being connected spiritually gives you hope that life can get better. There is the hope to know that the world is going to change and that you can possibly be a part of that change. Millennial churchgoers are the ones who can reach their peers. However, the millennials who are going to reach other millennials have to be rooted and grounded in the Lord in such a way that when they go and try to help their peers, they are not sucked back into their old habits. When millennials are attending church and learning how to be serve, unlike many other older religious leaders, millennials are learning to reach people where they are. The 12 Spiritual principles are as follow: acceptance, hope, faith, courage, honesty, willingness, humility, responsibility, love, discipline,

awareness/growth, and services (www.soberrecovery.com). Engaging millennials in the twelve spiritual principles can aid them in living a life that is pleasing while helping them to say committed to a religious organization. Spiritually is more about relationship building and religion is more about rules.

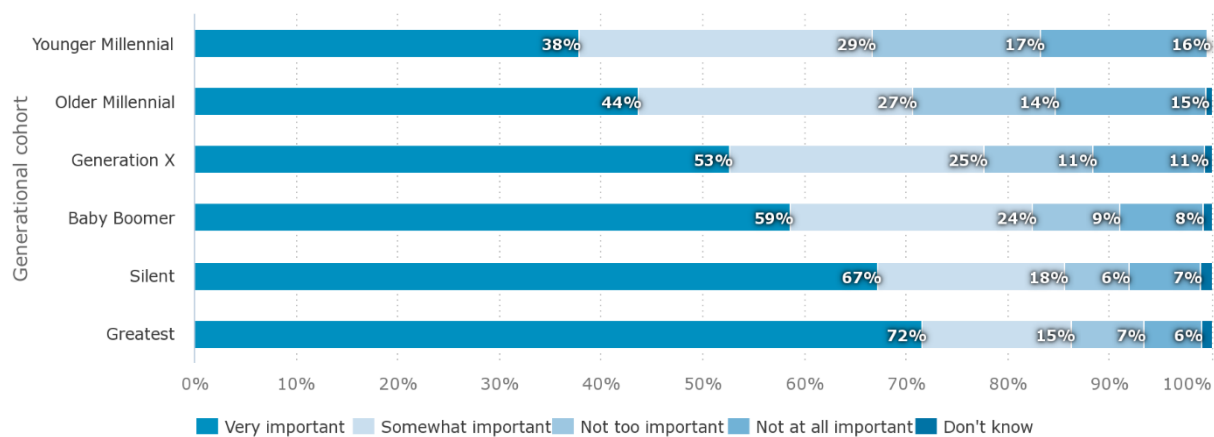
Not all individuals participate in faith communities; however, they may still be considered spiritual through their personal faith which can include belief in a supreme being, a divine spirit within all living things, or an ultimate human condition (Walsh, 2010). According to Figure 1 although millennials are the most disaffiliated from religion there are still a significant number of millennials who believe that religion is important in their lives (Lipka, 2015). African American's beliefs about God are part of their culture (Ajibade et al., 2016). Studies have proven that African American individuals who have a strong religious background, have a more meaningful and positive outlook on life (Ajibade et al., 2016).

Figure 1

Importance of Religion in One's Life by Generational Group

Importance of religion in one's life by generational group

% of adults who say religion is...



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Religious Identification

Loneliness and authenticity are not limited to any one specific religion. Research shows that 75% of humans identify as Christians, 23% identify as Roman Catholics, and 14% identify as mainline Protestants (Walsh, 2010). More than 60% of adults belong to a religious congregation and there are over 2,000 denominations with almost 500,000 churches, temples, mosques, or places of worship (Walsh, 2010). Study shows that when an individual has identified themselves in a religious/spiritual being, they have lower mortality rates. However, their demographics and health covariates play a huge part as well. When a person's life has been shaped by religion and spiritual principles, it will shape their behavior, their outlook on life, it also gives them a sense of community/connectiveness and plays a positive role in good health. Religious and mortality association has been the most consistently studied in literature (VanderWeele et al., 2017). Having a plethora of information on religion and mortality could lead individuals to believe that there is a correlation to the wellbeing of future and their religious commitment.

Through the years the various generations have begun to decrease their attendance and religiosity. Millennials are the least religious generation (Boehme, 2013). According to a 2014 Religious Landscape Study it was found that younger millennials born between 1990-1996 and older millennials born between 1981-1989 are the highest generation of religiously unaffiliated individuals as shown in Figure 2 (Lipka, 2015). Study suggests that the developmental stages of religious participation are as follow: declined in adolescence, stabilized in midlife, and then increased in later life, before finally declining in very old age (Bengtson et al., 2015). Many millennials learn much of their faith from their parents and their church families (Boehme, 2013). In recent years it was suggested

that millennials may be taught religion at home; however, with social networks these individuals are able to see a plurality of worldviews that may go against what they have learned at home (Swaminathan, 2020). Additionally, social technologies provide a newfound independence amongst millennials which was noted as not mixing well with religion. Swaminathan (2020) noted how religion is about adhering to community and respect for authority while millennials are about individualism and independence which advocate for personal liberty and choice. Millennials who have no religious affiliation are considered a growing population which requires attention (Reed, 2016). Millennials have more income inequality, higher median family income, higher materialism, more positive self-esteem views and lower social support. However, their religious attendance is down, and it is lower than it has been in years. During a Barna study it was annotated that many American adults are unattached to any religious organization, and they do not interact with any faith communities throughout the year, one-third have never attended church, and 20% of Americans do not feel like their faith is dependent on church attendance (Raj, 2013). In a secondary survey that was conducted worldwide by the Pew Research Center it was found that religious identity was decreasing worldwide. In over 40 countries those individuals under the age of 40 are less likely than their elders to be religiously affiliated, pray daily, and attend religious services on a weekly basis (Pew Research Center, 2018). Researchers suggest that millennials religious attendance is not due to their age but the time they were born (Twenge et al., 2015). In addition to the time frame when this group was born there are also the major factors that work against religious institutions maintaining high affiliation for millennials.

Figure 2

Generational Replacement Drives of Growth of Unaffiliated

Generational Replacement Drives Growth of Unaffiliated

	Evangelical Protestants	Mainline Prot.	Historically black Prot.	Catholic	Other Christian groups	Other groups	Unaffil.
Silent generation (1928-1945)	30%	22	5	24	3	4	11
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	28	17	7	23	3	5	17
Generation X (1965-1980)	25	13	7	21	4	6	23
Older Millennials (1981-1989)	22	10	6	16	3	8	34
Younger Millennials (1990-1996)	19	11	6	16	3	8	36

2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Don't know/refused answers not shown. "Other Christian groups" includes Mormons, Orthodox Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses and a number of smaller Christian groups.

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Factors Working Against Religious Institutions

Factors such as the millennial's religious upbringing can work against religious institutions. There has been a noted lack in baby boomers who raised their millennial children with a religious foundation. In 2016 a Pew Research study found that regardless of religion affiliation if a child was raised in a religious household those same individuals would identify with that specific religion in adulthood (Cox & Thomson-DeVeaux, 2019). This same survey found that many millennials who grew up in religious households are becoming more unlikely to return to religion (Cox & Thomson-DeVeaux, 2019). Millennials are not only affected by the religious identification of their parents but also the religious identification or lack of pertaining to their spouses, education that they may have received in the home or social media, hypocrisies, bigotry, and the connection they desire but lack to God.

Education

One of the major trends that have been seen throughout the world is the lack of knowledge that millennials have in regard to religion. Boehme (2013) noted that the

indifferences and antagonism about religion is due to millennials lacking knowledge about present day religion. Research indicates that individuals who are culturally literate and educated understand religion (Boehme, 2013). The lack of knowledge about religion on behalf of millennials has been related to religious disaffiliation. Religious disaffiliation comes from a variety of factors; however, the lack of education is due to millennials distancing themselves from religion. In an effort to reconnect millennials back to religion many colleges are requiring these individuals to learn the basics of the Bible. Secular college campuses desire for their students to have a working knowledge of the Bible in order to understand western literature that is taught (Boehme, 2013). In conjunction with the lack of knowledge there has been division amongst millennials and their religious beliefs that play a role in their education of the Bible. It was noted that people fall into one of three categories when it comes to their religious beliefs: the experientialist, the moralist, or the confessionalist (Boehme, 2013). The experientialists have religious beliefs that are based on emotions and feelings, the moralists are considered ethical Christians, and the confessionalists emphasize doctrine (Boehme, 2013). Millennials have changed the face of religion by virtue of the timeframe that they were born into and their beliefs about religion. One of the biggest characteristics of millennials is their desire to fight for social justice issues. The fight for social justice issues leads millennials to base their theology on the realm of ethics, emotions, and feelings (Boehme, 2013).

When thinking back to the biblical teachings that are taught during religious services there is a need to investigate further as to what is taught that causes millennials to question their affiliation. There are various scriptures that tells Christians how they

should live their lives which are pleasing to God; however, there is a need to identify how these same biblical teachings can cause existential confliction. James 4:7 tells us, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (King James Bible, 1769/2017). This scripture teaches us that we should fell from our worldly desires and trust in God. At times God may feel as if his children are cheating on him and the scripture reveals that his children should submit themselves to him in order to achieve the desires of one’s own heart. When faced with temptation it may be easy for a single millennial woman to turn to others as a means of decreasing loneliness or fulfilling a part of herself that may feel empty. It is imperative that these women know worldly desires are part of the devil’s temptation and it will not help them to achieve a sense of being or decrease the emptiness that they may be feeling. As single millennial women began to submit to God it is important that they are taught about submission. So often individuals may feel as if their voices are unheard in the church which could cause them to leave the institution. In learning to look past the messenger of the church and the congregation of the church James 4:8 speaks about individuals drawing closer to God. As individuals draw closer to God, he will draw closer to them; however, it is important to have a clean and pure heart from sin (King James Bible, 1769/2017, James 4:8). Education must entail how single millennial women can draw closer to God, how they can submit, and how God is a forgiving God who only wants us to confess our sins. With millennials being a more and diverse generation of individuals, hypocrisies can cause millennials to turn away from the church. Although the Bible teaches that God is forgiving, and it gives the blueprint on how Christians should strive to live their lives millennials may not feel as if what is written in the Bible can guide them in being authentic. Millennials are considered

more tolerant of differences amongst individuals such as individuals having the freedom to choose who they love to include interracial relationships and same-sex relationships.

