

RETHINKING CONNECTION: SPIRITUALITY, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND CRISIS OF FAITH
IN YOUNG ADULT

by

Connie L. Beckham

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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Abstract

This phenomenological study aims to understand the impact of social media and spiritual formation or faith development in young adults in the United States. The theory guiding this study is provided by theorists of identity and development, including Erik Erikson, James Marcia, and James Fowler (Verschuere, 2017). Specifically, Fowler identified a direct correlation between identity and faith development to more modern identity considerations and historical data relating to existentialism and other crises (Lamont, 2020). The data was collected from interviews with young adults to explore the impact of social media and faith among young adults. The interviews included thirteen questions that provided insight into the participants' lived experiences. Themes were developed utilizing the transcripts from audio recordings from the participant's interviews. The interviewees and expert reviewers accessed the transcripts and analysis for accuracy.

Keywords: social media, faith, influence, emerging adults

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Social media has rapidly increased over the last few decades and influenced young people's views on their life and faith (Huff, 2022). This chapter will show the impact of social media on young adults' faith. The background will reveal the increase in positive and negative influences that help develop an emerging young adult's faith Identity and the evolution of it. The problem statement reveals a young person's faith beliefs resulting from influences from social media. This study aims to show the framework of social media and whether it positively or negatively influences a young person leaving their faith. The significance of the study reveals the need for more research on the phenomenal impact of social media and its influence on a young adult's faith.

Background

In the last ten years, social media has evolved, infiltrated our lives, and influenced young adults' faith development. In 2003, data showed that just over one in 10 Americans claimed to be atheist, agnostic, or of no faith (11%), and over eight in 10 identified as having Christian faith (Barna Group, 2019). The recent decline in youth identifying with the Christian faith raises questions of causation, particularly in how this age group defines who they are and how they see themselves concerning the world and others.

Thanks to the revolutionary and accessibility of technology today, young people are bombarded with social media (Vogels et al., 2022). Social media influence evolved among young people born after 1994 (Twenge, 2017). This section includes the historical background regarding the increasing growth of social media and the impact on young adults leaving their faith.

Despite the abundance of studies about the effects of social media on young adults today, there has not been research on this phenomenon. Rapid growth in recognition is due to substantial changes in young people's social media usage (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Teens spent an average of four hours daily on social media in the 90s, while these estimates have soared to nine hours daily. Media has taken up more hours in a teen's day than the hours they spend at school (Ye et al., 2020). Young adults allow social media influencers to define their identity instead of their faith (Huff, 2022). The increased growth of media's positive and negative influence on a young person's faith is significant (Uecker & McClure, 2022).

Situation to Self

As a therapist, I have seen the risen concern for young adults' mental health over the last thirty years. The influence of social media has impacted young people's faith in humanity and their Christian faith. This researcher grew up in a time when there were no social media. My influence was by the people I hung around, and my faith faded into the background. Young

adults today are influenced by social media, a vast majority through their peers (Twenge, 2017; Boursier & Manna, 2018). No longer is immediate family or environment the only influence on young people today because of the easy accessibility to media from any place in the world at any time of day or night (Elsayed, 2021).

Social media highly influences a person's mental state in their anxieties, depression, and mental illness by the rapid growth in media and are readily accessible to the younger and younger generation (Yoo et al., 2019). The influences of young adults emerging into adulthood through social media have affected their identity and faith (Krause et al., 2021; Stonestreet & Kunkle, 2020). As a therapist, mother and grandmother, my heart is to learn, grow and share research that might help future generations.

Problem Statement

A comprehensive understanding of social media's impact on young adults' faith does not exist. The rate of young people leaving their childhood faith has rapidly increased (McClure, 2020). The era's progression dramatically matters in how young adults experience faith (Drovdahl & Keuss, 2020). Although social media has grown exponentially over the last thirty years, there is not enough research to reflect its influence on a young adult's faith. This study addresses the impact of social media positively and negatively but leaves a need for more research. The complexity of issues includes the bright and dark sides of media and the influences on a young person's life. (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2018). Young people are growing up in an age of selfies, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube (Stonestreet & Kunkle, 2020). These social media platforms significantly impact emerging young adults today (Eichorn, 2019; McClure, 2020). As social media has become a part of one's everyday life, this digital culture shapes a young adult's identity and faith formation (Lewis, 2018).

Purpose Statement

This study aims to understand the experiences of individuals whose faith journey impacts by social media. While the study shows how many factors on their faith journey influence young adults, social media has increasingly emerged in the last few decades in challenging one's faith. This unprecedented crisis of faith influenced by social media will show the need for more research on this subject. Knowledge and insight of social media influences on emerging young adults will reveal their faith's positive and adverse effects.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study reveals that social media has an increasing influence on emerging young adults' faith. Christian faith has declined as more young people identify as atheists or agnostics and has doubled from 11 percent in 2003 to 21 percent in 2018 (Barna Group, 2020.). This phenomenon of a person's faith has continually declined over the last twenty years showing that half of those that had religion fell away from their faith. Only one in four Americans say that they are a practicing faith Christian (Barna Group, 2020). Young adults in the Gen Z era are less interested in faith identity than past generations (Barna Group, 2020). The importance of research on the growth of technology and its influences on young people's faith and identity impacting their faith impacts on the rapidly increasing development of technology is not without a lack of needed research.

The evolution of social media affects younger people's views of faith (Barna Group, 2020). The average social media user in 2019 was ten years of age and continues to reach younger and younger age users (World Health Organization, 2019). The Bureau of Labor Statistics data reveals that social media usage is utilized by a person more than some everyday

activities. Technology tools navigate one's perceptions and experiences of reality, offering an illusion of total access to the world (Kinnaman & Matlock,2019). This study focuses on social media's impact on a young adult's faith development and is found in both positive and negative holistic perspectives.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of individuals whose faith is impacted by social media?

RQ2: How does the influence of social media modify faith development?

RQ3: How does one's environment serve as a protective factor regarding the impact of social media?

RQ4: What sources of resilience balance the effect of social media on faith development?

Summary

This chapter provides the purpose and overview of the study. The background examines the evolution of social media's influence and its impact on emerging young adults' faith. The rapidly increasing technology reveals the imperative need to investigate and continue research on faith beliefs and social media connections. Limited research shows the complexity of the two. Participants' social media usage will reflect how it influences their spiritual belief systems. Through this inductive, qualitative study, the research hopes to reveal insight into social media's impact on future generations concerning their faith development to help emerging young adults in their faith journey.

CHAPTER TWO-LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature provides a framework for illuminating social media's impact on young adults' faith development process. Identity development theories illustrate assumptions regarding the importance of age, stage, and other tenets of growth through adolescence and young adulthood. Theories of faith development presented in a similar framework as age, stage, and the period of adolescence and young adulthood are significant to how faith perspectives cultivate. Environmental factors impacting identity and faith development, such as parental values, peer influence, trauma experiences, and involvement in college and academic settings, are represented. How social media intrudes on identity and faith development is detailed. The literature point to the connection between identity and developmental faith processes and how social media adapts those experiences, drawing young adults away from the crystallization of their Christian faith and beliefs.

Identity Development Theories

Identity defines distinguishing characteristics a person uses to describe the self (Webster, 2018). A person's identity forms through stages, crises, and pathways in which self-knowledge, independence, and a sense of affiliation collaborate into the concept of personal identity (Crocetti, 2017; Boursier & Manna, 2018). Identity has biological and psychosocial attributes that

are essential considerations (Dunkel & Harbke, 2016). Theorists explain the processes involved in identity transformation over time and how it matures through adolescence and young adulthood experiences (Elsayed, 2021). Three theoretical perspectives show how the framework for identity developed. Psychosocial development illustrates the role of socialization and how human interactions cultivate a crisis between identity and role confusion as a pivotal developmental stage (Crocetti, 2017). Secondly, identity status theory presents a four-status model representing a series of decision-making crises that contribute to our understanding of identity formation (Elsayed, 2021). Narrative identity theory contributes a non-stage model that points to the involvement of self, related to how an individual internalizes selective memories of past experiences to create a personal life story (McAdams, 2018). As individuals integrate and reconstruct their past, they can see their future with a degree of unity and purpose (Shenster, 2020)

Psychosocial Development

Psychosocial development theory suggests that a person's personality development involves an eight-stage model established through meaningful virtues and when the crisis navigates successfully. Negative personality traits may emerge if the crisis does not happen. The first stage occurs in infancy, known as the crisis of trust vs. mistrust, related to a child's ability to feel secure and cared for by their parents and environment. If trust becomes established, then the virtue of hope ensues (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). At age one ½-3, the second stage is autonomy vs. shame; the child develops a sense of independence through personal control over physical skills. If this crisis manages successfully, the virtue of will comes into existence (Knight, 2017). The third stage is initiative versus guilt, at age 3-5, where a child uses social interactions through play to practice interpersonal skills and initiate engagement with other children (Marcia, 2020).

Through playing and starting activities with peers, children develop a sense of initiative, which builds feelings of security about leading others and making decisions. Success here creates the virtue of purpose. The fourth stage, age 5-12, is industry vs. inferiority. Through social interactions, a child either feels industrious and competent in achieving goals or feels inferior and lacks confidence (Maree, 2021). Parents and teachers play a crucial role in encouraging industry, as they can set the stage for a child to feel confident; if parents or teachers are overly restrictive and critical, a child can begin to feel inferior and doubt their ability (Laible et al., 2019). The virtue of successfully piloting this stage is competency. These four stages serve as vital building blocks enabling an individual to enter the fifth stage, identity vs. role confusion, with tools and traits that will contribute to crystallizing identity attributes.

The fifth stage of psychosocial theory is most important when assessing identity's role in personality development. The crisis stage of identity versus role confusion happens between 12-18. This stage is a process of defining self and exploring independence, personal values, goals, and beliefs (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). Adolescents need to define their identity formation of self and their role in Society to avoid role confusion (Verschuere et al, 2017). Individuals will experience a greater sense of well-being if they establish a stable, articulate, positive sense of Identity (Klimstra & Denissen, 2017). Otherwise, these individuals that do not form a strong image of self and develop Identity commitments may struggle with mental health issues that could include internalizing and externalizing symptoms, depression, and even suicidal ideations (Mitchell et al., 2021). Identity confusion predicts a higher possibility for an individual in adolescence to encounter early delinquent behavior, alcohol use, cigarette, and marijuana use, early sexual experiences, and unprotected sex (Hatano et al., 2017). The significance of individuals developing a solid commitment to their values, beliefs, roles, and integrity is part of helping them form a powerful sense of self-identity (Krause, et al., 2021).

Individuals must discover their beliefs, values, sexual identity, and interests to engage in their mental and emotional makeup (Dunkel & Harbke, 2016). Adults who struggle with identity integration experience unreliability in many other areas of life (Schwartz, 2016). If young adults do not know their identity and role in Society during this stage of development, they may struggle with their sexual identity and where they fit in Society as a whole (Michikyan, 2020).

Individuals who have trouble forming a stable, positive sense of self early in young adult life will continue to struggle moving forward in the subsequent ability to develop healthy adult tasks (Mitchell et al., 2021). If an individual does not form a strong Identity and a sense of direction in life during this fifth stage, it may result in role confusion where they are unsure of who they are and where they fit in (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). The individual may drift from one job to another, as well as relationships, while continually feeling disappointed and confused about where they fit in. This individual will live a life of constant consequences with commitments, mental health and well-being, lack of confidence, and a weak sense of self (Knight, 2017).

Forming a healthy and whole sense of identity is imperative in decreasing role confusion. Identity is the most crucial and well-developed construct of the eight stages of psychosocial development. It lays a central foundation for the later stages in Erikson's theory (Mitchell et al., 2021). Erickson identity development encourages individuals to build on their strengths, complete goals, and commitments, try new activities, and explore interests. Suppose an individual successfully forms their identity in this fifth stage. In that case, they can create close intimate relationships with others and illustrate strong values, goals, and commitments in their role in Society throughout the subsequent decades of their life (Mitchell et al., 2021).

Identity Status Theory

James Marcia extended Erikson's works and characterized identity status theory as one's

sense of identity is developed by the choices and commitments they make concerning specific social and personal traits (Verschueren et al, 2017). Marcia identified four stages that a person undergoes in their life: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement (Verschueren et al, 2017). Each status represented an individual's relation to an identity crisis which involved a period of conscious decision-making related to identity formation.

The first stage is identity diffusion status, characterized as a state of mind where a person has neither explored nor made a commitment to identity. The individual in this status lacks firm commitments in their identity but drifts aimlessly, has little connection with others around them, and does not have a sense of purpose in their life (Verschueren, 2017). Individuals in this stage are not ready to develop their path in their ideological or occupational commitments. Identity diffusion begins in the adolescent years and continues into adulthood, allowing them an expansion to form their identities (Melonashi, 2019).

High school and college years are a critical stage for an individual in trying out diverse types of personas where they may be one way at home and another identity among peers (Paris et al., 2023). The individual in the diffusion status stage makes up low commitment and in-depth exploring and are moderately passive in their identity approach (Crocetti, 2017).

The second status is known as foreclosure, characterized as the state where a person has committed without exploring other options (Meeus, 2018). This status is when an individual establishes an Identity based on accepting the values and beliefs of their family, culture, and community (Kroger, 2017). In foreclosure status, an individual does not explore or question any alternative identities but assumes their identity based on significant others in their life, passively accepting the identities assigned to them. Adolescents in foreclosure status score high in commitment, are usually well-adjusted, and have positive interpersonal relationships but are not highly active in their community (Crocetti, 2017).

The status of a moratorium is a period where one considers alternatives toward a commitment. The adolescent explores separate roles and beliefs, which can cause anxious and emotionally tense times. This status has added more stress due to the in-depth exploration and higher reconsideration of commitment (Crocetti, 2017). This reconsideration commitment can negatively impact low-income family relations, low academic achievement, and maladjustment. An individual examines different choices but has not made a solid commitment to any of them (Meeus, 2018). Adolescence in the moratorium status describes internal and external struggles and lower life satisfaction (Crocetti, 2017)

The fourth status is the achievement status, involving a commitment to choices made after a crisis that allowed a person to explore alternatives. The achievement status is often associated with the healthiest psychosocial individuals who score high on personality traits (Crocetti, 2017). This last status is when an individual attains their identity based on personal decisions. Identity achievement represents that the adolescent has finished exploring and has decided on a commitment (Meeus, 2018). Individuals are more conscientious, open, and agreeable, with higher levels of life satisfaction and lower external and internal symptoms. The identity stage of achievement is a significant development of the adolescent years, even though individuals may not resolve or rationalize their identity at an early age (Fadjukoff et al., 2016).