Hypocrisies

When millennials attend religious services, they may desire to see the congregational leader living a life that is elevating and one that is pleasing to the Word of God; however, this is not always the case. During the “A Generation in Transition: Religion, Values, and Politics among College-Age Millennials: Findings from the 2012 Millennial Values Survey” that was conducted by Georgetown University, Public Religion Institute, and Georgetown’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs a significant amount of division was found (Abdul-Alim, 2012). The study was conducted in order to show how millennials are turning away from religion and to showcase what their generation values. Millennial expert Mark Taylor noted how the millennial movement was being driven by college-age students who are coming to view organized religion as strongly morally judgmental with no acceptance of responsibility that are accounting for the real religious missions such as helping the poor (Abdul-Alim, 2012). The millennial generation is one that works towards inclusion, diversity, and supporting social justice. Thorsen (2020) noted that hypocrisy has to do with how individuals may say one thing and then act a different way, claiming moral high ground while transgressing the same moral. Not only are there the hypocrisies in the church millennials have noted how some of the biggest hypocrites are found in the church based on biblical teachings. It was noted that many individuals who attend church claim to love their neighbor, yet they are the first to be disrespectful and show hatred towards other races, ethnicities, sexes, classes, and religions (Thorsen, 2020). When millennials were

asked their viewpoint on present-day Christianity 64% described it as anti-gay, 62% described Christianity as judgmental, and 58% described it as hypocritical (Abdul-Alim, 2012). The Bible teaches that hypocrisy is a sinful act. Matthew 7:1-5 tells us, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye’ and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (King James Version, 1769/2017). With hypocrisy being taught biblically it would make one think that there should be leaps and bound to overcome this obstacle. Research has noted the opposite in regard to hypocrisy and those in power. When a member of clergy sins they are held to a different standard as opposed to a member of the congregation. Additionally, the bible has taught that divorce was a sin and almost always frowned down upon until the number of divorces in the church began to increase resulting in individuals divorcing and remarrying for fear of being ostracized (Thorsen, 2020). Congregational members were ostracized or gossiped about due to being single and it became normal for individuals to divorce and remarry (Thorsen, 2020). The pattern of divorcing and remarrying made it seem as if being single was a sin. Viewing singleness as a sin creates barriers for the single millennial women to feel welcomed and free of judgment in the religious institution.

Millennials are a generation that are more accepting and tolerant of diversity. It has been noted that millennials are the most diverse generation in the nation and are

considered uniquely tolerant when it comes to diversity (Guldalian, 2013). Research has shown that the Catholic Church's attitude toward homosexuality, the thought of religion discriminating based on sexuality, and the feeling of shame and guilt due to sexuality have been one of main factors for religious disaffiliation (LeCount, 2017). Much like the Catholic churches the Christian churches preach about how God loves everyone; however, these same churches condemn and shame members of the LGBT community (Thorsen, 2020; VanderWaal et al., 2017). This practice of shaming and condemning this community causes millennials to leave the institution due to being tolerant and/or having friends that are part of the LGBT community. There are some churches who also teach that birth control goes against God and women should be ashamed for using birth control. With the small number of female preachers' millennial women may feel like they do not have anyone who can understand them or relate to them (Jones, 2018). Millennials who have attended in-person church and heard these messages may feel like the congregational leader is sending mixed messages, not giving enough answers to clear up their confusion about God, and/or they are constantly telling women how they should live their lives. When there is no true understanding as to what the scripture means millennials may turn to other sources as a means of finding answers or they may choose not to believe the scriptures are the actual Word of God as depicted in Figure 3 (Alper, 2015). Additionally, if the scripture is taught in the religious institution yet it is not adhered to by all congregational leaders and members it can result in individuals feeling as if the institution is full of bigots. The feeling of bigots and bigotry in the religious institution creates an atmosphere where individuals are unable to see past the messenger to connect to God. It is imperative that the religious institution look harder at their

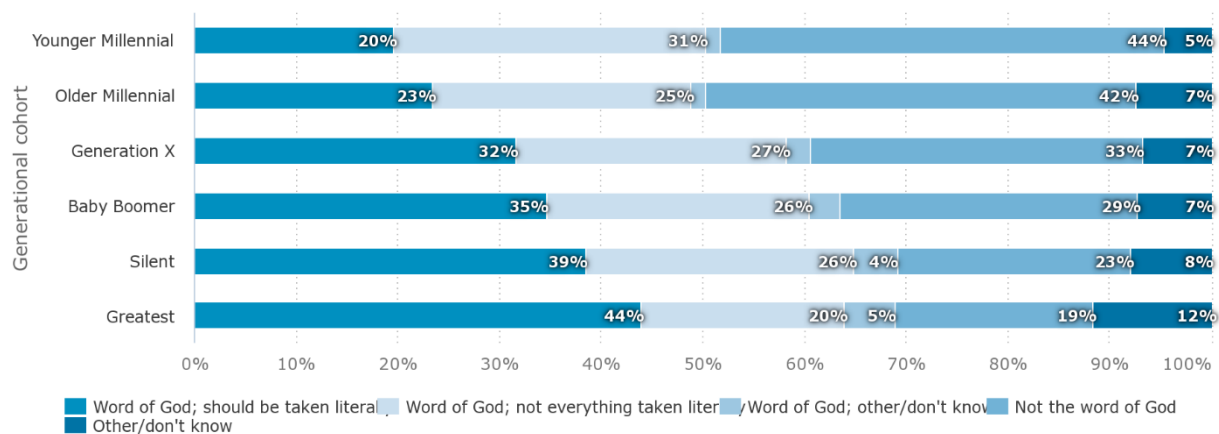
discrepancies in order to escape from the hypocrisies and bigotries that exist which are causing millennials and more specifically the single millennial woman to feel as if they do not belong.

Figure 3

Interpreting Scripture by Generational Group

Interpreting scripture by generational group

% of adults who say the holy scripture is...



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Connection to God

Many millennials may feel like they are not able to make a connection with God when they pray which can cause them to question their faith. Out of all of the generations, millennials are considered the least religious generation who are involved in a cultural war where militant atheism is increasing (Boehme, 2013). The rise of the militant atheism leaves little room for a true and authentic connection to God. As a militia that aims to reach millennials through their teachings the ideas that are instilled align with the progressive and liberal mindsets of millennials that boast the approval of same gender marriage, children outside of marriage, adults living together, and the approval of abortion; all issues that go against biblical teachings (Boehme, 2013). Not only do these issues go against biblical teachings but they also work against the connections that

millennials may feel with God due to internal conflicts and the potential to feel like they have fallen out of his grace by engaging in issues.

Millennials are looking for acceptance and hope. In order to get them back into church it is going to take the older churchgoers to leave their judgement at the door. The church is having to reconnect with a generation that has no legacy in the church. Millennials want to serve, and they want to give but without feeling like they are required to do so. Historically, the African American church was a place where one could go if they wanted to meet up with like-minded individuals or needed hope (Watkins, 2018). Presently, many individuals look at the church as a place where people pray yet they still suffer and there are pastors who still have worldly ways (Watkins, 2018). The difference between what the church represented in the past as to what it represents to some in present day America destroys the connection to God before one can even begin to build a foundation. It is essential for the church to walk more in spirituality than religion. The lack of research on how loneliness and authenticity of single millennial women within a religious institution could affect the overall wellbeing of this population. Additionally, conducting research on authenticity and loneliness could potentially identify how these religious institutions can appeal to this population while aiding in these individuals being authentic to their true selves.

Impact Religion has on Loneliness with Millennials

Literature has shown that loneliness can be impacted by religious commitment. Being committed to religion has been associated with decreased sexual activity, sexual guilt, and poor sexual satisfaction (Abbott et al., 2016). Individuals who faithfully attend a church organization may feel like they are sinning by having a relationship or fulfilling

their loneliness outside of marriage causing internal conflicts. The guilt has come from one of the Ten Commandments, again, the law that says, though shall not fornicate. Millennials know the word of God but have not begun to apply it effectively to their lives because of all the propaganda that has been associated with it. Yes, fornicating is a sin but what happened to teaching these individuals how to withstand the urge of that sin. The Bible tells us to resist the devil and he should flee but when you have a buildup of loneliness then it is hard to resist when you have no strength to resist. Higher levels of religious commitment are said to be associated with fewer sexual partners and abstinence (Abbott et al., 2016). Studies suggest that if millennials have a great support system, it can decrease the effects of loneliness (Child & Lawton, 2019). Having small groups at church, sister circles, brother circles, young people groups are all support systems. Giving them the opportunity to be heard and express themselves are always good to help them feel connected, when millennials participate in social activities, it decreases loneliness and/or isolation (Child & Lawton, 2019). Anytime you feel like you belong, not just there, but belong, it heightens your endorphins and allows you to thrive in an environment that would have normally paralyzed you. Determining whether social support and/or becoming more goal-oriented plays a part in loneliness as well in single millennial women is instrumental in closing any disparities that may exist for this subpopulation (Smith et al., 2017). Creating travel groups have been known to help single millennials, as well. Learning new things and exploring life can also cause one to come out of a feeling of loneliness and depression. Simply belonging and being accepted for who you are, empowering the real authentic you can help one to come out of that state of loneliness.

Biblical teachings have been put in place as a guide for our lives that teaches us and give us a compass to live if we want to get to Heaven. The Bible did not say that life was going to be easy, just, or fair but it did say that one day, you will be more than a conquer (King James Bible, 1769/2017). Millennials have to know that their lives matter, their thoughts matter, and having a safe place like the church matters to them. As religious leaders and mentors it is imperative that millennials understand that the church is a place to come and lay burdens down while being able to rest. It must be taught that it is acceptable for millennials to attend multiple churches until they feel comfortable. So often it is taught that one must not move from church to church instead of teaching the importance of finding a church that feels like home. When millennials feel like they have to attend a church based on their parent's background or religious affiliation it may cause them to decrease attendance or become unaffiliated without the thought of finding a church that speaks to their spirit. The enemy's job is to steal kill and to destroy, but God says that he came so that you may have life and have it more abundantly (King James Bible, 1769/2017).

Religious Disaffiliation

Leaving a religion can be a defining role in one's identity and it has also been characterized as a tough decision that one must make in order to help define their identity. The disaffiliation from a religious institution does not happen overnight and it may take months to years. Research has indicated that nearly 24 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 41 are outsiders to Christianity and religion does not hold a positive reputation amongst millennials (Boehme, 2013). Advances in technology has allowed millennials to find information relatively quickly. One factor that influences

social interactionism is the ability for millennials to see individuals who have social influences which may impact their religious commitment and religious disaffiliation. The militant atheism culture has influential figures such as Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins (Boehme, 2013). These individuals work to influence millennials by teaching them through social media that religion is the root of society's evil, and religions is toxic (Boehme, 2013).

Research has shown that there are negative consequences associated with leaving a religion such as a decreased sense of wellbeing and loss of community (LeCount, 2017). For some losing their religious commitment decreases a sense of community and camaraderie. Additionally, millennials may feel increased loneliness due to disaffiliation; however, the feeling of shame or guilt will keep them from returning. Those individuals who do choose to disaffiliate from a religious institution are often cut off from their family and friends resulting in increased confusion, loneliness, and internal conflicts (LeCount, 2017).

Millennials Connecting to Religious Institutions

Although there is a large number of millennials who are not attending church on a weekly basis or have considered themselves disaffiliated from religious institutions it is still imperative that these institutions try to find a way to make the connection that is needed. Research has noted how millennials want to be engaged in religious institutions; however, they have to feel welcome (Jones, 2018). Specifically, the single millennial woman who is contemplating leaving the religious institution due to feeling lonely, unheard, inauthentic, and struggling to maintain her connection to God without fear of being judged by the religious community. Lakies (2013) informs readers that the goal of

life is happiness, which is attained by being keeping the peace, being amiable, and not judging others. Happiness steers millennials to God with the expectation that He will intervene on their behalf and take care of their needs and wants. It was noted that religious involvement can be associated with civic engagement and interpersonal trust (Cox & Thomson-Deveaux, 2019).

Religious institutions who portray themselves as repressive, shallow, and closed off to questioning will continue to push millennials who yearn to learn more about their religion, feelings, and their connection to God farther away (Lakies, 2013). Most importantly, churches who refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem within their institution could create barriers for the single millennial woman who is struggling to remain in the church in hopes of finding support despite her desire to decrease her loneliness. It is imperative that elders and leaders of the church work diligently to engage in conversations with these millennial women in order to help them foster a connection to God.

Helping millennials foster a connection to God and religious institutions requires work and faithfulness. Research indicates that there is a problem with the millennial not coming to the religious institution or staying there; however, it is imperative to look at each subpopulation within the millennial generation to determine their needs while taking a closer look at the religious institution to determine what could be better implemented. Although millennials as a whole are moving toward religious disaffiliation research has noted that there is a noticeable increase in women becoming disaffiliated (Pew Research Center, 2015). Historically women have always been deemed more religious than men and in prior research the focus was on finding ways to increase religious attendance for

men as opposed to finding ways to keep women committed mentally and spiritually to a religious institution. The use of intergenerational relationships within the religious institution could be one of the keys to single millennial women regaining confidence in religious institutions. Lakies (2013) mentions that a stronger intergenerational relationship within the church needs to be formed in order to make disciples and sustain them. Despite the research that has been conducted there is no indication the churches, regardless of religious affiliation, are examining how biblical teachings, the need to maintain authenticity, and loneliness are driving single millennial women to walk away from religious institutions. Intergenerational relationships must be willing to work together so that knowledge is passed from generation to generation in the religious institution while being open to understand the factors that pushes individuals to have decreased religious commitment and reservations about attending in person church services. Understanding the different factors that pushes these single millennial women away will help religious institutions began to have conversations that invoke a sense of welcoming and willingness to understand so that progression may take place. In doing so, biblical teachings need to be taught in their entirety with the transfer of knowledge that lets churchgoers know that we have all fallen short of the glory and perfection is not expected.

Summary

Millennials were left uncovered by the generation before them. They were born during a time where Baby Boomers were living and trying to just survive, leaving millennials to learn from social media and each other. The church was the last thing on their minds. To them, church came with rules and regulations that were completely

different from what they saw and about what they have heard. The negative effects of biblical teachings for Millennials can cause them to feel lonely while serving the Lord because of all the dos and do not. Studies have shown a connectiveness with the religious community can very well help with loneliness. It is up to the religious community to be warm and inviting so that the millennials would feel welcome to come in and stay committed. The millennials have become more empowered with knowledge and economic stability and will be a great asset to the church. Loneliness and isolation have been hinderances for them too long and it is far time for the church to embrace them and love them where they are so that they can move into a better place with the Lord. The church is a shelter in a time a need. It is a refuge from the rain, so therefore, getting millennials to come in as Psalms 91 states to dwell under the shadows of the almighty is a must (King James Bible, 1769/2017). In doing so, they will live a long healthy life just by being part of a community of like-minded believers.

The lack of research on how loneliness and authenticity of single millennial women within a religious institution could affect the overall wellbeing of this population. Additionally, conducting research on authenticity and loneliness could potentially identify how these religious institutions can appeal to this population while aiding in these individuals finding their true religious identification. The research that has been highlighted throughout the literature review shows how single millennial women could potentially have their religious commitment affected by authenticity and loneliness. Most recently, research has begun to examine ways in which churches are able to retain the millennial population; however, there is a lack of research on what may be the root causes of why single millennial women actually stray away from the church.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This research study utilized a quantitative survey research design. This design was used to explore the effects that loneliness and authenticity have on the religious commitment of single millennial women churchgoers who identify themselves as being saved. It was noted that the millennial generation have a growing disinterest in religion and the Bible (Reed, 2016). Through the years the number of millennials who have been attending in person services has been declining. Despite the decrease in attendance at religious institutions millennials are still engaging in minor aspects of religion while receiving their religious information from other sources, such as the internet. This study aimed to find whether religious commitment was impacted by the perceptions of loneliness or authenticity and if these single millennial women are leaving the church because their loneliness or authentic identities are not in line with what is being taught in the church. Evaluating the biblical teachings that single millennial women have learned, their desire to maintain their authenticity, and their perceived level of loneliness has aided in determining whether this population's religious commitment was affected.

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative survey research design. Survey research is one of the most widely used research methods to date (Heppner et al., 2016). The most common form of data collection for survey research is questionnaires (Ponto, 2015). Questionnaires are self-administered, can be given individually or in a group, and include a series of items that reflect the aims of the research (Ponto, 2015). Survey research aims to document the frequency of a particular variable while examining a specific population

(Heppner et al., 2016). The use of survey research allows for a variety of methods regarding recruiting participants, collecting data, and the utilization of various methods of instrumentation (Ponto, 2015).

This study examined the effect of authenticity and loneliness on religious commitment, for single millennial women. Quantitative analysis allowed the participants to remain anonymous. The participants were then able to self-report through the use of online surveys. Survey research is effective because it allows for data collection to reach a broad range of participants that meet the requirements of the population while ensuring that the responses of the sample accurately reflect the entire population (Heppner et al., 2016; Ponto, 2015). This study aimed to accurately detail the relationship if any between loneliness and authenticity on the religious commitment of single millennial women.

Research Questions

The following research question aided the researcher in gaining an increased understanding in how biblical teachings affect the authenticity and loneliness on the religious commitment of single millennial women who identify as churchgoers. This study investigated the following research questions:

RQ1: Does authenticity have a statistically significant impact on the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

RQ2: Does loneliness explain a significant amount of the variance in the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

Hypotheses

The research that was conducted aimed to find if there was a relationship between the response variable and the predictor variables of this study and if being a single

millennial woman impacted religious commitment. With the use of survey research, the expected results of the study were as follows:

H₀1: Loneliness does not have a statistically significant impact on the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

H_a1: Loneliness will predict a statistically significant impact on the religious commitment of single millennial women.

H₀2: Authenticity does not have a statistically significant impact on the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

H_a2: Authenticity will have a statistically significant impact on the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers.

Participants and Settings

Participants for this study were single millennial women who have attended in person Christian Church services at least one time within the last 12 months. For this study millennials are defined as those individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Jenkins & Martin, 2014). The participants for this study were recruited through social media and snowballing methods. Snowballing methods allowed the researcher to reach a larger audience by having personal contacts suggest other potential participants who would be willing to complete the survey (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010).

This survey was completed online anonymously. Participants who have access to a computer, smart phone, or tablet were able to complete the survey in the convenience of their home. The survey was then sent out through social media resulting in individuals within the United States being able to complete the survey if they fit the inclusion criteria. The survey was also shared within groups on social media.