Narrative Identity Theory

Narrative Identity Theory is a growing development in identity formation among young adults emerging into adulthood, where the individual conveys the meaning of their lives through a story of themselves (Setran, 2020). This story characterizes when a person's collective past life experiences influence and emerge into forming their self-identity and future purpose (Syed, 2017). The narrative theory allows individuals to separate from their problems and talk about

their issues rather than internalize them. Narrative Identity theory highlights several components (Seaman et al., 2017).

The first component is the achievement of a person's autobiographical reasoning during adolescence, integrating cognitive ability in utilizing memories into developing a more cohesive design of their purpose and goals (Setran, 2020). Storytelling is a component of Narrative Identity where an individual articulates a model of one's identity as a personal myth or integrative autobiographical project that allows them to focus on forming their sense of importance or self-defining scenes in their life (McAdams, 2018). In making meaning of their life, the storyteller can develop a semantic conclusion about themselves, conveying the story through episodic information (Syed, 2017). A person's identity-forming through a life story would sometimes consist of scenes, characters, settings, plots, and themes grasping the importance of psychological highs and low points in their life (Syed, 2017). An individual may form their understanding of their identity through big and little stories that build the Narrative of who they are through both retrospect and prospect (McAdams, 2019)

The second component is the aspect of the culture of biography, where the individual shares stories from a more organized narrative of self. This self-narrative thinking attempts to connect a person's past and present life with a meaningful story of themselves for an expected future (McAdams, 2019). Adolescents will adjust to age-related changes that will help develop their cognitive growth and play a significant role in representing their identity in abstract ways and coping with life's paradoxes and contradictions. Adolescents will adjust to age-related changes that will help develop their cognitive growth and play a significant role in representing their identity in abstract ways and coping with paradoxes and contradictions. Their early years for children begin to learn to develop Narrative stories forming their identity through parent-child conversations. Through the adolescent years, one begins to be able to tell a story about their

lives and thematic coherence, casual coherence, and a well-formed Narrative Identity of themselves (McAdams, 2018).

The third component is coherence, where the individual makes themselves comprehensive in linking temporary and themes in relating them to their Identity (Setran, 2020). Narrative Identity development assesses an individual's personality traits and differences in how they see themselves from others. This Narrative concept brought logic and order to a person's chaos through life experiences. The narrative identity theory did not investigate religious beliefs; instead, it focused on life experiences (Choo, 2021). Social networks will begin to play a role in sharing and having conversations requiring them to explain themselves in a meaningful story.

Narrative identity continues to grow and show that a person's story will not only significantly impact the development of one's identity but also reveal how an individual's life stories never end (Cho, 2021). These stories one tells themselves bring diverse elements into an integrated whole, managing and conflicting facets of one's life within a narrative framework allowing past, present, and future to connect and form a story of identity that evolves and takes form as they draft their story (Goodson et al., 2018). This theoretical framework has allowed the therapist to engage in a more profound understanding of a person's finding their identity through their life being and the impact of their relationships, stories, and life experiences (Dickson, 2016). Narrative identity helps an individual to rediscover one's life history, and this Narrative begins the process of a person "coming to tell," allowing them a process of "coming to know" a person's identity self (Goodson et al., 2018). Young adults who experience and resolve conflicts and assert exploration through crisis and commitments will develop a more precise identity (Verschueren et al, 2017).

Faith Development Theories

Faith is a natural common feature of every human being. Faith Development is an essential consideration because of its relevance to Identity formation and how young adults align their moral compasses and adopt or reject family values imposed during adolescence. Three theories, James Fowler, John Westerhoff, and Heinz Streib, propose stages theories that inform a deeper understanding of faith development. Each approach contributes a unique perspective that postures faith as an instrumental component of identity. Faith identifies as an essential focus underlying the formation of the beliefs, values, and intentions that (1) give coherence and direction to persons' lives; (2) link them in shared trusts and loyalties with others; (3) grounds their stances and communal loyalties in the sense of relatedness to a larger frame of reference; and (4) enables them to face and deal with the challenges of human life and death, relying on that which has the quality of ultimacy in their lives. Faith development theory concentrated on the general understanding that faith involved seeing a foundation for personal identity, social relations, and the qualities of personal and cultural meanings. Faith accommodates the development of an expanding range of object relations and exposure to religious symbols and practices, allowing the child to nurture a sense of relatedness as they mature emotionally and physically.

Fowler's Faith Development Theory

Faith development theory is an inclusive framework representing the formation of values, beliefs, and meaning in a coherent direction hypothesized as stages. The emergence of faith is considered from birth through the teen years, emphasizing trust, loyalties, and relatedness to God and others. This theory acknowledges the complex interplay between maturation, emotions, and cognitive and psychosocial development (Francis, 2019). Like other development stage theories, movement from one stage to the next is expected but not automatic or assured. An individual can reach adulthood, chronologically and biologically, while remaining in the earlier stages of faith

development. Higher spiritual aptitude is evident in children when nurtured in their spirituality along with the practices of spiritual disciplines,

A deeper level of faith development can proceed with expectation. The stages illustrated in this model represent the process of faith development that corresponds with other human development processes through childhood and adolescence (Streib & Keller, 2018). The time and attention invested in spiritual formation impact movement and transition from one stage to the next. Children are not able to distinguish between reality and fantasy at this stage. Their world consists of what objects and influences appear to them.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith begins for two years and extends to six or seven years of a child's life (Streib, 2018). Fowler linked Stage 1 to Piaget's pre-operational stage. This first stage is where a baby develops a sense of trust in others where they must rely entirely on their needs met by their parents or others (Lamont, 2020). They must rely entirely on the stories and languages to form images of God through others. During this stage, children learn at a fantastic rate to understand Bible stories and what the adults share and model with them (Lamont, 2020). Children are not able to distinguish between reality and fantasy at this stage. Their world consists of what objects and influences appear to them.

Stage 2: Mythic-literal Faith assumes prevalence in a child's life from 7 to 12 years of age. The child is aware of narrating stories they begin to understand at this stage. They are interested in their world, have concrete links between events and things, and become aware of concrete and realism (Streib, 2018). The child learns the orientation of reward and punishment and moral judgments. This second stage interprets faith as spirituality or religious beliefs (Harris et al, 2018).

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith influenced by puberty and developed self-image (Hart, 2020). This individual appears in early adolescence and orients toward concrete and

interpersonal harmony (Steib, 2018). During this stage, the individual begins to form values and beliefs, including a concept of faith. They begin to feel a sense of their own opinions and attitudes as they learn to value relationships through risk-taking. They cannot yet differentiate themselves from the relationships they are engaging in or develop a heteronomous, conforming, or conventional worldview. (Steib, 2018). The reasoning at this stage has not yet fully developed in forming a particular outlook.

Stage 4: Individuated-Reflective Faith is where the late adolescent and adult can clearly distinguish themselves from the environment, are part of, and reflect on it (Lamont, 2020). This stage proves detachment, autonomy, choice, and individuality. Faith is defined more at this stage, allowing individuals to decide their limits that exposure to Others' ways of living. Individual awareness and other worldviews are contemplated and reviewed with arguments (Steib, 2018).

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith is where individuals explore other beliefs and religions that will influence their lives and alter their beliefs into adulthood. This stage is expressed as dialogical, where the individual explores meaning. There is an emphasis on individual opinions and the need for one's own decisions (Steib, 2018). There is an increased awareness of understanding others and a willingness to adapt and live with contradictions, ambiguities, and controversies of a more mature faith (Lamont, 2020).

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith states that one is willing to sacrifice and risk partial justice for more inclusive justice and awareness of love (Steib, 2021). Fowler believed this stage was extremely rare and engaged in self-transcendence and a commitment to humanity. Faith consists of the cognitive structure, which entails the center of values and beliefs of power through images and stories (Steib, 2018). It also revealed how an individual's Identity and Faith develop over

time through a series of psycho-spiritual conflicts and challenges, enabling them to be engaged, resolved, and revisited if needed (Streib, 2021).

Westerhoff's Faith Development Theory

A pioneering theorist, John Westerhoff, proposed that growth in faith resembles how the rings of a tree change over time (Lamont, 2020). This journey is realized through interactions with other individuals of faith, creating opportunities to cultivate growth and thrive. These interactions are the water and nutrients needed to grow a person's Faith (Howard, 2019). The model includes four faith styles that coincide with age and development and considers nurturing relationships a foundational growth element.

Style 1. Experienced faith is when an individual experiences faith through the interactions of others. This style can be any interaction from a child holding an adult or a relationship with another person with Faith (Howard, 2019). An essential for children is a need for a few trusted and loving adults in their lives (Hosken, 2019). Children learn to respond to their experiences through their interactions with adults by seeing love and trust in these interactions (Lamont, 2020). Children are too young to think consciously about faith during this stage, yet they prove a sincere need for trust, love, and acceptance. This type of faith is the foundation for all the other faiths.

Style 2. Affiliative faith involves a flourishing experienced faith with another person of faith that is egalitarian. This style of faith is first experienced through successful actions with one another and then through images and stories (Howard, 2019). Affiliative builds Faith from these experiences showing affections and heartfelt spiritual beliefs. Style two is usually the faith a young teenager experiences. The community becomes essential during this style (Lamont, 2020).

Style 3. Searching for faith is during late adolescence when one questions their beliefs. In this stage, individuals no longer accept what they have believed but begin asking questions. In the

Searching Faith style, faith begins to add the "end" knowledge and more about the "heart" "of their beliefs (Van Niereck et al., 2018). Style 4. Owned faith occurs among young adults between 21-30 years of age. This stage only comes through the searching stage. In this style of faith, individuals have strong convictions about what they believe and are willing to die for (Van Niereck et al., 2018).

Faith commitment is vital in theology and knowledge as one seeks to understand Faith (Hart, 2020). This theory illustrates that faith expresses deep personal, living, and growing internal beliefs (Lamont, 2020). A person's journey of faith expounds on four styles of faith feeding upon the other.

Streib's Model of Religious Styles

Streib's model of religious styles Theorist Heinz Streib advanced Fowler's Faith Development model with the term "religious styles," emphasizing more interpersonal relationships (Streib & Keller, 2018). This model of religious styles believed the stages are hierarchical, sequential, and invariant. There are four types of religious styles (Streib et al., 2021). These four types emphasize differences between the religion of an "ethnocentric order" and the religion of a "universalistic order."

1, The Substantially Ethnocentric Type characterizes a substantial existence of mythic-literal understanding, substantial ethnocentric, nonreligious claims for the truths of texts and teachings of a person's tradition, and substantial support for a system that includes reward and punishment in an aspect of justice on earth and heaven.

2. The Predominantly Conventional Type involves a predominant inclination for agreement of a group's beliefs and prescriptions, their religious community, or closely small lifeworld; this type has a longing for conceptual, interpersonal harmony, meanwhile rejecting critical questioning.

3. The Emerging Dialogical-Xenosophic Type welcomes critical and autonomous reflecting-showing significant multi-religious multitude; in case of contradictory validity claims and considering models of tolerance.
4. Emerging Dialogical-xenosophic Type openness distinguishes the interreligious discussions challenged and changing by an encounter with the Alien/Other. This type encourages xenosophia, with critical and autonomous reflection, the knowledge in meeting the Alien/Strange (Streib & Keller, 2018).

The model of religious types shows the importance of developmental hierarchy involving individual reflection and tolerance in a person's attitude and understanding (Streib et al., 2020). The four types are value-driven and typical for developmental growth on philosophical-ethical styles of openness for dialogues, and xenosophia is ethically higher.

Summary

These theories reveal the influences when examining the impact of faith and social media on a young person. Fowler, Westerhoff, and Streib explain how faith development is vital in growing one's faith. These theorists emphasize the importance of an emerging adult's developmental growth in their faith journey. If young adults do not evolve in their faith development, social media influences will significantly impact them.

Influences on Faith Development

Several influences play a critical role in one's faith development. The impact of family, peers, college influences, and Trauma are just four of the significant forces in developmental growth that affect how a person forms their beliefs and values of their faith. The phenomenological approach reveals that sustaining religious beliefs from childhood to adulthood

influences these environmental and life experiences that create a cognitive belief system forming an individual's faith.

Family Influence

Families cultivate an environment that molds the faith and values of children from birth to the time they leave home. Parental influence is a dominant source of a child's first faith influence (Goodman & Dyer, 2020). Parents' religiosity contributes to adolescents' religiosity as they transition into adulthood (Hoffman, 2019).

Family modeling their faith practices in the home, such as family worship, prayer, and reading the word, is a significant part of an adolescent's faith growth and contributes to higher levels of parent and child transmission of faith (Laible et al., 2019). The influence of parents' attitudes and behaviors significantly impacts their children's attitudes and behaviors (Thiessen, 2016). Therefore, adolescents tend to mirror their parent's faith when exercised through dialogue and encouragement of religion through church attendance and practices (Van Niekerk & Breed, 2018).

Spiritual development is a significant part of everyday life in the home. Remarkably, when a parent's religious conduct orients with what they teach, the adolescent will mirror the same faith as the parent (Goodman & Dyer, 2020). Consequently, one expects higher levels of one's family religious practices to connect with positive levels of faith transmission connecting parent and adolescent.

Family rules in a person's family can affect their beliefs from the time they are born until they leave home (Furr, 2018). Parenting styles imperatively influence a child's growth causing low efficacy in their later functioning and affecting their own beliefs through a lack of trust (Srivastav & Lal Mathur, 2020). Parents with the traditional approach to the importance of religion combining elevated expectations with emotional warmth and support, open

communication, and involvement transmit practical faith to their children (Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). Adolescents from an authoritarian parenting style show a negative association with their religiosity and higher levels of positive religiosity with adolescents from authoritative parenting (Goodman & Dyer, 2020). Corporal punishment and religion are negatively correlated with religion and transmitting faith to children.

Attachment through a mother's love affects one's ability to connect to others (Barlow, 2019). The effect of a mother's love is significant on developing security and bonding (Srivastav & Lal Mathur, 2020). The warmth or closeness of the parent-adolescent relationship from the adolescent's view also impacts how closely their beliefs mirror those of their parents (Stearns & McKinney, 2019). Family influence is critical in creating a young child's faith (Young, 2017).

A strong attachment bond with close relationships with parents will often see God as affectionate and sensitive, caring for human needs and affairs. When individual experiences an attachment to God, it mirrors a relationship comparable to a parent-child bond. This attachment to God allows one to feel a sensation from God of affection and protection (Torralba et al., 2021). There is an unhealthy correlation between mental health and well-being when insecure attachment (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Unfortunately, when there is low parental warmth, there is often a higher possibility of doubts among adolescents about their religious beliefs (Srivastav & Lal Mthur, 2017).