Recruitment

The participants for this study were recruited through social media and snowballing methods. The initial method to gather participants for the study was through social media outlets such as Facebook. A recruiting poster was posted through Facebook on a bi-weekly basis asking for volunteers to participate in the research. The use of Facebook allowed the researcher to utilize the snowballing method in order to have more participants. Snowballing methods allowed the researcher to reach a larger audience by having personal contacts suggest other potential participants who would be willing to complete the survey (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010).

A secondary method that was used in conjunction with social media outlets was the researcher posting the survey in other forums such as survey circles. Posting the dissertation in survey circles enabled the researcher to gather participants ensuring there was diversity in location of individuals who choose to participate in the survey. Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board a recruitment poster was posted to social media asking for participants to volunteer to be a part of the study. If the potential participant was interested in being a part of the survey they were directed to the online survey.

Sample Size

To find an appropriate sample and sample size, the researcher utilized the inclusion and exclusion criteria listed in this study as well as current demographics of the United States. The participants were single millennial women who have attended at least one in person Christian Church services within the last twelve months. These participants were recruited through social media platforms and known contacts. According to the

Statista Research Department (2021), 21.97% of the population were identified as millennials in 2019. Of the 21.97% who identified as millennials 12% identified as single (Statista Research Department, 2021). Due to the inability to separate males from females in order to find an appropriate sample size the researcher will utilize the percent of this population that identifies as single which is 12%. The sample size that will be required to complete the analysis of the population will require approximately 163 participants. The sample size is based on a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, 12% population proportion, and an unknown population size (Faul et al., 2007).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria included the participant being at least 18 years of age, self-reporting to be of an Evangelical Christian faith, a willingness to participate in a mindfulness study, and an ability to verify consent. Exclusion criteria for the study were women who are married who have not attended in person and/or virtual church services in the last 12 months, and millennials who identify as male.

Instrumentation

Potential participants completed an assessment questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to help ascertain the inclusion criteria was met and the exclusion criteria were not. The initial assessment interview questions were the first four questions of the demographic questionnaire when participants entered the survey. The first four questions that are considered initial assessment interview questions consisted of the following: Are you a single woman between the ages of 20 and 40? Do you consider yourself saved religiously? Have you attended in person church services at least once in the last 12

months? and Have you ever been diagnosed with depression, anxiety and/or depression on Axis I?

Consent for Participation

In order to participate in the study, the participants had to assent to the informed consent. The informed consent detailed the risks and benefits of participation, limits of confidentiality, and benefits for participation. The informed consent that all participants acknowledged enabled the researcher to inform the participants of the study and preserve the dignity and welfare of each participant (Heppner et al., 2016). Participants who met the inclusion criteria still had the option to decline participation by exiting the survey.

Demographic Questionnaire

At the beginning of the survey all potential participants were asked demographic questions in order to determine whether or not they met the inclusion criteria. If a participant did not meet the inclusion criteria as described in the first four demographic questions they were directed to the end of the survey. The demographic information enabled the researcher to collect descriptive statistics. Personal information was excluded so that the researcher could maintain confidentiality and privacy for all participants. The following demographic questions were asked to establish inclusion:

1. Are you a single woman between the ages of 20 and 40?
2. Do you consider yourself an Evangelical Christian?
3. Have you attended church services in person/and or virtually in the last 12 months?
4. Have you ever been diagnosed with depression, anxiety and/or depression on Axis I?

5. What best describes your race?
6. What is your employment status?
7. What is your highest level of education?

Religious Commitment Inventory Scale – 10 (RCI-10)

The RCI-10 is a 10-item inventory that used a 5-point Likert scale which measured the integration of religion into daily activities and the degree to which one viewed the world through religious schema (Abbott et al., 2016). Worthington et al (2003) stated that, “the RCI-10 is thus brief enough to be valuable for research and perhaps for assessing the religiosity of clients...” (p. 94). This scale will be pivotal in answering the research questions and determining if religious commitment through biblical teachings is affected by the loneliness and acceptance of single millennial women. Sample items on the scale include statements such as “My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life” and “Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life” (Worthington et al., 2003). Cronbach’s alpha for the RCI-10 and subscales were .96 for the full scale, .94 for Intrapersonal Religious Commitment, and .92 for Interpersonal Religious Commitment (Worthington et al., 2003). The RCI-10 has been used with Christians, community samples, and college students (Worthington et al., 2003). Past research using this measure makes it effective in use for this study with single millennial women who are churchgoers. The RCI-10 is considered a brief global assessment survey which allows a therapist to determine the extent of a client’s religious commitment (Worthington et al., 2003). The instrument uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 5 (*totally true of me*). The RCI-10 survey, and scoring were found on the open domain.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)

The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996) was used to answer Research Question One. This 20-item Likert scale measures how lonely individuals describe their experience (Vassar & Crosby, 2008). The Cronbach's alpha ranged from .89 to .94 and over a one-year period the test-retest reliability was .73 (Russell, 1996). Sample items from the UCLA Loneliness scale include questions such as "How often do you feel alone?" and "How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful?" (Russell, 1996). The instrument used a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*always*). The UCLA Loneliness Scale was found on the open domain..

Authenticity Scale

The Authenticity Scale (AS) (Wood et al., 2008) is a measure consisting of 12-items that use a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 7 (*describes me very well*). The AS was designed to measure authenticity along three dimensions: Self-alienation, Authentic living, and Accepting external influence) and a total score" (p. 5). Sample items from the scale include statements such as "I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular" and "I live in accordance with my values and beliefs" (Woods et al., 2008). Correlations with social desirability were nonsignificant (Wood et al., 2008). It was noted that the scale had good psychometric properties with test-retest correlations ranging from $r = .78$ to $r = .91$ (Wood et al., 2008). The Authenticity Scale was found on the open domain.

Procedures

Upon approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) the researcher accessed Qualtrics in order to enter the individual scales into one scale for all

participants to use. The researcher created a new scale using the IRB stamped consent as the first page to orient potential participants to the specifics of the study. At the conclusion of the informed consent participants were asked to click whether they agreed to participate in the study or chose to exit the survey. The questions were then added by using the demographic questions first which were used as inclusion/exclusion criteria then they were followed by the RCI-10 scale, UCLA Loneliness scale, and the Authenticity Scale. Once all the questions were inputted in their entirety the survey was made live and social media recruitment took place in order to get participants. Recruitment flyers with the survey link were added on social media. Data collection consisted of one month so that there were enough participants to conduct data analysis. The individuals who chose to participate in the survey accessed the survey through the survey link and acknowledged the consent associated with the study. Upon conclusion of the data collection period all responses were then exported from Qualtrics, coded, and uploaded into SPSS for data analysis. Before completion of data analysis, it was essential that the data was cleaned to ensure accuracy. The last step prior to data analysis was to complete all assumption testing associated with Pearson's correlation. In the event that the data did not meet the assumptions to run the test a non-parametric analysis would be conducted.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection statistical analysis was used to analyze the data for each research question. The study was conducted through the use of a non-experimental research design. All participants were given the same set of questions. All

data was coded and imported into SPSS for further analysis. Data analysis was then completed using descriptive statistics, frequencies of variables, and Cronbach's alpha.

Initially, the data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize information about a sample (Warner, 2013). Descriptive statistics was summarized based on the demographic questions (Appendix A) that were included in the online survey. The demographic questionnaire consisted of categorical variables that are representative of naturally occurring groups such as gender, age range, religion, and race. Additional descriptive statistics were used to summarize the responses from the survey participants.

Scales

Prior to answering the research questions, the internal consistency for each scale was examined. The use of Cronbach's alpha allowed the researcher to measure internal consistency and reliability. The data was then further analyzed based on research questions that pertain to the study.

Research question one used correlation to analyze the effect of loneliness on religious commitment. The predictor variable was based on the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the response variable was based on the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale-10. Research question one aimed to determine whether there is an association between loneliness and the religious commitment of single millennial women.

Research question two used correlation to analyze the predictor variable of authenticity and the response variable of religious commitment. The predictor variable was based on the Authenticity Scale and the response variable was based on the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale-10. This research question aimed to determine whether

there was an association between the authenticity and religious commitment of single millennial women.

Research question three examined the level of religious commitment of single millennial women who attend church. This question was answered using descriptive statistics. This analysis used the categorical variable that identified the participant as a single millennial woman between the age of 20 and 40. The response variable for the analysis was based on the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale – 10. Research question three aimed to measure the religious commitment of single millennial women.

Internal Validity

Internal validity refers to the relationship among the predictor and response variables that focuses on whether the predictor variable is the cause of the response variable (Warner, 2013). The focus of this study was whether authenticity and loneliness had an effect on the religious commitment of single millennial women who are churchgoers. The internal validity of this study was measured by what extent the observed results represent the truth in regard to the population that is being studied (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The threats to internal validity potentially included selection of participants which could influence the results of the study, errors in instrumentation interpretation, or selection of instruments that did not accurately assess the intent of the study.