Environmental Influences

Environmental experiences, such as prenatal life, infancy, and early adolescence, will have an impression on one's growth process (Palumbo et al., 2019). Nurturing within family environments has shown how it impacts their security in intimate relationships and has a lasting impact on their security (Waldinger & Schulz, 2018). The more secure a person is in who they

are, the more substantial confidence they will develop healthy, safe relationships. Environmental influences affect one's personality and react to future situations (Furr, 2018).

Scientific knowledge shows how the mind and the environment affect the brain (Leaf, 2017). A person's experiences, such as prenatal life, infancy, and early adolescence, will impact one's growth process (Palumbo, Mariotti, Iofrida, & Pelligrini, 2018). Individuals' nature and nurture indicate their beliefs and behavior (Hosken, Hunt, & Wedell, 2019).

The adversities a person experiences in their life also affect the brain's maturation process. (Steinbeis et al., 2017) In the belief that the environment highly impacts the development of an individual, then the environment can be altered and produce a more positive character in one's behavior (Sauce & Matzel, 2018). Longitudinal relationships between parents and children's behavior reflect the contribution of genetics (Sherlock & Zietsch, 2018).

Peer Influences

Peer influences through childhood religious experiences are essential in a person's development. Individuals are more sensitive to peer pressure and impact in conforming (Ozimek & Bierhoff, 2020). Childhood religious peer networks predict one's church commitment as an adult (Tratner et al., 2017).

Young adults are easily influenced by social media and comparison, evoking a need to accept what the norm is exposing in hopes of feeling accepted (Friedenberg, 2020; Webber, 2020). The desire to "fit in" strongly predicts that peers influence other peers' participation in religious services and activities (Tratner et al., 2017). Youth have a challenging time not feeling as good as their peers if they do not have a cellular phone and are often made fun of for not knowing the apps associated with them (Ye, et al, 2020). Social media has convinced young adults that it is the only way to connect today (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Eichhorn, 2019).

Through Snapchat, video games, and Instagram posts, connecting has resulted in good and evil through technology, allowing sharing with others while feeling left out at times (Crouch, 2017).

College Influences

The influence of college on young adults' faith development is seen through other college students, professors, and groups (Syed, 2017). Faith and spiritual well-being significantly impact college students' motivation and response to situations (Beste, 2018). College is not only for one to attain a degree but to find a sense of community (Syed, 2017).

Many college students choose faith-based colleges to find others who share their faith and convictions (Syed, 2017). The temptation to find community often pulls on a person who does not have a strong faith before attending college and can easily sway if they cannot find that strong community in which they begin to compromise to prevent loneliness. A lack of being prepared intellectually for the pull of the worldviews in college can become a challenge that causes an individual to question their beliefs from childhood (Kruger, 2021).

Comparing and contrasting Jesus's way of being in the world with the typical college students' ways of being, students saying highlight how it is especially challenging for them to be countercultural and follow the path of Christ. College students refer to religion as just another activity to be involved in, rather than the main thing in one's life. (Beste, 2018). The realization that many college students begin to experience many of their Christian peers is often living a double life where they may go to religious activities while maintaining a life of worldliness (Kruger, 2021).

College students acknowledge that possessions, wealth, social status, and accomplishments prioritize values, other life priorities, or their relationship with God. The

struggle not to see those material things as a false sense of security but to regard them as vital to fit in with social acceptance. Compared with other college students who may have more, this belief keeps them from seeing that only a relationship with Jesus is fulfilling (Beste, 2018). Their studies may be remarkably successful while struggling with mental illness and isolation, especially since the pandemic (Beste, 2018). Anxiety, loneliness, and depression are high on college campuses today, leaving many of faith discouraged and alone with guilt they cannot overcome in these areas.

Trauma Influences

Trauma can cause people to question their faith, also known as a "crisis of faith" (Butenaite et al., 2016). A person's life experiences can affect their personality and act as they see themselves (Leaf, 2017). Several life experiences can impact one's identity, such as Trauma, betrayal, abuse, death, loss, rejection, humiliation, and divorce. Such experiences as loneliness and desolation in one's life are linked with a crisis of faith (Granqvist & Kilpatrick, 2016). This crisis of faith can often cause significant pain, suffering, and emotional distress and even resemble symptoms of a depressive episode, parallel to feelings of guilt, anxiety, and loss of interest (Marino, 2019).

Attempts to engage in spiritual activities such as attending church, prayer, or fellowship with other believers undergo enormous difficulty. These spiritual practices can lose the beliefs that one had held before. A crisis of faith may be short-lived, lasting years, or could become severe enough for a person to disown their faith entirely.

Individuals' personalities can change if they go through a trauma or an experience that affects them negatively or positively. Individuals who experience Trauma have a tough time seeing God's image as good and not harmful (Park et al., 2017). The strength or lack of one's spirituality can affect a positive or negative result, and stressors in life can issue a process of

distress and recovery following meaning in life (Slattery & Park, 2016). If there was never a strong faith in the first place, those under severe stress or Trauma might quickly abandon the faith they knew, whereas others who may not have had strong faith may very well be the ones to turn to religion to cope.

Trauma and spirituality are intertwined (Walker et al., 2015). Trauma often forces a person to face the instability and uncertainty of the root basis of human existence. Trauma can impact one's question of why a God would allow such pain or abuse in a person's life. Survivors of sexual abuse often experience a distorted image of God, sometimes seeing God as punitive, angry, or even abandoning them for allowing the abuse in the first place (Walker et al., 2015). Situation and personal factors can be sources of religious and spiritual struggles (Waldinger & Schultz, 2016).

Traumatic experiences affect one's sense of identity and most profound beliefs about responsibility, control, justice, guilt, trust, suffering, and forgiveness (Park et al., 2017). Once a person is affected by hurt, betrayal, or loss, they will react with fears and insecurities and sometimes get stuck in the trauma memory that keeps them from knowing their Identity (Rogers, 2018). One can see a child's personality change if there is emotional distress due to betrayal such as a divorce, sexual abuse, controlling parents, rejection, humiliation, or loss of an attachment figure (Baker et al., 2016). Hurt, betrayal, rejection, and abuse are also experiences that can significantly impact an individual's faith development (Waldinger & Schultz, 2016)

Social Media's Influence on Faith Development

Religion and communication have coexisted for centuries, but digital media has increased the reach, ease, and speed of global communication making religious media more "global" than ever before. Social media has increased opportunities for one's influence on their faith development (Dyer, 2020). Young adults' interactions with social media expand their knowledge

of socialization and transform their childhood experiences. Media influence challenges them to negotiate their identity (Silas, 2021). However, adolescents' media life cannot represent the only blame for the effect without considering other factors and circumstances that explain their media experiences (Thianthai, 2018)

Social media has shifted the traditional norm of religious structures and has shaped religion to be used by religious people and institutions (Tsuria & Yadlin-Segal, 2021). A person's way of communication has always served religious purposes through written texts (especially the Bible), religious art, sacred music, and television while challenging religion and religious identity. The influences of social media on a young person's faith are positive and negative (Gorrell, 2019). Sermons, podcasts, shared information with peers, and the opportunity for spiritual community and groups are positive influences for growth. Negative impacts include harmful influences/exposure to others' beliefs, opposing views and opinions from others, and bad examples and hypocrisy.

Positive Influences

Social media provides positive influences on young adults' faith development. Sermons, podcasts, online community groups, and peer information offer spiritual growth. The need for connections in one's spiritual growth can be met by others through social media, providing answers, insight, and community.

Information from Sermons and Podcasts

Social Media has influenced faith development (Siles et al., 2021). Critical characteristics of faith development include spending time with God in Bible study, prayer, and worship. These practices influence how Christians learn to live in their everyday lives. Technology is changing the Faith of Digital Millennials (Phillips, 2021). Social media networks give adolescents or young adults access to influences that shape their Faith (Dyer, 2020). These networks contribute

to sharing religious information for growth through sermons and podcasts (Lewis, 2018). The traditional setting of attending a Sunday service at a church sanctuary is no longer the norm. Individuals can grow in faith by watching a sermon or podcast on YouTube, viewing clips on Instagram, or Tweeting a pastor with questions or comments any day of the week (Morehouse & Saffer, 2021).

Social media creates a community that fosters faith development through accountability, social connection, emotional support, sermons, podcasts, resources, and prayer groups and helps growth in the individual's beliefs, habits, and character (Lewis, 2018). Through social media, the younger generation reacts to social, technological, and religious changes (Kinnaman, 2019). Social media expands a church's reach by allowing worship, sermons, podcasts, and online group meetings. Sermons are found online through almost any religious leader worldwide (Buckley, Gainous, & Wagner, 2021). Access to worship opportunities is at an all-time high. The rapid increase in social media allows individuals to share their thoughts on faith and engage with others about Faith (Tsuria & Yadlin-Segal, 2021). The constant growth in technology reflects the atmosphere of religion and human freedom while promoting individual and corporate responsibility (Healey & Woods, 2020).

Many diverse social media platforms are available to the public, catering to the public and niche special interest groups (Lewis, 2018). Throughout all nations, social media increases the spread of religious information (Siles et al., 2021). Social media allows an individual to access faith-based material and content, whether a person is knowledgeable or not (Radstake, 2021). Sharing religious content on social media makes one feel satisfied and motivated to minister to others (Goatley, 2020). Technology strengthens spiritual practices by expanding and creating religious communities (Kgatle, 2018).

Shared Information with Others

Social media can significantly affect spiritual growth through shared beliefs, messages, and religious teachings (Huda & Nur, 2021). For many on social media, their main motive is to build relationships with others with the same Faith (Anwar & Mujib, 2021). Radio, television, the Internet, e-mail, and mobile phones are social media resources for spiritual growth (Kgatlé, 2018). There is a positive association between social media usage intensity and frequency and the individuals' motivation for religious information. Via social media, spiritual and faith-based information is easily accessible without barriers and difficulties (Siles et al., 2021). Social media helps uplift one's spiritual health through life by sharing philosophies, mottos, epigrams, and quotes from famous people that give moral support to get through rough times or share humor to lift them (Thianthai, 2018).

One of the most intensive online experiences is when individuals share their personal religious beliefs (. Sharing is an intimate connection between an individual and the online community (Phillips, 2021). Individuals who appreciate the importance of religion in their lives consider faith sharing and conversations significant. These individuals involve themselves more in religious discussions, sharing faith-based content, enlightening themselves with spiritual teachings and guidelines, and gaining more about religion (Almobarraz, 2021). People feel relaxed and entertained via social media while practicing religious rituals and sharing religious messages with others. These social media interactions can contribute to their well-being, feelings of satisfaction, and contentment (Siles et al., 2021). Social media allows users to express their beliefs and religious practices with others while receiving religious resources, spiritual support, and guidance. This format supplies an opportunity to share religious desires and needs while giving and receiving spiritual growth (Kgatlé, 2018). Information on religious practices can be found on social media to help one's faith grow (Huff, 2022). Social media allows users to express their beliefs and religious practices with others while receiving religious resources, spiritual

support, and guidance (Gorrell, 2019). This format supplies an opportunity to share religious desires and needs while giving and receiving spiritual growth (Kgatle, 2018). Information on religious practices can be found on social media to help one's faith grow (Huff, 2022).

Online Groups and Communities of Faith

The intertwining of religion and social media plays a vital role in accessing information, creating communities, and increasing online users (Tsuria & Yadlin-Segal (2021). Social media creates communities clustered around faith (Lewis, 2018). 52% of individuals in online religious groups said they found companionship, instrumental help, and authentic community via their group (Lewis, 2018). For some, online church communities are a place where one is not afraid of rejection or the expectations of others, thus enabling the person to be more of their authentic self (Musters, 2017).

The quantity and quality of information we have access to through religious media and communication from all over the world; show how quickly we can communicate; and how many places we have for our input to disseminate to others. Many diverse social media platforms are available to the public, catering to the public and niche special interest groups (Lewis, 2018). This chaotic situation of online access also means more challenges to traditional authority, as informal interpretations can quickly become popular online. Tsuria,& Yadlin Segal, (2021).

Social media has allowed young people to connect with online religious groups and communities (Lewis, 2018). Churches, religious groups, and leaders use social media to engage with their communities, allowing a space where young people can worship, find fellowship, and be a part of a group without the confinement of a location (Gomes et al., 2020).

The online church builds community when individuals experience life together, free from a culture of perfection or judgment (Rogers, 2018). Modern culture needs to understand how to exist in the digital age while being immersed in the culture and acting as a change agent within

that culture (Lewis, 2018). Social media considers how a sense of belonging to a Christian community contributes to the spiritual development of young people (Stuart-Bittle, 2018).

Negative Influences

Social media influences hurt a young person's spiritual growth or faith development. This harmful influence can bring conflicting views and hypocrisy. With so many opposing views and opinions allowed to be posted by anyone on social media, a person can struggle with their own childhood beliefs (Doble, 2018). Social media influences harm a young person's spiritual growth or faith development (Webber, 2020). This harmful influence can bring conflicting views and hypocrisy.

Harmful Influences/Exposure to Others' Beliefs

In church cultures, people still need to understand authenticity; that community may make individuals feel the need to perform or "wear a mask" in a frustrating, exhausting, and unfulfilling way (Musters, 2017). The digital world creates an environment culture that fights Christian beliefs because this broken world brings challenges for one to stay in the faith. (Lewis, 2018). Media produces conflicts between different religious communities and deducts the hope of allowing inter-faith dialogues, understanding, and collaborations due to misinformation (Bhatia & Pathak-Shelat, 2019). A negative influence is publishing false information on Facebook and other platforms (Kgatle, 2018). The interpretation of "fake news" on social media impacts one's mental health, influencing spiritual growth.

There is a struggle for religious educators of young people to communicate spiritual teachings via social media to counter false teachings displayed by numerous media sources (Huff, 2022). A young person that did not grow up in a home with religious practices which is looking to understand or grow in their faith may find the incorrect information or be exposed to negative beliefs about faith, harming their faith. Media influence harming faith development

from opposing sources and opinions (Lewis, 2018). or be exposed to negative beliefs about faith, harming their faith. Media influence can hinder these young people's faith development from opposing sources and opinions (Lewis, 2018).

Opposing Views and Opinions from Others

Media influence is a dominant factor in religious beliefs at a macro-level, saturating the micro-realities of individuals in their everyday experiences and showing how one adopts technologies of self to handle themselves in conforming with their existing truths (Bhatia & Pathak-Shelat, 2019). Negative comments and opinions on pastors and Christians affect viewers' beliefs (Kgatle, 2018). Social media has a significant impact on the generation today, opening the door for faith development in young people who have a sense of loyalty to certain groups affecting their progress of identity formation and maintenance. Most importantly for this current generation, through the constantly re-imagining world of social media (Stuart-Buttle & Short, 2018).