External Validity

External validity refers to the generalizability of a study's result to the overall population (Warner, 2013). The threats to external validity for this study potentially included the characteristics of persons involved in the study and outcomes measured by

specific instruments. The overall study was anticipated to be higher in external validity than internal validity because it was limited to single millennial women who are churchgoers, all responses were collected anonymously, and there was no observation of behaviors (Warner, 2013). The defined population limited the study from being generalized to all single women and all women who are churchgoers.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there was a need for in depth conversations about biblical teachings that would result in decreased religious disaffiliation of single millennial women. Current research focused on how millennials are leaving churches at alarmingly high rates, yet there is a lack of research on the specific subpopulations within millennials and what factors may affect these subpopulations and their religious commitment. Through the use survey research methods using the demographics questionnaire, RCI-10, UCLA Loneliness Scale, and the Authenticity Scale questionnaires the study added to the gap in literature by examining whether the predictor variables of loneliness and authenticity had an effect on the response variable of religious commitment. It was expected that data analysis would indicate that these factors have a statistically significant impact on how single millennial women view their religious commitment resulting in the need for further research that will help congregational leaders connect with their members and foster a connection with God.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to investigate the relationship that authenticity and loneliness had on the religious commitment of single millennial women. Studying this population can bring an awareness as to why single millennial women may be leaving religious institutions. This chapter will discuss the results of the study, provide descriptive statistics and findings associated with hypotheses of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated during the study:

RQ1: Does Authenticity explain a significant amount of the variance the Religious Commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

RQ2: Does Loneliness explain a significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment of single millennial women who are church goers?

Participants

Data for this study were collected from participants who are single millennial women who were between the ages of 20 and 40. The participants identified as Evangelical Christians and had attended a church service at least once in person and/or virtually in the last 12 months. During a 28-day period, 162 individuals accessed the survey. Of that number, 25 were directed out of the survey because they did not meet the study inclusion criteria. Another 7 did not complete the survey. Data was collected data from 130 participants who identified as single millennial women and completed the three scales used in the study.

Participant Descriptive Statistics

Almost half of the participants identified as Black or African American ($n = 62$; 47.7%). One third of the participants were White ($n = 33$, 25.4%) and the remainder were Asian ($n = 7$, 5.4%), American Indian or Alaska Native ($n=5$, 3.6%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ($n = 4$, 3.1%), and Other ($n = 19$, 14.6%). Results for all descriptive statistics has been shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Race		
Black or African American	62	47.7%
White	33	25.4%
Asian	7	5.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	3.6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4	3.1%
Other	19	14.6%

Preparation of Scales

Prior to addressing the research questions, the data was prepared for analysis. Appropriate data items were reverse coded and then determined descriptive statistics, univariate outliers, and univariate normality. After the analyses, missing data was replaced using single mean imputation. IBM SPSS version 24 was used for all analyses.

Item-Level Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were determined for the 42 items included in the three measures which represent the constructs under study and presented in Chapter Three. All data fell within the expected range of

each instrument. To determine the presence of univariate outliers, the standard residual for each item was calculated. Examination of standardized Z scores for each item revealed no items values greater than 3.29 or less than -3.29 indicating no univariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Item univariate normality was determined by examining skewness and kurtosis values and through visual inspection of the histogram. There were no statistically significant outliers; skewness and kurtosis for all items were within acceptable limits.

Missing Data Imputations

Once it was determined that there were no univariate outliers and that all items were normally distributed, the data was examined for missing values. There were 14 data points missing in the data set with no participants missing more than one item. The single imputation technique was used to address the missing data points and inserted the mean standard of non-missing data (Scholomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010).

Item Correlations

Three scales were used in this study, including the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale (RCI-10), Authenticity Scale (AS), and the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA-LS). Before beginning analyses, the psychometric properties of each of the three scales was examined. Specifically, item-correlations, internal consistency, and item-total statistics were examined.

Religious Commitment

Religious Commitment was measured using the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale (RCIS; Worthington et al., 2003). The Religious Commitment Inventory Scale (see Appendix B) is a 10-item instrument designed to measure the integration of religion into

daily activities and the degree to which one viewed the world through religious schema (Abbott et al., 2006). In examining item correlations, all the scale items were correlated, with correlations from .472 to .832 (see Appendix G1) and item-total correlations from .690 to .846 (see Appendix H1). Cronbach's alpha for the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale was .95 (see Table 2).

Loneliness

Loneliness was measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA-LS; Vassar & Crosby, 2008). The UCLA Loneliness Scale (see Appendix C) is a 20-item instrument designed to measure how lonely individuals describe their experience (Vassar & Crosby, 2008). In examining item correlations, several of the scale items were not correlated or reversed correlated. Resultant factor analyses of the UCLA-LS resulted in a two-factor solution. Examination of the items in each factor suggested that there were two subthemes for the population: Internal Locus of Control and External Locus of Control.

Correlations among items for the LS-Internal Locus of Control (LS-ILC) ranged from .630 to .851 and the LS-External Locus of Control (LS-ELC) ranged from .360 to .853 (see Appendix G2 and Appendix G3). Item-total correlations for the two UCLA Loneliness Subscales ranged from .099 to .741 (see Appendix H2). Cronbach's alpha for the two UCLA Loneliness Subscales ranged from .94 to .97 (see Table 2).

Authenticity

Authenticity was measured using the Authenticity Scale (AS; Wood et al., 2008). The Authenticity Scale (see Appendix D) is a 12-item instrument designed to measure authenticity along three dimensions: Authentic Living, Self-Alienation, and Accepting External Influence (Wood et al., 2008). In examining item correlations, several of the

scale items were not correlated, consistent with the three-subscale design of the scale. Resultant factor analyses of the Authenticity Scale resulted in a two-factor solution. The items of the subscale, Authentic Living extracted one factor, and the items on the Self-Alienation, and Accepting External Influence subscales extracted one factor. In light of theory, examination of the items in each factor suggested that there were two subthemes for the population: congruence in their Internal Authenticity and congruence with their External Authenticity. Correlations among items for the Authenticity: Internal Congruence (AS-IC) ranged from .58 to .83 and the Authenticity: External Congruence (AS-EC) ranged from .80 to .89 (see Appendix G3 through Appendix G5). Item-total correlations for AS-IC ranged from .58 to .83; and the AS-EC ranged from .80 to .89 (see Appendix H3). Cronbach's alpha for the two Authenticity subscales ranged from .83 to .97 (see Table 2).

Summary. Examination of the Pearson product moment, item-total correlations, and reliability statistics for Religious Commitment, Loneliness-Internal Locus of Control, Loneliness-Internal Locus of Control, Authenticity: Internal Congruence (AS-IC) and Authenticity: External Congruence (AS-EC) indicated that the items of each scale demonstrated good internal consistency. Specifically, there were statistically significant correlations among the items within each scale. The item-total correlations indicated adequate internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha for the scales ranged from .83 to .97 (Table 2).

Table 2
Reliability Statistics for Study Scales

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
RCI	.95	10

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
LS-ILC	.97	11
LS-ELC	.94	9
AS-IC	.83	4
AS-EC	.97	8

Note. RCI = Religious Commitment Inventory Scale, LS-ILC = Loneliness Subscale: Internal Locus of Control, AS = Authenticity Scale.

Factor Analyses

Factor analysis was conducted to examine the factor loading of the scale items and to confirm the validity of the scales. Because so much of behavioral science research results in correlations among scales, Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation was used for all factor analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). To determine the number of factors to retain, the results were evaluated against the following criteria: (a) Total score variance; (b) Number and strength of factor loadings; (c) Internal consistency of resultant factors; and (d) Theoretical considerations and interpretability. Items with low factor loading (<.40) or low item-total correlations were assessed for removal (Garcon, 2011a; 2011b). Once the number of factors to extract and the items to retain were determined, the internal consistency of the identified factors was examined.

Religious Commitment. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the 10-items of in the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale. Factor analysis extracted one factor (see Appendix G). All items had acceptable factor loading (.439 to .852). Items demonstrated good internal consistency.

Loneliness. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the 20-items in the UCLA Loneliness Scale. As noted above, factor analysis extracted two factors (see Appendix G). Examination of the items

for each extracted factor suggested that there were two subscales: Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control and Loneliness: External Locus of Control.

Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the X-items in the Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control subscale. All items had acceptable factor loading (.794 to .923). Items demonstrated good internal consistency.

Loneliness: External Locus of Control. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the X-items in the Loneliness: External Locus of Control subscale. All items had acceptable factor loading (.623 to .899). Items demonstrated good internal consistency.

Authenticity. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the 12-items in the Authenticity Scale (AS; Wood et al., 2008). The Authenticity Scale consists of three subscales: Self-alienation, Authentic living, and Accepting external influence. Factor analysis extracted two factors: Authentic Living and Self-Alienation/Accepting External Influences. Upon examining the items, and based on the literature on authenticity noted in Chapter 2, it was determined that the items measured congruence in Internal Authenticity and congruence with External Authenticity.

Authenticity: Internal Congruence. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the X-items in the Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control subscale. All items had acceptable factor loading (.439 to .852). Items demonstrated good internal consistency.

Authenticity: External Congruence. Factor analysis was conducted using Maximum-Likelihood extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation on the X-items in the Loneliness: External Locus of Control subscale. All items had acceptable factor loading (.439 to .852). Items demonstrated good internal consistency.

Scale Correlations. To examining the relationship among the study scales, the Pearson product moment correlations were computed among the scales and subscales. The results indicate that all correlations were statistically significant ($p < .05$). Correlations among the scales ranged from .22 to .61 (see Table 3). Descriptive statistics for the standardized sum of each study scale suggest that there is sufficient variability in the individual scores of all scales to detect an effect (see Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Scale Sum Totals of Study Scales

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. RCI	412.38	89.56	—				
2. LS-ILC	257.86	113.51	-0.14	—			
3. LS-ELC	364.96	100.65	.55	-.46	—		
4. AS-IC	220.74	112.68	-.49	.14	-.45	—	
5. AS-EC	292.17	130.83	-.27	.72	-.41	.31	—

Note. Bold correlations were not significant. All other correlations are statistically significant, $p < .05$ (2-tailed). Note. RCI = Religious Commitment Inventory Scale, LS-ILC = Loneliness Subscale: Internal Locus of Control, AS = Authenticity Scale. $N = 130$.