In their spiritual growth, individuals engage in media, obtaining interpretations and beliefs through organizations often influenced by the dominant rationality (Bhatia & Pathak-Shelat, 2019). Social media negatively affects young people when they experience discrimination, disagreements on social media, and criticism. The psychological effects often cause depression and anxiety, demoralizing their spiritual beliefs (Thianthai, 2018). Creating social ties and the consequences of peer pressure are often essential aspects of young people's lives. Consequently, when a young person is "unfriended," blocked, or "unfollowed," it causes emotional and social distress and is linked to one's spirituality, affecting their sense of self and their Faith (Thianthai, 2018).

Accepting an interpretation or perspective given by the media can harm a young person's spiritual growth if that perspective is biased and not factual (Bhatia, 2019). Young people who

share beliefs about their faith are often criticized, harassed, and bullied. Over half of the teens today have experienced online abuse on social media (Huff, 2022). Aggressive teasing is cruel and high in identity confrontation, increases the denigration of the person's identity, and creates relational distance and social rejection (Sheldon et al., 2019). Negative feedback and social rejection from others affect a young person's beliefs (Schmuck et al., 2019). Hostility in social media affects young people's spiritual health. Spiritual health is closely related to their psychological and social health/well-being (Halsall, et al., 2019).

Bad Examples and Hypocrisy

One's online identity must be defined by how one sees churchgoers at the place they attended, viewing how one should be rather than the reality of who they are and who they should be (Musters, 2017). Young adults experience hypocrisy and spiritual abuse through the media (Fernandez, 2022). Disclosure of church abuse is rare. Spiritual communities (such as the church) are particularly vulnerable to abuse and cover-ups (Keul, 2022). The recent media exposure to churches secretly withholding sexual misconduct and abuse within denominations has left individuals wounded and betrayed, causing many to abandon their faith.

Religious leaders have lost credibility and devalued the faith due to the lack of values and beliefs (Cosgrove & Brand, 2019). The media has exposed pastors' infidelity, misuse of funds, deception, and spiritual abuse. Spiritual or religious abuse is a misuse of power from a leader with spiritual authority and occurs in all religions or faith-based communities (Fernandez, 2022). This abuse where a leader controls, or exploits a believer causes spiritual wounds where young adults no longer have faith.

Survivors of abuse from church leaders or those in authority require protection and safety. They deal with slander, character defamation, stigmatization, broken relationships, withdrawal of affection, and exclusion from their spiritual community (Keul, 2022). The

perpetrator is safe because of the spiritual power, while the victim's hope for spiritual help weakens, and their faith is shaken, broken, and left wounded by their spiritual communities.

Summary

The impact of social media on a young adult's faith has positive and negative influences. The positive influences have allowed one to obtain information from any podcasts or sermons and be able to share information with others about faith topics. Online groups and communities have risen over the last decades through many religious organizations creating a sense of belongingness in one's faith journey. Nevertheless, negative influences have also affected a young person's faith. These negative attributes have brought on a wide variety of others' beliefs, opinions, opposing views, and the realization of bad examples and hypocrisy. The influence of social media on a young adult's faith continues to increase growth as technology expands in its capacity.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This study seeks to illuminate social media's impact on young adults' faith development through a qualitative phenomenological methodology. The chapter details the design, research questions, participants, setting, data collection methods, and interview questions. The role of the researcher section demonstrates the trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability of the study and includes the instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis processes. The chapter concludes with the ethical guidelines followed by the research study.

Design

The study uses a qualitative phenomenological design to understand the experiences of individuals whose faith journeys are impacted by social media. The participants' rich descriptive narratives are captured by using semi-structured interviews. Participants' reactions to the questions and stories related to the influence of social media on faith development and spiritual formation become the data and thematic focus of the study.

The screening questionnaires are part of the recruitment process to determine if potential participants fit the study's purpose. After recruiting individuals who meet the criteria for the study, interviews are scheduled through Microsoft Teams. Using semi-structured interview an insightful understanding of participants' lived experiences is anticipated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The information from the semi-structured interviews reveals how social media impacts young people's Christian faith development and spiritual beliefs.

Research Questions

The research questions capture the overarching shared experiences of the impact of social media on young people's faith development and spiritual formation.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of individuals whose faith is impacted by social media?

RQ2: How does the influence of social media modify faith development?

RQ3: How does one's environment serve as a protective factor regarding the impact of social media?

RQ4: What sources of resilience balance the effect of social media on faith development?

Settings

The Microsoft Teams platform supports online scheduling, video conference, communication, and audio-recording transcription (Ilag, 2020). The interviews encourage participants to share their lived experiences regarding the implications of social media on

spiritual formation and faith development. Using online conferencing offers the opportunity to include participants from various geographical locations. The semi-structured interviews are conducted in a private, quiet room without distractions allowing for close attention and observance of the participant's reactions and expressions throughout the interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Participants

The participant pool is young adults who can offer insight into experiences where social media has impacted their faith development or spiritual formation in positive and negative way. Individuals across the United States aged 18-30 who use social media and have perspectives on how it has encouraged or diminished spiritual growth or faith development (Huff, 2022). Ten to fifteen individuals are recruited for the study, as it is anticipated that data saturation can result from the interview data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Participants for this research study are individuals of any race or gender.

Snowball and convenience sampling provide means of recruiting participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Snowball and convenience sampling used for this study through referrals made by individuals who share the same lived experiences in their faith and social media usage.

Snowball sampling is a type of convenience sampling method used when it is challenging to attain participants with the characteristics needed for the study through accessing a type of chain effect method from sample participants by referring to other participants with similar characteristics needed for the study (Naderifar, 2017). This snowball method is non-probability sampling chosen instead of random selection by the interviewer (Dorsten, 2019). It is a common technique used in qualitative research involving a sample group of interested people who know and tell others the same characteristics and who understand and share the elements needed for

the study (Ricci et al., 2018). Therefore, the entire population does not have an equal chance of participating in the study. Valid justification is necessary for using the snowball sampling method and requires a special IRB (Institution Review Board) approval. The interviewer must take precautions to protect the privacy of potential participants. The interviewer will ask participants to share with others they know with similar characteristics if they are willing to participate in the study as this snowball method technique (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). The snowball sample method saves time and is cost-effective, allowing access for participants through the participants' acquaintances. The investigator will utilize the snowball method until all participants identified for the study.

A second method of sampling that is used is convenience sampling involves participants through a method of convenience for the interviewer who is available for the study (Naderifar, 2017). This sampling helps find participants through shared locations such as churches, schools, Facebook, or other social media. Convenience sampling is time efficient, taking minimal effort, especially when time is a constraint.

Potential participants use for this study used social media in their daily lives and are willing to share their faith development experiences. The descriptive narratives of their beliefs, familial influences, religious understandings, and life experiences inform the data for the study. Pseudonyms are used for the privacy of the participants in the research study.

Procedures

The first step is to navigate the Institution Review Board (IRB) requirements to ensure that the study informs potential participants of the involvement details and that the research adheres to the ethical practices of conducting a study with human participants. The research

develops ethical procedures to complete the study to answer the research questions. Once IRB approves the study, the recruiting of the participants commences.

Various contact methods are utilized in the recruitment process to find participants for this study, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media measures.

Additionally, the recruitment process uses local churches, schools, and colleges that allow information to be shared. Emails are then used to contact qualified individuals who may be interested in the study.

The next step is for participants who express interest in the study to complete the screening questionnaire. Demographic information is part of the interview protocol's screening process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The demographic information includes a profile of participants who may contribute to the study (Crosswell & Poth, 2022). The following questions show the criteria for eligibility for the screening process:

1. Are you between the ages of 18-30?
2. Are you willing to share your experiences with social media?
3. Are you comfortable discussing how social media has impacted your faith development or spiritual formation?
4. Are you willing to participate in an interview via Microsoft Teams to describe experiences related to social media and faith development?

Individuals who meet the criterion to participate in the study are communicated with via email, phone call, or text message. An informed consent document is given to individuals agreeing to be in the study. The purpose of the study, participation procedures, the potential benefits and risks associated with the participation, the voluntary essence of participation and measures taken for the protection and confidentiality of the participant. After the participant signs the informed consent form, the date and time are established for the interview. Participants

are informed that they can withdraw from the study for any reason during the research process without personal consequences.

Semi-structured interview questions allow the participants to share their lived experiences and how their faith development and spiritual formation are transformed and impacted by social media. Rapport with each participant is vital to the interview process. Rapport building demonstrates honesty, trust, and genuine care for each participant. A safe and inviting environment is created to build rapport with the participants (Prior, 2017). The interviews begin with introductions and an explanation of the purpose of the study. The interviewer allows for a few minutes of small talk to build comfort and trust with each participant. The passion for understanding social media's impact on young people's faith and spiritual development is shared to build rapport (Lewis, 2018). Participants are encouraged to share their feelings and experiences regarding this topic.

It is anticipated that each interview will last from 45 minutes to an hour. The interviews are recorded allowing the participants to express their individual experiences of social media's impact on faith and spiritual development. Verbal and nonverbal cues are identified when the participants respond to each question. Should any participant need mental health support or resources of participating in the study, the researcher will ensure they have an appropriate referral in place. At the conclusion of the interview, participants are given space to share any concluding remarks and the researcher expresses appreciation for the contribution to the study.

NVIVO software program is used to code the interviews and identify central themes from the participants' shared experiences. The triangulation method used in qualitative research enhances the quality of the data by using more than one source as a piece of multiple data-gathering information to validate the study's research (Flick, 2018). One expert reviewer is a clinical therapist who works with young adults. Another expert reviewer is in pastoral ministry

who specifically works with college and young adult populations. Once the session ends, the transcripts are downloaded from Microsoft Teams for member checking and forwarded to the participants to verify any material additions or omissions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data analysis process will show the themes and codes from the collected data revealing the findings regarding the impact of social media and young people's faith development and social formation.

Researcher's Role

This is to give participants space to tell their stories, allowing time for story expansion, accessing knowledge, and understanding themes related to social media and the impact on faith development. Through my experience as a therapist, I have seen the decline in young people's faith and have a passion for understanding the influence of social media platforms on young adults. The results of this study may broaden the professional insight and understanding of social media's impact on faith development and spiritual formation. The research proposes the study because of the high numbers of anxieties, depression, and mental health seen in young people. Observation and notations of the participant's thoughts and feelings allow access to themes related to young adults' faith beliefs and social media's impact on their overall mental health.

Data Collection

The research utilizes semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method for this qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to share their lived experiences by answering open-ended questions that expand their stories (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Even though the questions are predetermined, the participants' answers cannot be predetermined. Open-ended questions allow the participants freedom to openly share and present their experiences and feelings and provides a natural flow of communication between the researcher and participant (Levitt, 2019).

The interviews are conducted in a private room in the interviewer's home, guaranteeing the highest form of confidentiality and anonymity. Microsoft Teams is a digital software tool that provides communication and collaboration through an audio and video format assembled on a cloud platform that uses numerous services such as chat, meetings, calling, and files (Ilag, 2020). Teams offer a complete meeting solution, supporting sharing, voice, and video conferencing. Users can use Teams to allow users to meet from anywhere around the world for all types of meetings with internal and external participants.

The interviews are transcribed using audio recordings, utilizing alias names for the participants, and stored transcriptions in a locked filing cabinet. The audio recordings are available in mobile and computer application formats. They are protected and monitored within the NHS Secure Boundary.

Interviews

Interviews present the opportunity to gather detailed and thick descriptions of an individual's lived experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Thirteen open-ended questions that focus on faith development, spiritual formation, identity, and environmental protective factors will be utilized.

Interview Prompts

1. Describe your familial adolescent faith development experiences.
2. What childhood or youth influences were most important to your spiritual formation or faith development?
3. As you left home for college or employment, how did your religious beliefs, values, morals, and practices change or transform?
4. How do you describe the relationship between your identity and faith?
5. Please share some examples of your use of social media and how it has influenced you.

6. How has social media recently broadened or benefitted your spiritual growth and faith?
7. How has social media been a negative or neutralizing impact on your spiritual growth and faith development?
8. What role do online faith communities or networking opportunities have in your spiritual growth or faith development?
9. Please describe any significant transformations, changes, growth, or setbacks related to your identity and faith that you experienced during young adulthood.
10. How do you anticipate changing your relationship with Christ in the next two years?
11. What role will social media have in your relationship with Christ?
12. Looking back on your spiritual formation and faith development, is there something you would tell your younger self about obstacles, barriers, supports, or provisions related to growing in faith during young adulthood?
13. What wisdom would you give other young adults about social media and its impact on spiritual growth and faith development?

Narrative Descriptions and Rationale for the Interview Questions and Prompts

Each interview question is informed from empirical sources and are intentionally stated to cultivate descriptive responses. The purpose of the questions is to contribute insight to the phenomenon where there are gaps in the current body of literature.

Question One

First prompt allows participants to share their faith formation influences during their adolescent years. Faith is a natural part of every individual's growth and involves a foundation for personal identity and social relations. Family is one of the first influences on an individual's faith development (Goodman & Dyer, 2020).

Question Two

The second question solicits information about participants' relationships during childhood and youth faith development or spiritual formation. Adolescents mirror their parents' faith as they watch their parents' practices regarding church attendance and spiritual development. Van Niekerk and Breed (2018) denoted that knowledge about the impact of relationships in forming a person's faith can help individuals.

Question Three

The third question gains insight into an individual's experiences after leaving home that may influence their religious beliefs, values, morals, or practices from question three. It shows whether these influences positively or negatively affect the individual's faith journey. Young adults often see their faith through other influences once they leave home, watching and learning from their professors, peers, and college groups. The impact can positively or negatively affect their faith beliefs (Syed, 2017).

Question Four

The fourth question uses question four to examine the relationship between an individual's identity and faith. Life experiences, trauma, and family are some influences that help create a person's identity (Crocetti, 2017).

Prompt Five and Questions Six and Seven

Question five and questions six and seven to learn about social media's impact on young adults. These questions may deepen the understanding of how social media impacts spiritual growth and faith development. According to Simoson (2017), social media gained access to the younger generation and influenced their faith.

Question Eight

The interviewer examines the role of online faith communities or networking opportunities on an individual's faith journey via question eight. Lewis (2018) noted that researchers might find how online faith communities contribute to one's faith journey.

Prompt Nine

Question nine gleans the experiences affecting an individual's transformation faith journey. The data from this interview question allows learning about how experiences can help or hurt a young adult's faith journey.

Questions 10-13

Huff (2022) noted that social media influences and mental illness in young adults have increased. Questions 10-13 use these questions to gain insight into young adults' social media usage and its impact on their faith development. These questions allow the participants to share what they do to experience growth in their spiritual beliefs.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the data for this study used through NVIVO software. This software helps to organize, manage, and analyze the themes' data codes. The resulting codes and themes are included in the research study to answer the research questions that guide this study (Allsop et al., 2022). This process of data analysis will aid in the data collected, discover repeated themes and relationships collected, and show new insight about the impact of social media on young adults' faith development and spiritual formation.

NVIVO software has advanced code and retrievable functions and modeling capabilities, managing faster and larger data sets and retrieving data. The software helps organize unstructured data, including interviews, audio, video, text, and images. The participant's interviews are easy and quickly transcribed in NVIVO because it allows a playback function for

video and audio files. An added benefit of NVIVO is that it provides secure database storage in singular files (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

The understanding of lived experiences of young adults affected by the influence of social media in their faith development and spiritual development is managed and organized by themes and codes, and the data is analyzed through the interpretation of this study. The individual transcripts of the participant's shared experiences answering open-ended questions through interviews are data used for this study. These interviews are transcribed and loaded into NVIVO for finding themes, patterns, and significant categories in discovering the phenomenon of social media and faith (Allsop et al., 2022).

The qualitative data analysis begins with showing repeated phrases or experiences, observing emotional responses, comparing findings with earlier and current research, and any missing information or gaps (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). NVIVO aids in interpreting the data and classifying the relationships in the data through sorting and examining. This process will help show the themes in the young adults' social media experiences and faith. Once the data from the interviews are entered into the NVIVO database, coding strips are turned on to give a visual image of the data collected. Coding will aid and organize the typical characteristics of the data discovered through the NVIVO software (Allsop et al., 2022).

Steps to the data analysis are (1) managing and organizing the data transcribed from the interviews. (2) identify the possible contributing themes from the shared characteristics from the participant's lived experiences. (3) identify, classify, and categorize the common themes and patterns through coding using the NVIVO software. (4) assess and develop the interpretation of the identified pattern and themes within the connections and discovered categories. Utilize the NVIVO tools to organize and develop the discovered themes and interpretations that add to the

detailed findings (5) and collaborate with the findings and assumptions relevant to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Trustworthiness

Transparency of the research regarding the study's processes ensures trustworthiness. This transparency allows an understanding of the shared information and goals reached (Levitt, 2019). Potential participants are contacted to verify that they meet the requirements to take part in the study. Then, qualified participants are given instructions about the study's process, which include a scheduled date and time for the interview, a copy of the interview questions, and any additional information pertinent to the study.

Verbal and written descriptions of the study's purpose and details of the interview process are shared to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The participants have the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to verify that they accurately responded to the interview questions. After the participants verify the accuracy of the transcript, data analysis codes the transcripts to develop themes, and expert reviewers review the themes.

Member Checking

A crucial step in data analysis is member checking, which removes bias from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking adds credibility to the participant's experience and validates the participant's reactions (Nowell et al., 2017). Each participant receives a transcript of their interview, checks it for accuracy, and validates the transcription results. Participants can request any edits needed during member checking (Candela, 2019).

Triangulation

Expert reviewer was used for triangulation to analyze the data's themes, patterns, and interpretations. Triangulation strengthens the validity of a qualitative study and involves cross-checking, which utilizes multiple sources to confirm themes in the data (Bloomberg, 2023;

Candela, 2019). The expert reviewers used for this study are experts in the field of counseling and young adults. Expertise in young people's faith development and spiritual formation and the impact of social media in one's life today is included in the expert reviewers.

The expert reviewer examines data from NVIVO to determine if the codes, themes, and conclusions accurately represent the data collected. The expert reviewer supports the data triangulation process and assists as a peer debriefer (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Peer reviews may support the research's conclusions and perceptions by offering feedback (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The expert reviewer is asked for recommendations or insights to strengthen the data interpretations. The expert reviewer's questions may bring attention to any bias and unique or unusual findings.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research reveals the findings' accuracy and measures the research's actual value. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), researchers can review participants' recordings and transcripts for accurate expressions and perceptions. Credibility and validity are equivalent methods to incorporate data outcomes through member checking and peer debriefing. The participants' review of transcripts to ensure accuracy is imperative in credibility. Expert reviewers provide external checks on the research process and examine the adequacy of preliminary findings and raw data interpretations (Nowell et al., 2017).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the data from the research study. The research ensures the analytical processes achieve this dependability by using NVIVO. It strengthens the analysis process by organizing, analyzing, and finding insights in the unstructured data from the participants' interviews (Allsop et al., 2022)

The data collected answers the research questions regarding the impact of social media influences on young adults' faith development or spiritual growth. The research utilizes the NVIVO software to generate the data outcome reports and written transcripts. The analysis ensures data documentation is logical and traceable by explaining how the data is collected and analyzed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Triangulation and expert review add richness to the context, ensuring the reported data's reliability and dependability and avoiding potential bias from a single researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The expert reviewer aids in examining the study, exploring, and testing how the data is analyzed and translated.

Confirmability

Confirmability involves a research study's confidence level based on the participants' words and excludes the possibility of researcher bias. Confirmability calls attention to the results, verifying whether they could be supported or confirmed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The proof of evidence between data and conclusions provides confirmability in this study (Flick, 2018).

Confirmability is known as an audit trail because it requires details of the data process involving the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. This data is instrumental in providing an understanding of the emerging themes. Throughout the confirmability process, the research will include member checking, using qualitative software ethically, and ensuring that the interpretations are confirmed by the participants and expert reviewers (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability includes showing that the study's results are relatable or meaningful to other individuals beyond the participants and individuals with similar backgrounds (Bloomberg & Volpe, 201). The research addresses transferability via thick, rich, and detailed descriptions of

the participants' context and looks to develop the findings that may apply to a broader context. Transferability supplies adequate detail for readers to judge of the findings are applicable or not to another context (Flick, 2018).

The research uses purposeful sampling to supply a complete, detailed description of participants' shared experiences to see whether the study results might be transferable or not to others that are affected by social media and their faith development or spiritual formation. The results may bring understanding to the contextual factors, participants, and experiences in this research study. The interview setting, research questions, and observed visual and auditory responses add to the interpretations, allowing contextual meaning (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are included in this study that support morally bound adherence to the moral expectations of the investigator in a manner that minimizes potential harm to the study's participants. Ethical expectations include confidentiality, anonymity, pseudonyms, informed consent, and privacy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Obtaining approval from the IRB and the participants' informed consent is the first crucial step in ethical considerations. Participants are informed of the study's purpose and ensure their participation is voluntary, allowing them to withdraw at any time during the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Acknowledgment of the research-participant relationship is shown throughout the research process. Each participant is provided resources to deal with emotional distress during the interview while precautions are taken to honor and protect participants from harm. The data collected is locked in a secure file cabinet in a private room to guarantee confidentiality, and all precautions are considered to protect participants from harm. Privacy for the participants is supported throughout the study by conducting the interviews in an isolated room. Pseudonyms

can protect the participants' privacy, anonymity, and confidential information throughout the study's process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

This chapter includes the background information for the study, details of the potential participants, a review of the research questions, and an explanation of the research method. This chapter also shows the settings and procedures, data collection processes, and analysis methods used in this study. Ethical considerations are shown through steps to secure trustworthiness.

The study reveals how social media impacts young adults in their faith. The findings show if social media affects young adults leaving their faith. Although there is much research on faith beliefs and social media connections, there is limited research on the complexity of the two constructs. Investigating the convergence of social media and young adults' faith is imperative. This inductive, qualitative study examines participants' social media usage and how it influences their faith development and spiritual formation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the data findings of the 16 participants in the current study. Each of the participants was asked to answer 10 open-ended questions. The respondents' answers were transcribed and analyzed. Each participant is described briefly in this chapter, showing the diversity of their age, gender, and ethnicity. The themes were identified through data analysis as provided from the questions asked during the interviews. Faith development and social media usage were discovered as key thematic areas through the participants' answers.

Participants

The participants for the study's interviews were young adults aged 18-30. The 16 participants represented both genders and were from varying cultures. They all identified as Christian and had experience with social media usage. The participants study shared their memories of growing up in their faith or spiritual development. The respondents revealed their positive and negative experiences with social media.

Mary

Mary is a 22-year-old Caucasian college student living in Waco, Texas. She grew up in a Christian household until her parents divorced when she was eight. Both Mary's parents served in the church during her childhood. Her dad was a worship pastor while her mom sang in the choir. Mary had strong Christian influence through her grandparents as well as her parents. Although she struggled with her faith in high school, she found a solid Christian community in college. Mary grew up in an era where social media was a significant part of her young life and has learned to put a perimeter around the negative influence it had on her. At the time of the interview, Mary was about to graduate with her interior design degree.

Pam

Pam is a 9-year-old African American young lady, who grew up outside the big city of Houston, Texas in a small town called Shiner, Texas. Her parents never married and never lived together. She was raised by her paternal aunt together with her cousins. Pam shared that both her parents struggled with addictions and were in and out of her life. She became a mother right out of high school and married the father of her child several years later. Pam was raised in church but did not realize her faith until she went to church camp in her junior year of high school. She stated that she struggled with her faith once she was out of the home, and social media gave light to a whole new world. During the interview, Mary was a member of a church and growing in her faith.

Luke

Luke is a 26-year-old Caucasian young man who lives in Richmond, Texas. He is a fitness trainer at a local gym. Luke grew up as a pastor's kid from the time he was born. His parents worked at the church his whole life but were good at separating church and family life. Luke's father had an affair with his assistant at the church he pastored, and this betrayal affected his faith. Luke had also been on staff as an associate youth pastor upon learning of his

father's extramarital affair. He has restored his faith and continues to volunteer in a local church. Luke stated that he grew up in an era where social media had a positive and negative influence on his life.

Amy

Amy is a 26-year-old Latin Hispanic young lady and a mother to a two-year-old boy. She grew up in a divorced home with her mother and stepfather. Amy stated that her family did not go to church while growing up. She became a Christian as a teenager at a church camp she was invited to attend. Amy went to a community college before enlisting and becoming a Marine, where she served for four years. She was instrumental in her parents becoming Christians. She stated she had a difficult childhood where she experienced abuse. Amy struggled with her faith after leaving home and going to college. Social media became available to her age group when she was already in high school.

Molly

Molly is a 28-year-old Guatemalan raised by a single mother. She came to the United States for college in New Orleans and was at the time working as a nurse. Her family was still in Guatemala. Molly grew up in a Catholic home where most of Guatemala's culture was Catholic. Her mother visited a Christian church and became a Christian, but Molly was only seven years old at the time. Her mother took her to church, and at 14, Molly discovered her Christian faith for herself at a Christian youth conference. In college, Molly saw Christianity as a tradition to many and had to grow stronger in her faith. Her sorority chose her to be the Chaplain, where she would lead the prayers and bible studies. She has seen her entire family become Christians.

Opal

Opal is a 21-year-old Caucasian college student at Houston Christian University. She was studying psychology, but wanted to become a teacher and coach cheer for high school students. Opal was a pastor's kid and had attended church her whole life. Her parents modeled their Christian faith and greatly influenced her faith. She was from California and went to public school her whole life, surrounded by others who knew her faith. Opal has grown up in the social media era and has had to be diligent in her usage to protect against the negativity it could have on her mental health.

Gail

Gail is a 30-year-old Hispanic mother of three children—her husband of 12 years, whom she married right after high school, was an African American. Gail's family went to church but experienced abuse from birth until 17 years of age. Going to church was checking off a box for her. She struggled with her faith until she became a mom and realized the responsibility she had in their life. She stated that counseling helped her heal from childhood trauma and restore a broken marriage. They were deeply involved in their local church. Gail did not have a phone or social media until she was 18 because her mother could not allow it. She home-schools her three children and allows them to keep her accountable for her social media use. She stated that she had to set parameters around social media usage because of its negative influence on her mental state.

Missy

Missy is a single 29-year-old Guatemalan that works as the youth pastor at her parent's church. She grew up in a Christian home, and when she was nine years old, her parents decided to move to the United States in Miami, Florida, to plant a church. She lived a sheltered life until she returned to Guatemala for high school. She had much freedom there because her parents stayed in the States. Missy lived a double life and was not known as

the pastor's kid in Guatemala. She went to a Christian school where she saw a different life than the one, she knew with her parents. The new friends introduced her to social media and many new things that exposed her to worldly life, where she found herself trying to be someone else. After a while, she found herself in a dark place and encountered Jesus at a youth conference, which led her back to her Christian upbringing and found faith for herself.

Suzy

Suzy is a 20-year-old sophomore college student at Texas A&M University. She was raised in a pastor's home where she was the youngest of three siblings. Suzy, a Caucasian and has two older brothers. She grew up having strong youth leaders that influenced her Christian faith and stayed with her through her teen years. The family went to church every time the doors were open. Suzy struggled through her first year of college because it was during COVID-19 pandemic, and she had to live at home, without meeting new friends or going out. She had grown up in the era of social media and was a Communications major at college. At the time of the interview, she was living away at college and getting to experience community.

Chase

Chase, a Hispanic male was 22 years old. He grew up in a home highly involved in church and the Christian faith. His grandparents were founders of a church. He grew up in Dallas, Texas but moved to Houston, Texas, where he works at a local church. He did not come into his Christian faith until he was an older teenager and had to decide for himself after leaving home. He was in an era where social media was the norm among his peers. Chase had to be careful with social media due to distractions and losing motivation when using it too much. He had dealt with and overcame porn addiction. Chase struggled through COVID-19 pandemic using social media as a coping mechanism but was able to limit its use for his mental health.

Chase acknowledged the dangers of social media and fasts from his usage for months at a time. **Zack**

Zack is a 23-year-old Caucasian college graduate who grew up in North Carolina. He was attending King's University in Dallas, Texas, following his father's footsteps as a pastor. He was a youth pastor and had been married for two years. Zack grew up helping others in his parents' church and loved serving. He went to a secular college in his first year but immediately knew it was not for him and moved back home to go to a local private university. Zack met his wife through social media online after several mutual friends had encouraged him and his wife to meet and told him they would be a great match.

He was not a fan of social media and limited himself to only posting about church events.

Avery

Avery is a 28-year-old Caucasian young lady. She grew up in a strict Christian home where she experienced rules more than relationships. Avery was married at 18 and divorced two years later after her husband's extramarital affairs. He was the worship pastor in the church she attended. In her early teens, Avery struggled with her Christian faith and was then a program director at her local church. She graduated with a bachelor's degree and worked in the business world before going back to school, where she was working on a graduate degree in Christian education. She had remarried a youth pastor and had done counseling to heal from her childhood and first marriage trauma. Avery utilizes social media for her work, school, and community.