Results of Analyses by Research Question

In this section, the results of the analyses by research question are presented. The study scales for these analyses include the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale (RCIS), Loneliness Subscale-Internal Locus of Control (LS-ILC), Loneliness Subscale-External Locus of Control (LS-ELC), Authenticity Subscale: Internal Congruence (AS-IC), and the Authenticity Subscale: External Congruence (AS-EC). IBM SPSS version 28 was used for all analyses.

Research Question One

The first research question asks the question: Does authenticity explain a significant amount of the variance in the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers? Based on the item and subscale analyses of the Authenticity Scale, Authenticity consisted of two clear factors. Therefore, Research Question One was revised to the following: Does Authenticity: Internal Congruence and Authenticity: External Congruence explain a significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment of single millennial women who are church goers? To answer this question, a linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the independent variables, Authenticity Subscale: Internal Congruence (AS-IC), and the Authenticity Subscale: External Congruence (AS-EC), on the dependent variable, Religious Commitment.

Analyses Results

The results of multiple linear regression indicated that the overall contribution of the two independent variables ($r = .50$, $F(2, 127) = 21.43$; $p < .001$) accounted for 25% of the variance observed in Religious Commitment (see Table 4). The coefficient for AS-IC ($B = -.35$; $\beta = -.44$, $p < .001$) of the regression equation was statistically significant, (see Table 5). In addition, the negative coefficient indicates an inverse relationship between the dependent and independent variables. However, the coefficient for AS-EC ($B = -1.01$; $\beta = -.13$, $p = .11$) was not statistically significant, suggesting that this subscale did not explain Religious Commitment in the model.

Table 4

Summary for Combined Independent Authenticity Variables Regressed on Religious Commitment

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>SE Est.</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.50 ^a	.25	.24	78.05	.24	21.43	2	127	.000

a. Independent Variables: (Constant), AS-IC, AS-EC

Table 5

Coefficients of Regression Equation for Combined Independent Authenticity Variables

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1 (Constant)	517.06	19.11		27.05	.00
AS-IC	-.35	.06	-.44	3.57	.00
AS-EC	-1.10	.06	-.13	1.90	.11

a. Dependent Variable: Religious Commitment

Summary

Results partially supported the hypotheses for the first research question. The independent variable, Authenticity: Internal Congruence, explained a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. However, the relationship between the remaining independent variable, Authenticity: External Congruence, did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. Authenticity: Internal Congruence explained 25% of the variability in Religious Commitment. Authenticity: External Congruence did not contribute additional explanatory power to the model beyond Authenticity: Internal Congruence.

Research Question Two

The second research question asks the question: Does loneliness explain a significant amount of variance in the religious commitment of single millennial women who are church goers? Based on the item and scale analyses of the UCA Loneliness Scale, Loneliness consisted of two clear factors. Therefore, Research Question Two was revised to the following: Does Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control and Loneliness: External Locus of Control explain a significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment of single millennial women who are church goers? To answer Research Question 2, a

linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the independent variables, Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control and Loneliness: External Locus of Control, on the dependent variable, Religious Commitment.

Analyses Results

The results of multiple linear regression indicated that the overall contribution of the two independent variables ($r = .56$, $F(2, 127) = 29.06$; $p < .001$) accounted for 31% of the variance observed in Religious Commitment (see Table 6). The coefficient for LS-ELC ($B = .54$; $\beta = .61$, $p < .001$) of the regression equation was statistically significant (see Table 7). However, the coefficient for LS-ILC ($B = .11$; $\beta = .14$, $p < .09$) was not statistically significant, suggesting that this subscale did not explain Religious Commitment in the model.

Table 6

Summary for Combined Independent Loneliness Variables Regressed on Religious Commitment

Model	R	R^2	$Adj. R^2$	$SE Est.$	ΔR^2	ΔF	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.56	.31	.30	74.76	.30	29.06	2	127	.000

a. Independent Variables: (Constant), LS-ILC, LS-ELC

Table 7

Coefficients of Regression Equation for Combined Independent Loneliness Variables

Model	B	$SE B$	β	t	p
1 (Constant)	184.77	38.38		4.81	.00
LS-ILC	.11	.07	.14	4.72	.09
LS-ELC (RC)	.54	.07	.61	7.38	.00

a. Dependent Variable: Religious Commitment

Summary

Results partially supported the hypotheses for the second research question. The independent variable, Loneliness: External Locus of Control RC, explained a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. The remaining independent variable, Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control, did not explain a statistically significant

amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. Loneliness: External Locus of Control explained 31% of the variability in Religious Commitment. Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control did not contribute additional explanatory power to the model beyond Authenticity: External Congruence.

Summary

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study was to determine whether Authenticity and Loneliness would explain the variance observed in Religious Commitment for single millennial women. Results partially supported the hypotheses for the research questions. The independent variable, Authenticity: Internal Congruence, explained a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. However, Authenticity: External Congruence, did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. In addition, Loneliness: External Locus of Control RC, explained a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. However, Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control, did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment. The next chapter provides an overall discussion of important findings, the implications of these findings, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship that authenticity and loneliness had on the religious commitment of single millennial women. Studying this population can bring an awareness as to why single millennial women may be leaving religious institutions. This chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the results of the analyzes, implications for researchers, religious institutions, pastoral counselors, and church leadership, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Research to date has suggested that millennials have become increasingly disaffiliated with religious institutions, greater than any other generation (Manalang, 2021; Taylor et al., 2017). Despite the research that has been done on millennials overall, there is a lack of research on the various subgroups within the millennial population, including single millennial woman. Because research suggests that this group reported higher levels of loneliness and authenticity, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of authenticity and loneliness on the religious commitment of single millennial women.

Research Question One

Based on the results of the scale analyzes, Research Question One was revised to the following: Does Authenticity: Internal Congruence and Authenticity: External Congruence explain a significant amount of the variance the Religious Commitment of single millennial women who are church goers? The findings are supportive of the literature on millennials and authenticity (Counted, 2016). Subscales allowed for a

measuring two aspects of Authenticity: Internal Congruence (personal values, beliefs, and behaviors are congruent, regardless of external setting; strong sense of self) and External Congruence (personal values, beliefs, and behaviors are congruent, regardless of external setting; weak sense of self).

Results from this study indicate Authenticity: Internal Congruence explained 25% of the variability in Religious Commitment, while Authenticity: External Congruence did not contribute additional explanatory power to the model beyond Authenticity: Internal Congruence. Christian women participating in the study tended to be less committed to religious practices the more their values, beliefs, and behaviors were congruent. This suggests that traditional religious practices may not match their sense of authenticity. The higher the levels of Authenticity: Internal Congruence, the lower the levels of Religious Commitment. The lower the levels of Authenticity: Internal Congruence, the higher the levels of Religious Commitment. The higher the participant's perception that their personal values, beliefs, and behaviors are congruent (strong sense of self), the lower the levels of their commitment to engage in Religious practices. The lower the participant's perception that their personal values, beliefs, and behaviors are congruent (strong sense of self), the higher the levels of their commitment to engage in Religious practices.

Research Question Two

Based on the results of the scale analyzes, Research Question Two was revised to the following: Does Loneliness Internal Locus of Control and Loneliness External Locus of Control explain a significant amount of the variance in Religious Commitment of single millennial women who are church goers? Research has indicated that loneliness is a rising social problem for millennials and emerging adults (Williams & Braun, 2019).

Subscales allowed for a measuring two aspects of loneliness: Internal Locus (perception of their ability to connect with others when needed is shaped by their internal view of self; strong sense of self) and External Locus (perception of their ability to connect with others when needed is shaped by others in their external setting; weak sense of self).

Results from this study indicate Loneliness: External Locus of Control explained 31% of the variability in Religious Commitment, while Loneliness: Internal Locus of Control did not contribute additional explanatory power to the model beyond Authenticity: External Congruence. Participants tended to be less committed to religious practices the less that their perception that their ability to connect with others when needed is mainly shaped by others in their external setting. This suggests that the social aspect of traditional religious practice tends to be less relevant when the participants felt they had to ability to meet social needs based on their internal sense of self. The higher the levels of Loneliness: External Locus of Control, the higher the levels of Religious Commitment. The lower the levels of Loneliness: External Locus of Control, the lower the levels of Religious Commitment. The higher the participant's perception of their ability to connect with others when needed is shaped by others in their external setting (weak sense of self), the higher the levels of their commitment to engage in Religious practices. The lower the participant's perception of their ability to connect with others when needed is shaped by others in their external setting (weak sense of self), the lower the levels of their commitment to engage in Religious practices.

Implications

The results from this non-experimental quantitative research study suggest that the participants' sense of congruence in their values, beliefs, and behaviors as well as in

their ability meet social needs based on their internal sense of self were less likely to be committed to religious. Furthermore, given the fact that the participants were Evangelical Christians, the results suggest that traditional religious practices may not match their spiritual values, beliefs, and behaviors. The results also suggest that when Evangelical Women Millennials tended to be less committed to religious practices the less that their perception that their ability to connect with others when needed is mainly shaped by others in their external setting. This suggests that the social aspect of traditional religious practice tends to be less relevant to the participants when felt they had to ability to meet social needs based on their internal sense of self. By understanding how these aspects of authenticity and loneliness affect religious commitment in this population can be beneficial in aiding these young women to reconnect with religious institutions..

The main implication of this is that single millennial women are contemplating, if not walking away from religious institutions because they are lacking an authentic connection with these institutions. Research shows that millennial women are foregoing marriage because they know what they want, and they are more focused on themselves than forming their own households (Bialik & Fry, 2019). While religious institutions nominally invite individuals to come as their authentic selves, some single millennial women feel their authentic selves are not welcome in those institutions. Additionally, when these women identify as members of the LGBT+ community, it causes bigger complexities. Many churches teach about how the Bible and God are against homosexuality and those from Conservative Christian backgrounds may feel unwelcome depending on the sermon that is being preached (VanderWaal et al., 2017). It is imperative that if the bible teaches us to love one another that this message is upheld

regardless of how an individual may present themselves. Retaining the youth in the church so that mentorships and fellowships can continue to happen should be the number one priority for any religion while still being able to teach the true Word of God in a manner that is not demeaning or condemning. By understanding why single millennial women are leaving the church is the first step in informing pastoral leaders, church elders, religious institutions, and counselors in potential ways to reversing this trend.