Blake

Blake is a 21-year-old Lebanese college student but grew up in the United States. He was the youngest of two siblings. His dad was a pastor, and his mother was a teacher and coach at the Christian private school he attended. He attended a public high school and then a community college during COVID-19. His father was betrayed and let go from the church Blake's

grandfather had co-pastored his entire life. Blake was hurt by the pastor who was like another father to whom he had found his Christian faith. He had to work through the confusion of the only church he had ever known since he was a young boy that no longer was his community. He barely used social media for anything but sports and sermons he likes on podcasts.

Paige

Paige is a 24-year-old Caucasian college student about to graduate and hoping to attend medical school. She was recently engaged and would be getting married upon graduation. Paige grew up in a Christian home where she stated she saw her parents loving other people all the time and thought that it exemplified Christianity. Her parents modeled a positive lifestyle of their Christian faith. They lived in apartment living, where they provided social events to develop relationships with people, perhaps to invite them to church. She took off a year after high school before college to travel with a group called the World Race, where young people travel and share their Christian faith. Paige met her fiancé on the World Race. She desired to become a lawyer and help the less fortunate.

Grace

Grace is a 19-year-old intern at a local church and worked in a retail store. She was from Iowa and grew up with a single mother. Grace was a Caucasian with some Italian heritage. Her parents divorced before she was even two years old, leaving her with very few memories of her parents together. Her whole family, including her grandparents, went to the same church until she was in high school, and the family quit attending church because of something the pastor said that was hurtful. She has a stepfather whom she does not get along with very well. After high school, she moved in with her father and stepmother, who are deeply involved in the church, and she is interning. She was not allowed to have social media until she was 18.

Renee

Renee is a 2-year-old of Asian culture. Her parents divorced when she was one year old. Her father was a doctor and had been married three times. Her mother was mentally unstable. Her father was Mormon, even though she did not go to the Mormon church but a few times as a child. Renee's stepmother was abusive, and her father did not protect her. Her stepmother forbade her to go to church, was psychologically abusive, and punished her for no reason. She was invited to a Field of Faith event by a friend at school, where she went and found her Christian faith. Renee was unfortunate and struggled with depression in her young years due to her home life. She had gone to counseling to deal with the trauma from her parents. When she was a freshman at college, a solid, Godly, and healthy family took her in as their own and helped her in her faith. She was studying for her Medical College Admission Test and hoping to attend medical school and become a missionary doctor.

Theme Development

The theme development was based on the interview questions and the NVivo data analysis. The three themes were based on the consistent words and phrases identified throughout the data analysis. The common influences that formed the young adult's faith from their church and family upbringing were spoken about by 14 of the 16 participants. Peer and community influences were mentioned by 12 of the interviewees, and 8 referred to the influences of role models. The negative influences from social media on a young adult's faith development or spiritual formation was presented as theme two, where 10 of the 16 participants mentioned comparison and competition with others; 10 participants spoke on the potential for addiction to social media leading to time wastage; 10 of the 16 referred to the spread of negativity, misinformation, and fake lifestyle; and four brought up decrease in face-to-face interactions. Theme three was represented by introducing the positive effects of social media on young adults' faith formation. Lastly, 12 of the 16 participants shared access to spiritual resources, eight

denoted the ability to connect with like-minded individuals, and 11 of the 16 mentioned creating awareness and understanding.

Common Influences on the Spiritual Formation or Faith

The data revealed the common influences that impacted a young adult's spiritual formation or faith development during their childhood or youth throughout the interviews shared stories. One of the most robust themes that set the stage for understanding the influence of social media was the role that family, the church, peers, and the community play on an individual's faith development process. These common influences helped develop the participants' faith journey, building a solid foundation in their Christian faith. The impact of these influences was found to be positive and negative on the young adult's spiritual formation.

Family Upbringing and Church Influence

Family upbringing and church influence contributed to spiritual formation and faith development of the young adults during their childhood and youth stages. An example of this progressive change is vividly illustrated in the participants' stories of growing up in a church culture and feeling like part of a church family. For instance, Avery grew up in a household where both parents served in the church, whereby they routinely attended services on Sunday morning and evening, Wednesday nights, and occasionally Saturday choir rehearsals. This routine cultivated a faith development process starting at a very young age. She shared:

Both my parents have been in ministry my whole life, so I grew up around the Lord's church, and it was the normal thing we did. We had Sunday night service, Sunday morning service, Wednesday night service, and occasional choir practice on Saturdays. We were always there. I grew up where I was closer to church friends than I was to school friends. I will say my family, even though we were not very close to our extended family.

Being a part of an active church culture served as a safe space to grow spiritually and have a built-in support system that nurtured her spiritually. As a young child, this culture was not Avery's choice, but a formation influenced by the environment her parents chose; it obviously grounded her to Christian principles and worldview.

Being grounded in one's Christian faith was represented in many stories about how spiritual formation and faith development was experienced throughout childhood and adolescence. Chase is a good example of an individual with a strong religious framework, cultivated and maintained by his family's commitment to church and being involved in the ministry throughout his life. He grew up in a Christian household with grandparents who were church founders. Generations of family members were anchored to a lifestyle of church leadership and influence. Chase shared, "I was basically raised in Gateway Church since I was four or five years old. You know, just growing up in Gateway just really helped for sure a lot in my faith and in my, you know, my Christianity." Paige also emphasized that she and her family have always been in church. Her faith emphasized the normalcy and routine of being involved in the church. She said, "Faith was just a way of living. It was not necessarily something that we just did on Sundays. It was just a way that we did life." Continuing the theme of "growing up in church" Similarly, Suzy said, "I have grown up going to church ever since I can remember. So, it was pretty strong. Every Sunday, we were going to go to church." Having a family invested in a church culture from a young age and throughout childhood serves as a strong foundation of faith building and spiritual formation.

The theme of family upbringing and Church influence is a part of the larger story of developmental faith. Individuals raised in a church culture recognize the benefits of being grounded in Christian principles and understand the efforts their family put into providing a

stabilizing environment. Luke illustrated how his life was inundated by his parents' commitment to their church, saying:

I was pretty much born into a church. My dad was the lead pastor of a church when I was born, and then my mom worked in the church as well. So, all my experiences growing up was just kind of foundationally led by my dad being the pastor and always being at church.

Luke recognizes and appreciates both his mother and father's commitment to the church, which contributed to his understanding and commitment to a Christian lifestyle. Opal has a similar upbringing that represents a lifestyle of service guided by her parents. She told of her experience saying:

My dad has worked in the church since I was born. Basically, since I was like two years old. I was born in California, and then we moved to Texas when I was one and a half or two because my dad got a job at the church. So, I grew up there. He worked at the same church my entire life. He still works there now. So, I grew up in that church, and it has been ingrained in me to know who Jesus was, and that is what we believe.

These illustrations confirm that family traditions, time commitments, and vested interest in the church culture form a fundamental framework of building children's faith and understanding of Christian values. It is evident that grounded faith was a shared experience that might provide some protection against related influence and distractions of social media. It is important to reflect on the timeline and how childhood environments, family values, and the level of loyalty to church culture influences faith development stages through childhood and adolescence.

Having a strong spiritual foundation contributed to a heritage of a young adults' Christian faith. Individuals who grew up in a home where families not only went to church as a way of

life, but also modeled serving in the church taught them a way of life that contributed to their faith development. Missy shared how growing up watching her parents love the Lord and modeling ministry as a way of life had a long-lasting impact on her spiritual foundation. Missy stated:

I was blessed to have parents who might have loved the Lord since I was born. So, I grew up in a Christian home. They have always been very involved in ministry and all, so I had that blessing of seeing them, seeing a good example of that, but my parents, when I was maybe nine years old, planted a church, and so that was a whole new world to me. It was really helpful for me and wanting to love the Lord as well. Wanting to come to church, they never forced us to do it, and I am grateful for that because it made us want to go.

As illustrated growing up watching one's parents model a love for the Lord and a lifestyle of living out their faith by showing a positive example of serving in a local church has a huge impact on creating a solid spiritual foundation. Mary is another example of how watching her parents serve in the worship team where her dad led worship in church played a big role in her spiritual foundation. Mary said,

I grew up in a Christian household, and my parents and grandparents played a big role. Growing up, my mom and dad were both part of the worship team, my mom would sing, and my dad led worship at the church.

Mary's parents modeling serving in their local church portrayed a positive role in her spiritual formation.

When parents raise their children in church at a young age, it sets the groundwork for a strong spiritual foundation for their Christian faith. Zack revealed how attending church beginning at a very early age was instrumental in his own personal experience in building a

robust relationship with the Lord. It allowed him to establish a strong spiritual foundation in his Christian faith. Zack shared:

Growing up, I was raised in church. From a very young age and from the moment that I can remember, I was at church and in the presence of the Lord. So, I had a pretty good foundation for walking with the Lord.

Zack's upbringing in church from a young age allowed him to experience the presence of the Lord and gave him a strong foundation to his Christian faith. Thus, the traditions of taking children to church at an early age plays a critical role in anchoring a strong foundation for their faith development.

Family upbringing positively influences young adults' faith or spiritual development during their childhood and youth years. Participants shared that growing up in homes where they experienced Christian faith contributed to their spiritual formation. They believed their parents' efforts in modeling their Christian faith at home influenced their faith development or spiritual formation. Going to church every Sunday and sometimes more often as a usual way of life in the family during their childhood helped develop long-term spiritual habits for young adults' Christian faith.

Community and Peer Influence

Peers and community influence could positively or negatively affect young adults' faith. Positive impacts include peers actively involved in church and community, outreach programs, or seeking spiritual improvement. Participants claimed that the people, such as coworkers at work or college classmates, had a favorable or harmful impact on their beliefs. There is value in

having companions with similar values and views, giving young adults the focus and inspiration, they need to stay committed to their faith.

Positive Influences

Positive peer influence is crucial in a young adult's faith development, as it gives insight and encouragement. Luke's peers influenced him through encouragement and motivation to stay on a positive path. For instance, Luke said, "I always wanted to be a part of a group like that because you get around people who can influence you and motivate you in an ultimately positive direction." Luke recognized the need to be around positive influences that were instrumental in encouraging and motivating him to make good choices. Grace also shared her experience of having positive community and peer experiences, saying:

I did have a relatively good youth group that I went to at church. The pastor's kids influenced me. They helped me experience my favorite thing at the church: going to youth camp with all of them as a kid.

Grace's experience with having a good youth group and youth camp experience shows how positive community and peer influences impact an individual's faith development or spiritual formation.

A young adult's social environment significantly impacts how they navigate their spiritual path. Participants discussed that friends' support and encouragement allowed them to grow their faith and gave them a sense of responsibility in their spiritual way. Mary had roommates that positively influenced her Christian faith, challenged her to grow, and brought the community she sought. Mary shared:

My roommates were very strong Christians, and they invited me to attend a church they attend. I became a member of that church. They have a really good community, and through living with my roommates, they constantly push me to challenge my faith and

grow after going to college and finding friends that liked and valued my community and wanted to help me and see me succeed and grow in Christ. I would say meeting my roommates was a huge transformative part of my walk with Christ.

Mary's experience of having friends with faith gave her a community that influenced her faith growth. The community was a crucial element in maintaining her spiritual well-being. The participants shared that they discovered that belonging to a welcoming group of people who shared their beliefs allowed them fellowship, prayer, and worship that made them feel connected. Thanks to this sense of belonging, they could better handle the difficulties of adjusting to a new situation, making them feel more at home in their surroundings. Joining student organizations, attending church with peers, and simply being in the presence of other believers was instrumental to young adults finding spiritual communities outside of their family home. Molly shared that finding a community was important and had an impact on her spiritual growth:

I came to the US, and that was the first thing I looked for when I came here. I looked for a church that I connected with. In my college and university, we have a Christian ministry called Kai-Alpha. They have different like small groups and Bible studies. And their purpose is to share the gospel and the college community. I got plugged in with their organization and loved finding a different way of exploring faith.

As Molly illustrated, she found a connection in her college through a Christian ministry that provided small groups and bible studies. Community is crucial in a young adult's faith growth, as it offers opportunities for fellowship, shared beliefs, support, and true connections.

Peers could significantly influence others when showing care and concern for their Christian faith. Spiritual faith was significantly influenced by the support and direction of their

peers, demonstrating the value of community. Renee found her faith because a peer invited her to a Christian event and showed her kindness. Renee shared her experience saying:

I came to know the Lord because I had a really close friend. Well, not at the time. I barely knew her. However, in the 8th grade, I asked if I could sit with some people, and they, like people, did not even look at me. I did not share. But this girl came out and was so nice to me and invited me to sit with her every day, and she invited me to this thing called Fields of Faith, where I became a Christian. I found faith because a peer invited me to a Christian event and showed me kindness.

Since Renee came to her Christian faith after being invited to a Faith event by a peer, her experience illustrates the positive influence it had on her faith. Hence, Renee's peers demonstrated the value of positive influence and community support.

The value of having companions with similar values and views gives people the focus and inspiration they need to stay committed to their faith. Some of the participants illustrated that small groups or peer mentors played a part in their spiritual development. Having a community of Christian believers that provide support and encouragement influenced young adults' faith positively. Once young adults leave their childhood home, different factors influence their lives. These influences are vital, as peers and communities could impact one's choices. Several of the participants revealed that it was important to be around like-minded individuals because it shaped their growth. Having a group of peers within the community could help with the confirmation of choices and decisions for young adults' spiritual path.

Negative Influences

As influential as Christian peers that share a worldview and faith practices are to young adults' faith development, having friends and peers that do not share a Christian worldview could derail one's faith and understanding of the values and morals instilled as a youth. A vivid

example of this aspect was shared by Mary as she recounted how her high school experience with what she described as toxic peers created doubt and confusion about her relationship with Christ. Being naïve and assuming that peers have common values blindsided her and she found herself in an emotional depression and questioning many things about her faith. Mary stated:

During high school, I think it was probably a negative thing. I feel like my spiritual growth and decline involve community because, in high school, I had a bit of a spiritual decline in my relationship with Jesus. Because a lot of my friends at the time stabbed me in the back, I isolated myself and had a bit of a depressive episode and was not really reaching out to God in those moments.

This is a vivid illustration of how negative peer and community influence affects a person's spiritual formation or faith development. As Mary admitted, being hurt by peers affected her mental health, making her to isolate herself from others.

Peers influence can disrupt a healthy self-view of a person's confidence in themselves and their identity if they experience rejection. Peer rejection belittles another peer's self-esteem and self-confidence, often isolating them from others. Missy said:

I was in sports, and I love sports. I was there the majority of the time. So, I started making friends, and I had my first boyfriend there. I just decided, if this is, you know, this seems more fun than being alone and not having any friends. So, I just gave in to it. I kept going to church and doing those things just like them.

According to Missy, it was hard to live out her Christian faith and the influences that led her to live a double life. She slowly began to live more like her peers making bad choices in her life than being able to stay strong in her Christian faith. Sometimes trying to fit in with peers could negatively affect a young person's confidence in maintaining a Christian lifestyle. She started focusing on having fun with peers led to situations that compromised her faith principles.

High school years can be hard for young people as they are looking to find acceptance from their peers, often losing their true selves to fit in. Amy admitted going through a difficult time because of trying to find this peer acceptance. A dark season in her life was recognized during her high school years when she allowed peer pressure to fit in but quickly regretted it. She stated that choosing this negative influence brought about fun for a short season, ending her in a dark place. Amy shared:

I spent my junior and senior years just wanting to fit in and wanting to have friends and have fun. And so, it was. It really led me to a really dark, dark place because I chose to do that. Although I regret it, it was after I graduated high school and realized that it was fun, momentarily temporarily, but it led me to a really dark place.

As Amy highlighted, giving into peer pressure to fit in contributes to dark season whereby she lost herself. She asserted that the fun lasted for a moment and ended up worse than when she started her junior year of high school. The peers that individuals choose to spend time with serve as a significant part of spiritual formation and faith development. Peers can derail and create a distraction from a Christian lifestyle, or peers can be a positive influence by serving as a means of accountability and support.

Role Models

The importance of role models such as pastors and youth leaders played a crucial role in the study participants' spiritual development. Pastors are respected as knowledgeable mentors by young individuals. Religious authorities are frequently revered and looked up to for their understanding of the Bible and their capacity to guide on both private and public matters. Pastors could present a picture of how to live a loyal and fruitful life by preaching, teaching, and one-on-one encounters with the participants. Mostly, the pastors functioned as mentors and role models, giving the participants the resources and encouragement, they needed to advance their faith.

Participants gave credit to their pastors as positive mentors and role models. For the majority of the participants positive spiritual role models were essential.

Young adults frequently looked up to youth leaders as their role models for their spiritual growth. These leaders assisted in developing a feeling of community among young adults through youth groups, retreats, service projects, and other endeavors. Through various events and activities, they could engage with younger congregation members more personally, relate to their experiences and problems, and offer support and guidance. For instance, Boston remembered how his pastor was a positive role model to him growing up. Boston shared that "growing up, as a kid, I looked up to my pastor a lot, he was a good teaching pastor." Pastors are often looked up to as role models for many young adults, as Boston revealed in his experience with his pastor, whom he thought he was a good teaching pastor.

Small group leaders are positive role models influencing spiritual formation or faith development for young adults in childhood and adolescence. Luke stated, "I looked towards the youth pastor as well as my small group leader when I was growing up in elementary, middle, and high school." Adults who serve in these leadership roles and spend quality time with youth can draw them in by making meaningful experiences that youth not only enjoy but also look forward to participating in. Al shared similar experiences with her small group leader, saying, "I was very encouraged that the small group leaders move up with their kids. So, if you started as a small group leader in elementary school, they encourage you to move up every year with them." As illustrated, Opal credited her faith growth to small group leaders who were positive role models throughout her childhood and teen years. Likewise, Suzy revealed having a similar experience with leaders from young age until she graduated high school. Suzy said, "when I was growing up, there was one leader with my group from when we were in elementary school, and she was there until we graduated." Similarly, Zack demonstrated that he spent consistent time with his

pastor to seek guidance and direction. Zack said, “The longest youth pastor I had was with me from eighth grade through 11th grade. He was the one I was closest to, and I would hang out with and spend time with.” Likewise, Renee had a positive experience with her youth pastor. Renee said, “my youth leader baptized me, and it was the beginning of the foundation of the rest of my life with the Lord. I got to really know the gospel. It came alive to me.” Renee’s youth pastor had a significant impact on her faith development and set the foundation for her love for the Lord.

Indeed, the participants acknowledged the importance of mentors and role models in their life. These role models were essential in a young adult's faith development and spiritual formation. Consistency in role models throughout a young adult's life critically influenced their Christian faith. As young adults, having role models invest in their lives as children and youth leave a lasting impact on their spiritual growth.

Negative Effects of Social Media and Faith

Social media has negative effects on a young adult’s faith. The study participants illustrated that they have been using different social media platforms for some time. While joining social media networks was common among young adults, it comes with adverse impact on their lives. Four themes were discovered from the negative effects of social media and faith. These themes included comparison and competition with others, time consumption of social media, spread of negativity, misinformation, and fake lifestyle, and decrease in face-to-face interactions,

Comparison and Competition with Others

Social media leads to comparison and competition, which consumes young adults’ attention and draws them away from pursuing a unique and individual relationship with Christ. Young adults adopt a mindset that they need to be constantly improving and becoming a

better version of themselves as often this is the message on social media. The drive towards perfection and being valuable enough to be accepted by peers creates a spiritual crisis where young adults lose perspective on the role of Christ in their life as the sanctifier of their sin and imperfection. Thus, social media creates a spiritual crisis for young adults.

Influencers, advertisements, and news on social media tempt one to compare themselves with others resulting in negative emotions. Avery said, "Social media will just drag you through the mud because it will lead you to compare, and it leads you to feel awful. And there are people who are called influencers; that is their occupation now."

Avery's experience illuminates the impact that role models can have, and more and more, young adults find those on social media. Even though she was looking for someone to build her up, and point her in the right direction, living through the eyes of peer influences can have an adverse affect on personal image and esteem.

Social media creates a temptation for one to compare themselves with others. Molly found herself comparing herself with others on social media. She highlighted that this comparison affected how she saw herself and began questioning her faith and acceptance of herself or God. She questioned her looks, faith, and even how God saw her. She said:

The negative side is how things can easily appear one way when there are different ways. For example, you see a lot of people posting pictures, and sometimes the reality is different. On Instagram, there are a lot of comparisons, and now with editing apps and filters, you see what it really is not It is not perfect. Sometimes, I start comparing myself to someone from social media and questioning my faith, my looks, and the way God made me because I am comparing myself to that person or to that account. I will unfollow them because they will bring me down.

From Molly's experience, scrolling through Instagram, brought on a negative feeling about herself. Even though she was aware of the filtering done through editing apps, she still found herself comparing herself with others. The evolution of technology having the ability to edit photos creates a perfect picture of others that is not really affecting negative feelings about oneself.

It is often easy to see other's lives as better than your own. Pam struggled with comparing her life to others on social media. She became a mom right out of high school and stated that this experience affected her stage of adolescence. Pam reported that watching other girls her age going out and having fun while she was at home with babies affected her. She said, "I tried not to compare myself, but I am only human, so I tend to compare myself to other things on Instagram." Evaluating one's life through pictures and stories of peers on social media can contribute to an identity crisis in young adults. Pam shared that evidently, she went to a counselor and part of the healing process was avoiding social media. Paige also had a similar experience and she shared, "I deleted Instagram from my Sophomore year of college all the way to my senior year because I was tired of comparing myself." As she noted, Paige realized the exhaustion Instagram had on her and chose to delete the social media apps so that she would not be tempted to compare herself with others. She recognized that avoiding social media allowed her to focus on her spiritual growth.

Comparing yourself to others on social media affects an individual's true identity. As a young child and teen are growing up, they are trying to figure out who they are. They are often influenced through their peer's lives on social media. Chase stated:

You are never going to grow, and obviously, on Instagram, you are comparing yourself and seeing everybody posts their highlights on Instagram, and you are comparing somebody else's best to your worst. That is going to mess with your identity.

In this case, Chase recognized how easy it was to compare someone else's best highlights to the worst. Social media has made it more accessible to see what is going on in other people's lives. You can see someone posting the perfect vacations, parties or get-togethers, to a post about their perfect meal. These posts often only show the highlights of the event and not all the details or edits that may have happened in order to create that post.

Comparison brings negative feelings, affecting the way individuals see themselves. It disrupts their spiritual growth, and the way God intends for them to see themselves. Suzy experienced this struggle of comparison with other girls her age, sharing:

It is easy to compare yourself to other girls. I feel like that is where I find myself where I need to be doing this, or I am like not doing this right. It is like I need to look this way or stuff which would be like it is a negative influence. I feel like the comparison can be damaging to my spiritual growth because it is kind of like you get in this thought process of why I could not have looked like this or like why couldn't I have done this and stuff.

Suzy showed that it was a struggle to compare herself with other girls. She put expectations on herself to be like them ,and accomplish what they were doing. The negative influence of social media affected her spiritual growth.

It is so accessible today for young teens to be exposed to others' lives through social media today. They are easily drawn in to want to look like others their own age causing confusion about their own identity. Opal also acknowledged that social media had a negative influence causing her to compare herself with others and what they look like. She shared:

It has been negative, and just like being a girl-like comparison, I would say that social media has influenced my exposure to what other people look like, so sometimes they could look like that, and other times it is just edited. But just like my exposure to like to other people and like comparing myself to them, and I guess that relates to faith and just

like finding my identity and how I look instead of, you know, what Jesus says about me.

Opal explained that it was easy to let social media create an edited version of oneself, not the identity that Jesus would reveal about her. Therefore, social media leads to comparisons negatively influencing young adults' true identity and often results in negative feelings about themselves.

Time consumption of Social Media

The possibility of addiction was another detrimental consequence of social media on the growth of Christian faith. Social media businesses built their systems to be compulsive, continuously supplying users with notifications and new information to keep them interested in extended periods resulting in a lack of time and attention to spiritual activities and priorities. Browsing through social media replaces time for prayer, reading scripture, or being involved in Christian activities. The frequent use of social media is a diversion whenever confronted with a feeling or concept that individuals do not want to acknowledge. Avery revealed that social media distracted her when she wanted to avoid negative feelings. Avery shared:

For starters, it is a big-time consumer. Moreover, I think for me my natural tendency is that when I feel something that I do not necessarily want to process, I will distract myself.

And social media is probably the first distraction I can go on social media, distract myself. It just is not an easy outlook.

Avery illustrates that browsing through social media helps avoid unwanted negative feelings and adds to wasting time. Chase also stated that social media wasted time, adding that it was less valuable than a tool, but a distraction and addiction. He said:

Social media was almost used as a distraction more than a tool. I felt especially in this new year that God was telling me to limit my social media use, because I do not use it for anything more than just wasting time. I feel like social media can plummet my productivity if the first thing I wake up is to look at my phone and just start scrolling, and before I know it, it has been an hour or two, and I am still in bed. I feel like they are made to keep you on the app and distracted and addicted versus helping your life. Social media makers make you stay on the app as long as possible to keep you addicted. You know that is how they make money. It is very easy just to escape any social situation. Even if I was in church, I could just like instead of after service talking to people, I could just sit on the couch looking at my phone, scrolling through TikTok, Instagram.

Social media continues to evolve in its capabilities. This growth creates a hunger for one to be attracted to more and more websites, information, videos, causing a person to be distracted from their day to day lives. It generates an atmosphere of isolation from others and what is going on in their surroundings. Chase demonstrated that social media apps could be more of a distraction than the tool intended to assist people positively. Social media makers purposely develop apps to create a need for them, causing addiction.

It is easy for an individual to look up almost anything they are interested in on social media today. The struggle comes when hours go by, and they find themselves still scrolling through videos or drawn to the next one that pops up. Social media, as Grace shared, was addictive. She would tell herself only to watch one more video, and before she knew it, hours had gone by. She acknowledged:

I will focus. I will not even notice the time when I look at them. And it is like 11:00. And even then, you are like one more video. one more video, one more video, and then it is like 3:00 AM, you are like, okay, I should put it down.

Grace recognized the temptation of scrolling videos on social media, and before she noticed, hours would have passed late in the night. Zack also shared his experience with social media being a timewaster, stating: "I think it is just a time waster. I mean, I definitely think before I realized that it was more so prevalent in just time wasting." Zack is among many young adults that grew up in the era of easy access to social media and YouTube where social media addiction continues to rise as younger teens and children gain easier access to technology devices. Whether playing video games, scrolling on YouTube, or posting on Instagram or Snapchat, Luke explained how easy time consumption. He stated:

You find yourself having a hard time sometimes with addiction or not being able, you know, like, wow, it has been 2 hours, and I have done nothing but been on social media. At this point in my life, the hardest thing for me is putting my phone down to go to sleep, and it is most of the time it's spent either me playing video games or just on my phone, like on Instagram or Snapchat, or whatever it may be. And the reason why I say this is the hardest part is because, like, three or four days out of the week, I am supposed to be up at 4:30 for work. So, you get to a place where it is like, oh man, I have been on my phone for a couple of hours, and now it is eleven o'clock, then it is midnight. And I've got to be up in 4 hours. And it is messing up and then turns over to the physical side of life, where I am now dragging throughout my day because I decided to spend so much time mentally on social media and kind of mindlessly just going through everybody's life that gets posted.

Social media often escapes reality, leading to negative influences, wasting time, and addiction. Luke shared how social media had wasted so much time in his life, often affecting him mentally and physically as well. It is so easy to be playing a game, reading people's posts, or just looking at videos on YouTube and find that the interests and excitement keeps you drawn in to

not being able to put it down even after hours and hours have passed you by. Pam confessed that social media has had a significant influence on her and led to addiction at one time in her life. She said, "I am a heavy TikTok user. I do scroll TikTok a lot. That has had a huge influence on me. At one time I was very addicted to social media as an escape from my reality." She noted that she was a frequent TikTok user and scrolls through these apps for an escape in life. Mary is another example of how easy it was to look up after hours of scrolling through apps such as TikTok and Instagram. She illustrates that she spent so much time scrolling through these apps, making her unable to accomplish other things. She stated, "it was almost like an addiction, especially with TikTok and Instagram reels. I would scroll on it for hours and then realize I had not done anything with my day; I was dedicating hours to nothing." Social media robs an individual of accomplishing tasks, often wasting hours of the day.

Social media was created to be obsessive, constantly notifying users to be interested in the new information provided without an end (Levounis & Sherer, 2022). The frequent use of social media leads an individual away from spending time growing their faith, attending spiritual activities, or participating in connecting with others. This diversion also provides a false sense of escape, leading to possible addiction rather than growing in one's faith.