The results of this study also is consistent with research suggesting that there are unique challenges in bringing part of the millennial population back to the church building and restoring their religious affiliation (Norris et al., 2017). The results of this study provides insight into two factors that impact religious commitment. Given these factors, Pastoral leaders who seek to help reconnect single millennial women with other women and mentors in the church must be willing to examine how their values, beliefs, and values may differ from the spirituality of millennial women. Filling this void in their lives may ultimately help this population to increase their self-esteem, physical wellbeing, and mental wellbeing.

Limitations

Limitations of a study are included sample size and selection. There was also limited diversity among the participants. However, despite these limitations, the study provides valuable explanatory information on the increased disaffiliation with religious institutions observed in this population.

Recommendations for Future Research

To further increase knowledge in this field of study it is imperative to present recommendations for further research. Further research is needed due to the limited

literature that is currently present on the single millennial woman who report higher levels of disaffiliation from religious institutions. Research has shown that millennials are leaving religious institutions at alarmingly high rates (Jones, 2021). In an effort to understand the true nature of why this subgroup or any group of millennials feel the need to leave religious institutions in pursuit of other religious affiliations or no religious affiliation an in-depth conversation must be had within this generation.

First, while quantitative research can help explain the variance observed in religious commitment, it does not provide the participants' meaning behind their perceptions. Therefore, qualitative research could fill this gap. Qualitative research has been used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to social and human problems (Creswell, 2014). The use of qualitative research approach would allow a more comprehensive and thorough explanation from the lived experiences of individuals who feel like their authenticity is being questioned. The use of a qualitative approach allows the researcher to use open-ended questions that delve farther into detail while looking at themes that may arise which cannot be captured through a quantitative research approach (Williams, 2007). Quantitative methodology raises more issues through broad and open-ended inquiry, and it allows for the understanding behaviors of values, beliefs, and assumptions (Choy, 2014). Creswell (2014) annotated that those researchers who engage in qualitative approaches support a focus on individual meaning and the importance of contributing to complex situations. A study of this caliber has the ability to provide real world solutions to religious institutions that would increase millennial affiliation.

This research was done on the subgroup of single millennial women who identified as Evangelical Christians which limited the generalization of the study. However, half of the population identified as Black women. Given the importance of the church in the Black community, future research could focus on Black women millennials.

Summary

This quantitative study examined the impact that authenticity and loneliness had on the religious commitment of single millennial women who identify as Evangelical Christians. The findings of the study indicated that Evangelical Women Millennials tended to be less committed to religious practices the higher their congruence of their spiritual values, beliefs, and behaviors and the less that their perception that their ability to connect with others when needed is mainly shaped by others in their external setting. This suggest that traditional religious practices may not match their spiritual values, beliefs, and behaviors, and the social aspect of traditional religious practice was less relevant to the participants. This research will be able to inform church leadership with the insight needed to begin to address the increasing disaffiliation of millennial women in institutional churches.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Are you a single woman between the ages of 20 and 40?
 - Yes
 - No

2. Do you consider yourself an Evangelical Christian?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Have you attended church services in person/and or virtually in the last 12 months?
 - Yes, I have
 - No, I have not

4. Have you ever been diagnosed with depression, anxiety and/or depression on Axis I
 - Yes, I have
 - No, I have not

5. What best describes your race?
 - White
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - Some other race (please specify)

6. What is your employment status?
 - Employed, working full-time
 - Employed, working part-time
 - Not employed, looking for work
 - Not employed, NOT looking for work
 - Retired
 - Disabled, not able to work

7. What is your highest level of education?
 - Less than a high school degree
 - High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
 - Some college but no degree
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Graduate degree

Appendix B: Religious Commitment Inventory Scale – 10 (Worthington et al., 2003)

Instructions: Read each of the following statements. Using the scale to the right, CIRCLE the response that best describes how true each statement is for you.

Not at all true of me me 1	Somewhat true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Mostly true of me 4	Totally true of 5
1. I often read books and magazines about my faith.				1 2 3 4 5
2. I make financial contributions to my religious organization.				1 2 3 4 5
3. I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith.				1 2 3 4 5
4. Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.				1 2 3 4 5
5. My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.				1 2 3 4 5
6. I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.				1 2 3 4 5
7. Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.				1 2 3 4 5
8. It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.				1 2 3 4 5
9. I enjoy working in the activities of my religious affiliation.				1 2 3 4 5
10. I keep well informed about my local religious group and have some influence in its decisions.				1 2 3 4 5

The scoring is straightforward. Add the scores on each item. If you want to use the two subscale scores separately (Items 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 make up the Intrapersonal Religious Commitment subscale; items 2, 6, 9, and 10 make up the Interpersonal Religious Commitment subscale), add the items on each subscale. (No reverse scoring is needed.)

Appendix C: UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996)

Instructions: The following statements describe how people sometimes feel. For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way described by circling one of the responses below.

1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = always

1. How often do you feel that you are “in tune” with the people around you?
2. How often do you feel that you lack companionship?
3. How often do you feel that there is no one you can turn to?
4. How often do you feel alone?
5. How often do you feel part of a group of friends?
6. How often do you feel that you have a lot in common with the people around you?
7. How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone?
8. How often do you feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by those around you?
9. How often do you feel outgoing and friendly?
10. How often do you feel close to people?
11. How often do you feel left out?
12. How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful?
13. How often do you feel that no one really knows you well?
14. How often do you feel isolated from others?
15. How often do you feel that you can find companionship when you want it?
16. How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you?
17. How often do you feel shy?
18. How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you?
19. How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to?
20. How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to?

Scoring:

Q1, Q5, Q6, Q9, Q10, Q15, Q16, Q19, and Q20 should be reverse scored. Reverse-scored items are worded in the opposite direction of what the scale is measuring. The formula for reverse-scoring an item is:

$$((\text{Number of scale points}) + 1) - (\text{Respondent's answer})$$

To calculate the total score for each participant, sum all responses for a score ranging from 20 to 80.

Appendix D: Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008)

Instructions: The following measure has a series of statements that involve people's perceptions about themselves. There are not right or wrong responses, so please answer honestly. Respond to each statement by writing the number from the scale below, which you feel most accurately characterizes your response to the statement.

1. I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular
2. I don't know how I really feel inside
3. I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others
4. I usually do what other people tell me to do
5. I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do
6. Other people influence me greatly
7. I feel as if I don't know myself very well
8. I always stand by what I believe in
9. I am true to myself in most situations
10. I feel out of touch with the 'real me
11. I live in accordance with my values and beliefs
12. I feel alienated from myself

Scoring Instructions

All items are presented on a 1 (does not describe me at all) to 7 (describes me very well) scale with 4 representing neutral. Total Items 1, 8, 9, and 11 for Authentic Living; Items 3, 4, 5, and 6 for Accepting External Influence; and Items 2, 7, 10, and 12 for Self-Alienation.

Appendix E: IRB Informed Consent

Consent

Title of the Project: THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT ON THE LONELINESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF EVANGELICAL SINGLE MILLENNIAL WOMEN CHURCHGOERS

Principal Investigator: Zowee Jamison-Shanks, MA, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a single woman between 20-40 years of age, self-report as an Evangelical Christian, and have attended church services in-person and/or virtually within the last 12 months. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

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

The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a need for in-depth conversations about biblical teachings and if such conversations/teachings could result in decreased religious disaffiliation of Evangelical single millennial women. The study seeks to fill the gap in literature with regard to millennials, more specifically, single, millennial women who are becoming religiously disaffiliated.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Complete an anonymous online survey that should take approximately 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

The results of this study may prove to be valuable to religious institutions, professional counselors, and church elders as they work to help single, millennial women remain steadfast in their faith, remain authentic to their true selves, and provide effective mentorship that can be passed from generation to generation.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

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 IRB-FY21-22-160
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How will personal information be protected?

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

- Data will be stored on a password locked computer.
- After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Participants will take the survey in an online platform.
- Participation will be completely anonymous, and no identifying information will be collected.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Zowee Jamison-Shanks. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Daniel Marston, at [REDACTED].

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

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

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Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

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Appendix F: Social Media

Research Participants Needed

THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT ON THE LONELINESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF EVANGELICAL SINGLE MILLENNIAL WOMEN

CHURCHGOERS

- Are you a single woman between the ages of 20 and 40?
 - Do you consider yourself an Evangelical Christian?
- Have you attended church services in person and/or virtually in the last 12 months?

If you answered **yes** to the above questions, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine whether there is a need for in-depth conversations about biblical teachings, and if such conversations/teachings could result in decreased religious disaffiliation of Evangelical, single, millennial women. Investigating the impact that authenticity and loneliness has on the religious commitment of this population could provide insight as to why Evangelical single millennial women are leaving religious institutions. Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey, which should take about 15 minutes. Consent information will be provided to interested individuals.

Zowee Jamison-Shanks, a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Please contact Zowee Jamison-Shanks at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
for more information.**

Appendix F Continued: Social Media

Facebook

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine whether there is a need for in-depth conversations about biblical teachings and if such conversations/teachings could result in decreased religious disaffiliation of Evangelical, single, millennial women. To participate, you must be a single woman between 20-40 years of age, self-report as an Evangelical Christian, and have attended church services in person and/or virtually in the last 12 months. Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey, which should take about 15 minutes. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please direct message me for more information. A consent document will be sent to you along with the link to the survey. Please review the consent document, but you do not need to sign it unless you choose to do so.

Twitter

Are you a single female between 20-40 years of age, and do you consider yourself to be an Evangelical Christian? Direct message me for information about a study on whether there is a need for in-depth conversations about biblical teachings and if such conversations/teachings could result in decreased religious disaffiliation.

Appendix G: Scale Items Correlation of Study Scales

Table G1.

Item Correlations on Religious Commitment Inventory Scale

	RC_1	RC_2	RC_3	RC_4	RC_5	RC_6	RC_7	RC_8	RC_9	RC_10
RC_1	—									
RC_2	.637	—								
RC_3	.705	.622	—							
RC_4	.605	.609	.775	—						
RC_5	.676	.552	.832	.700	—					
RC_6	.658	.661	.706	.635	.715	—				
RC_7	.636	.586	.637	.664	.733	.774	—			
RC_8	.518	.621	.684	.625	.669	.737	.729	—		
RC_9	.641	.569	.695	.644	.649	.713	.692	.761	—	
RC_10	.672	.523	.481	.472	.537	.669	.640	.533	.709	—

Note. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table G2

Item Correlations on Loneliness Scale-Internal Locus of Control

	LS_2	LS_3	LS_4	LS_7	LS_8	LS_11	LS_12	LS_13	LS_14	LS_17	LS_18
LS_2	—										
LS_3	.782	—									
LS_4	.797	.826	—								
LS_7	.630	.736	.772	—							
LS_8	.666	.730	.781	.802	—						
LS_11	.668	.752	.805	.742	.819	—					
LS_12	.644	.721	.695	.732	.685	.711	—				
LS_13	.687	.765	.779	.712	.783	.834	.704	—			
LS_14	.747	.767	.758	.712	.784	.783	.703	.851	—		
LS_17	.697	.774	.688	.641	.671	.717	.649	.701	.701	—	
LS_18	.792	.779	.840	.720	.807	.850	.704	.826	.844	.709	—

Note. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

AS_	.364	.659	.745	--								
11	**	**	**									
AS_	-	.173	0.05	0.0	--							
3	0.09	*	5	92								
5												
AS_	-	.173	0.03	0.0	.926	--						
4	0.11	*	1	79	**							
5												
AS_	-	0.14	0.02	0.0	.893	.883	--					
5	0.05	5	8	54	**	**						
3												
AS_	-	.189	0.08	0.1	.837	.796	.818	--				
6	0.07	*	0	28	**	**	**					
6												
AS_	-	0.14	0.05	0.0	.805	.791	.830	.764	--			
2	0.01	7	4	97	**	**	**	**				
6												
AS_	0.03	.264	0.15	0.1	.715	.733	.739	.641	.715	--		
7	5	**	2	31	**	**	**	**	**			
AS_	-	0.13	0.10	0.1	.811	.801	.817	.734	.851	.761	--	
10	0.06	9	0	02	**	**	**	**	**	**		
4												
AS_	-	0.11	0.01	0.0	.815	.812	.797	.740	.784	.777	.805	--
12	0.14	2	8	84	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	
5												

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table G5

Item Correlations on Authentic Living Subscale

	AS_1	AS_8	AS_9	AS_1 1
AS_1	--			
AS_8	.343	--		
AS_9	.453	.747	--	
AS_1 1	.364	.659	.745	--

Note. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table G6
Item Correlations on Accepting External Influence Subscale

	AS_3	AS_4	AS_5	AS_6
AS_3	--			
AS_4	.926	--		
AS_5	.893	.883	--	
AS_6	.837	.796	.818	--

Note. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table G7
Item Correlations on Self-Alienation Subscale

	AS_2	AS_7	AS_1 0	AS_1 2
AS_2	--			
AS_7	.715	--		
AS_10	.851	.761	--	
AS_1 2	.784	.777	.805	--

Note. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table G8

Item Correlations on Self-Alienation and Accepting External Influence Subscale

	AS_2	AS_7	AS_1 0	AS_1 2	AS_3	AS_4	AS_5	AS_6
AS_2	--							
AS_7	.715	--						
AS_1 0	.851	.761	--					
AS_1 2	.784	.777	.805	--				
AS_3	.805	.715	.811	.815	--			
AS_4	.791	.733	.801	.812	.926	--		
AS_5	.830	.739	.817	.797	.893	.883	--	
AS_6	.764	.641	.734	.740	.837	.796	.818	—

Note. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

LS_17	.697 **	.774 **	.688 **	.641* *	.671 **	.717 **	.649 **	.701 **	.701 **	--									
LS_18	.792 **	.779 **	.840 **	.720* *	.807 **	.850 **	.704 **	.826 **	.844 **	.709 **	--								
LS_1R	- 0.15 5	- 0.09 0	- 0.09 3	- .19 5*	- 0.08 7	- 0.04 2	- .246 **	- 0.05 9	- 0.05 5	- 0.13 7	- 0.00 9	--							
LS_5R	- .330 **	- .240 **	- .196 *	- 0.1 41	- .184 *	- 0.15 2	- .353 **	- .177 *	- .260 **	- .242 **	- 0.15 1	--	.56 4*						
LS_6R	- .249 **	- .175 *	- .243 **	- 0.1 71	- .209 *	- .223 *	- .313 **	- 0.14 2	- 0.17 1	- .230 **	- 0.11 7	--	.46 7*	.77 6*					
LS_9R	- 0.15 2	- 0.16 4	- .208 *	- .19 3*	- 0.13 7	- 0.15 5	- .310 **	- 0.10 3	- 0.11 9	- 0.05 8	- 0.09 9	--	.48 9*	.64 4*	.63 1*				
LS_10R	- 0.16 7	- 0.11 2	- 0.12 6	- .18 9*	- 0.17 2	- .175 *	- .319 **	- 0.11 1	- .172 *	- .218 *	- 0.09 0	--	.60 3*	.72 5*	.72 6*	.76 2*			
LS_15R	- .288 **	- .303 **	- .307 **	- .20 5*	- .234 **	- .326 **	- .482 **	- .248 **	- .322 **	- .380 **	- .243 **	--	.36 0*	.64 9*	.63 9*	.57 8*	.647 **		
LS_16R	- .238 **	- .205 *	- .195 *	- 0.1 53	- 0.09 7	- .214 *	- .302 **	- 0.09 3	- .197 *	- .344 **	- .208 *	--	.44 6*	.57 8*	.57 5*	.59 0*	.688 **	.584 **	--

LS_19R	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.57	.72	.63	.68	.788	.689	.699	--
	.234	0.16	0.11	0.1	0.08	0.08	.341	0.10	0.15	.232	0.10	4*	1*	3*	8*	**	**	**	
	**	0	9	22	8	6	**	5	0	**	1	*	*	*	*	**	**	**	
LS_20R	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.51	.66	.61	.66	.738	.653	.720	.85
	.191	.176	0.12	0.1	0.09	0.12	.318	0.08	0.13	.198	0.08	6*	4*	1*	7*	**	**	**	**
	*	*	0	37	8	3	**	3	3	*	7	*	*	*	*	**	**	**	**

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table G10
Item Correlations

	RC	LS_R	LS_N R	AS_A L	AS_E A
RC_T	--				
LS_T	.653**	--			
LS_NR_T	.653**	1.000**	--		
AS_AL_T	.591**	-.565**	.565**	--	
AS_EA_T	.206*	-.357**	.357**	0.093	--

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Factors: Loneliness Scale: Internal Locus of Control

Factor Matrix^a

Factor 1

LS_2	0.820
LS_3	0.873
LS_4	0.897
LS_7	0.825
LS_8	0.876
LS_11	0.899
LS_12	0.794
LS_13	0.894
LS_14	0.892
LS_17	0.795
LS_18	0.923

Factors: Loneliness Scale: External Locus of Control

Factor Matrix^a

Factor 1

LS_1R	0.623
LS_5R	0.819
LS_6R	0.778
LS_9R	0.791
LS_10R	0.890
LS_15R	0.752
LS_16R	0.767
LS_19R	0.899
LS_20R	0.865

Appendix H: Reliability and Item-Total Statistics for Study Scales

Table H1

Reliability and Item-Total Statistics for Religious Commitment

	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's <i>a</i> if Item Deleted
RCI1	.769	.942
RCI2	.713	.944
RCI3	.822	.940
RCI4	.759	.942
RCI5	.810	.940
RCI6	.846	.938
RCI7	.815	.940
RCI8	.787	.941
RCI9	.812	.940
RCI10	.690	.947

Table H2

Reliability and Item-Total Statistics for Loneliness

	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's <i>a</i> if Item Deleted
UCLA1	.205	.870
UCLA2	.583	.857
UCLA3	.652	.854
UCLA4	.678	.853
UCLA5	.187	.871
UCLA6	.188	.871
UCLA7	.607	.856
UCLA8	.677	.853
UCLA9	.254	.868
UCLA10	.294	.867
UCLA11	.696	.852
UCLA12	.492	.860
UCLA13	.710	.852
UCLA14	.670	.853
UCLA15	.099	.874
UCLA16	.181	.871
UCLA17	.553	.858
UCLA 18	.741	.851
UCLA19	.308	.866
UCLA20	.282	.867

Table H3

Reliability and Item-Total Statistics for Authenticity

	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's <i>a</i> if Item Deleted
AS1	-.019	.923
AS2	.819	.892
AS3	.867	.890
AS4	.854	.890
AS5	.867	.890
AS6	.800	.894
AS7	.799	.893
AS8	.305	.914
AS9	.201	.917
AS10	.820	.892
AS11	.238	.916
AS12	.802	.893