Spread of Negativity, Misinformation, and Fake Lifestyle

Another way that social media could have a detrimental effect on the growth of faith is through the propagation of negativity, false information, and fake lifestyles. Social media was frequently used as a forum to disseminate hate speech and bad attitudes, which might be especially harmful to anyone trying to live a faith-centered life. Moreover, false information, conspiracies, and fake news could thrive on social media, distorting the facts and confusing people about religious practices and beliefs. Social media's promotion of specific lifestyles and

its portrayal of the ideal life was also harmful, making people feel unworthy and far from their faith. Avery shared how social media has fed her insecurities and worldview. She stated:

It also presents this fake life, like social media is just so fake. Thus, when you have hard times, then it honestly just feeds into your hard times and feeling like, oh, look like they are traveling to Italy and they are doing all these things like they just have another baby, and you are just comparing constantly of like all your and all of your insecurities, I think social media is one of the biggest things that feed your insecurity, whether it means to or not. It is just because that is our worldview of ourselves and social media. Because you post this picture, and it is not perfect. It is, yeah. You feel like, wow, I am sitting here in pajamas today while you are taking your family to the grocery store and making these cute little videos and all that stuff. The religious one positive thing is not the whole picture but the 50 shots to get to that cute picture.

The ability to literally be sitting in at home but putting up videos with a different backdrop can cause others to feel like they are missing out on a better life. Even watching others post videos of their exotic vacations or perfect lifestyles can interfere with having contentment in one's own life. These fake or over exaggerated lifestyles can cause insecurities in a person, especially when compared to what is most important in one's faith. The worldview can often compete with a Biblical lifestyle and social media makes it even harder because now you can see so many others lives than just those around you.

Social media can cause harm to young adults when they are exposed to negative information or when aggressive or bullying comments are made to one's post or opinion. Boston shared how he found social media harmful for him. He exposed that individuals make others feel stupid or wrong if they disagree with their opinion. He shared:

It was all negative. Even if it was my beliefs, it was just bringing the other party down. Like, hard, you suck like this belief is stupid. I mean, that is not going to get us. That is not going to get anybody anywhere. So, I deleted Twitter when that happened, but then when Elon Musk bought it, I got it back because, like, all that stuff, but it does not show up on my timeline anymore.

Boston realized that the only way he could remove himself from all the negativity was to delete certain apps. He acknowledged that only a few of the opinions shared on social media led to something helpful. Paige also added that the negativity and fake lifestyles of others on social media affected her, so she deleted her Twitter for years. She said, "you are actually living because you start existing in that fake world. I got off Twitter years and years ago and just completely deleted my account because of all the negativities." Social media can overwhelm individuals with negative or false messages. It seems as if it is too difficult to filter content and often the only resolution is to choose to avoid it all together.

Social media is recognized as having an impact on the emotional state of young teens today. Young adults admit the negative feelings they experience when they see things on social media they may not agree with or when other's opinions are pushed rather than expressed in a healthy way. Gabby is another young adult revealing how social media negatively affected her emotionally. According to her:

There definitely have been times when it is negative or neutral. The social media kick has, multiple times, either neutralized that or created a negative effect on it and just pushed it to the side. I will see something on social media that may irritate me or put me in a bad headspace, and then I never reach out to any of my friends and check on them or whatever. So, there are times when social media has affected the growth of my faith. The one-sided opinions and sometimes aggressive comments on social media leaves

young adults with negative emotions. These negative emotions have brought on irritations, often robbing a person of their joy. Gabby shows that social media's negative comments, opinions, and influence leave a negative mind space on an individual and affect their spiritual faith. In a similar note, Amy stated that social media could brainwash her and upset her, so she had to stay away from it. She stated:

The only thing that I can do is to stay away from it because it is only going to brainwash me or it's only going to make me upset from what I see. When I used to watch the news and everything, I would try to get involved with politics and everything. I could tell that the only thing coming out of me was the one getting angry, and I did not want that. So, I completely booted it out of the way when I got Instagram and everything like that. I wanted to post everything, but none of that was me.

It is very tempting to post things to be accepted rather than to represent your true self on social media. The pressure to be liked or agree with what is socially acceptable by certain groups can brainwash what one truly feels about certain topics. As Amy shared, she realized she was influenced by others' posts and found herself posting things that did not represent who she was. She acknowledged the impact of social media had on her emotions causing her to get upset or attempt to brainwash her.

The freedom to post opinions on any topic on social media platforms has produced controversy that leaves a person questioned their own beliefs. Opal expressed that opinions of others influenced how she saw things. She found that the controversy of others' opinions was not good for her. Opal revealed others' opinions affected her trusting what was true and what was not. She was enlightened by emphasizing outer appearance rather than a person's inner self. She stated:

It is people constantly putting their opinions out there, and that influenced a lot of how I saw things. That is how I got news about what was going on in the world, and especially now, with just all the controversy going on, seeing everybody's opinion is not always a positive for me. Having it makes me judge other people's opinions more because they are different from mine, and sometimes it can make me feel like a question like, what is the truth? Like if there's all of these things going on and all these people are saying this is the truth or the truth? It has challenged my viewpoints on social media. Social media really emphasizes the importance they emphasize on the outside appearance and less on the inside.

Therefore, the increase in social media apps allowing for fake news and the opportunity for negative opinions on other's platforms affects a young adult's true identity. Young adults experience harm from others' negative comments on social media, questioning their viewpoints or beliefs. For instance, the increase in apps allowing individuals to edit their photos and posts creates a fake lifestyle.

Decreased Face-to-Face Interaction

Diminishing face-to-face interaction due to excessive reliance on digital communication is another detrimental consequence of social media forming faith. Social media gives users a false feeling of community, making them believe they actively participated in their religious groups even when they were not. Even with this, a lack of interpersonal contact and physical presence might improve a person's spiritual growth. Social media presented a facade, an easy way to interact, and a sense of community. Chase shared that he would get on social media to avoid uncomfortable situations. He said, "If you find any uncomfortableness in a social situation and you just hop on social media, then you have no area to grow in socially because you are just so used to just finding the easy way out." The easy access to hide behind one's phone or

computer to avoid social situations that may be unbearable or awkward has generated a decline in face-to-face interactions among individuals.

Social media has expanded so substantially that many people now place more importance on their online presence and following than on face-to-face interaction and forming genuine connections. Mary believed that interpersonal connections were more valuable than those made on social media; she also admitted that social media significantly impacted her. She stated:

I feel like the amount of time I was spending on social media didn't not that it did not give me the opportunity to spend time with people, but because I definitely had the opportunity, I just chose not to. I do not know. It was an addiction, and I did not want to spend time with people.

Mary also wanted to avoid being with people after spending so much time on social media. She posited that social media became an addiction that kept her from having opportunities of having face-to-face interactions with others. Due to social media, Avery believed there needs to be more connection between friendships and true interactions. She said, "it falsifies friendships like we struggle to number one interact with each other. It just puts another separation between everyday interactions and friendships." Avery, like many others, acknowledged that social media provides a false sense of friendships.

Social media has evolved over the years. It has become more about online connections rather than developing real and personal relationships. The phenomena cultivated a lack of actual face-to-face relationships. Pam recognized the pull from face-to-face relationships due to social media. She expressed the desire to have others follow her Instagram or other social media platforms instead of focusing on real-life relationships. According to Pam, social media relationships have greatly affected her from having real face-to-face personal relationships. She stated:

That definitely does overpower personal relationships. Social media has become so big that people are worried about their following rather than getting face-to-face, turning off social media, checking out, and developing personal relationships. In real life, personal relationships are genuine. Life is more core than social media relationships, and it has affected me greatly.

As illustrated, social media has caused an increase in isolation for many people. It fosters a false sense of communication, contributing to a decline in face-to-face interactions. This decline produced a fear of connecting in social settings affecting a young adult's spiritual growth and true identity.

Positive Effects of Social Media and Faith

Three main themes were found in the positive effects of social media and faith. The following themes revealed an increased access to spiritual resources, ability to connect with like-minded individuals, and awareness and understanding. Social media has evolved in being a positive influence for a young adult's faith providing them many opportunities to grow in their Christian faith.

Increased Access to Spiritual Resources

Even while social media could have beneficial and harmful effects on the growth of one's faith, it is crucial to acknowledge both influences. The fact that social media offers easy access to spiritual resources is identified as one such advantage. Religious groups and leaders have used social media to spread uplifting messages, host online worship sessions, and give people access to a wealth of information that helps them on their spiritual journeys. It also creates opportunities for individuals to interact with other religious groups globally, opening doors for interfaith discussion, learning, and mutual understanding. Pam shared that having social media so readily available allows her to grow in her spiritual walk. She says, "if I want to watch a sermon on TV,

YouTube, or Instagram, it is at my fingertips. Having technology and social media so accessible is such a big thing making it positive." She acknowledged that being able to watch any sermon or YouTuber share about faith was a positive asset for her spiritual growth.

The increase in resources provides for anyone to be able to read a Bible verse online at any time or day, as well as be encouraged from others through social media platforms. Grace stated that she benefits from watching Christian influencers on social media that post uplifting devotionals or Bible verses. She explained:

It is helpful to my spiritual growth. I follow a lot of Christian influencers who post uplifting devotions or Bible verses. It sheds light on some Bible stories, making them more fun, uplifting, and inviting. It opens up with the Bible app. It opens up more ways to read on the go instead of carrying my big chunky Bible. I can read in the middle of Starbucks, and I can read it on my phone. You know the power of technology. It is great.

Grace added that technology allowed access to read Bible verses anytime without carrying a big Bible. As such, social media has brought an opportunity for one to be able to access the Bible, sermons, podcasts and encouraging devotionals from others helping in one's spiritual growth.

People find it simple to obtain support and encouragement even when they cannot attend in-person gatherings, thanks to the accessibility and convenience of online networks.

Individuals could not go to church, especially during and after COVID-19 pandemic, so having the ability to watch services online has been such a great tool that churches offer today. Chase appreciates that he could watch his favorite pastors online, saving the money it would take to travel to see them. He states:

We have so many people who cannot make Church on Sunday. So, they watch online, which is a great tool. I can watch a YouTube video of a preacher preaching in a different

state that I do not have to travel and pay hundreds of dollars, but I can hear him online. It can be a huge tool if you learn how to use it correctly.

Therefore, watching sermons, conferences, and concerts through social media is an advantage for individuals who cannot afford to travel. Chase recognized the benefit social media had in his ability to listen to pastors aiding in his spiritual growth.

Social media allows individuals to share information on spiritual resources. Molly shared that she learned from following another Spanish-speaking girl on social media that dissects the Bible word for word and explains its meaning. She said:

I intentionally follow accounts that uplift me and my emotional and spiritual part of myself. One Spanish-speaking girl takes things we believe and shreds everything word for word, explaining what it means and where it comes from.

As Molly expressed, her emotional and spiritual self was uplifted when she listened to specific influencers on social media. Boston utilized social media to learn from posts he saw and share them with others. He said, "If I like a Bible verse I read, I'll take a picture of it and post it on my Instagram story. People read it." He shared the power of social media to influence and increase spiritual resources. Paige also noted that her church's online post greatly supported her spiritual growth. She said, "I would probably say the biggest thing online is my church's Instagram. They post informational stuff like Bible verses or daily devotionals." Hence, the Church's ability to contribute on social media platforms provides a positive resource for Paige and others' spiritual growth.

The Ability to Connect with Like-minded Individuals

Social media has enabled young adults to connect with like-minded people. Making connections with people who share similar interests using social media was another way that

helped participants grow in their faith. Regardless of their physical location, participants could use social media to connect and meet others who shared their faith and values. This aspect was significant for those lacking access to a local faith group or are looking for a broader spectrum of viewpoints. Molly shared that she connected with people from her home country when living across the country. Molly said, "It connects a lot of people; being out of my home country, I can be in contact with people I went to school with, my family, with people I worked with, so that is the positive side of social media." She revealed that social media was impactful in her need to connect with those important people.

Social media provides an opportunity where information helps others relate to things in their life. Amy shared that watching Christian videos brought awareness to her to relate to things that were helpful to her spiritual growth. She said, "I see Christian videos or something that somebody has gone through in their life, and I see that it can relate to my life." Amy is an example of the need for young adults to relate to others. Zack reported that he only used social media for his position as a youth pastor to support the youth he helps connect with others. He said, "The only reason I got it back on is that we moved and started a new job as a youth pastor and needed to start meeting some of the guys, students and hosting and getting them connected." Thus, social media is an excellent resource for youth to connect with other youth and for youth pastors to get to know their followers.

Individuals could discover a sense of belonging and support in online groups. This support is crucial to their faith journey, giving them the drive and encouragement, they require to keep growing spiritually. Opal shared that her small group positively impacted her spiritual growth. She stated:

My small group would do Bible plans together, like the Bible app. Being in a group with others has helped me keep myself more accountable, ensuring I read it every day. I think

it is very recent, but it has made me more consistent with reading my Bible. Being in a group with other people has made me keep myself more accountable, ensuring I do it every day. It has been very recent but has made me more consistent with reading my Bible.

Opal also expressed how important having a Bible app that she read daily kept her more accountable. She acknowledged that having a group helps with accountability and adds to being more consistent in reading her Bible.

Social media being available worldwide allows access to pastors and speakers globally. Luke expressed that he would love to hear his favorite speakers in person but is grateful to be able to watch them online. He said:

Some aspects push me towards reconnecting. This is the biggest role social media has regarding my faith. What is cool about social media regarding the connecting aspect is that it allows me to hear my favorite speaker and pastor in Miami, FL. I would love to go one day but cannot go on a Sunday. There have been a lot of times when I will watch a certain clip and I have some connection on social media.

Luke also shared that he could connect with others by watching video clips. He acknowledged that social media has gained a big role in reconnecting him to others. The ability to watch other sermons or speakers online from all over the world acknowledging some of the same struggle helps one feel connected to others recognizing you're not alone in the same issues in life. Social media has opened a world of support and encouragement by hearing important topics that are beneficial in one's spiritual growth.

Social media provides an opportunity for individuals to be able to connect with others for support or encouragement. Renee noted that she would only acquire the connections she had developed with the help of social media. She said:

I enjoy social media to connect with people. Seeing the community that I would not have happened otherwise. Some people who have supported me over the years have never met in person. It allowed me to connect with these people.

Social media has offered opportunities for people to connect and gain much-needed support from others. Renee found this support from people she was yet to meet in person.

Likewise, Missy got spiritual support from others through online platforms. Missy said:

I am encouraged daily through social media, and I am the type of person that is visual and likes hearing things more than reading. I follow people that encourage me daily. So, you can like to be coached through life. Hearing it daily, God is with you, and encouraging scriptures play a huge role in my life. Social media influences me in a positive way of growth in my faith.

According to Missy, it is possible to see a thing on social media visually and being able to be coached through life using it.

Social media through online communities helps in connecting people. Networking and online faith communities facilitate connecting people with others who share their faith and beliefs. Finding a physical community where one could experience a sense of support and belonging might have been difficult for some people. However, online communities offer a helpful setting for people to interact with one another in these situations, share their experiences, and offer support to one another.

Creating Awareness and Understanding

Social media promotes knowledge and comprehension of different faiths and beliefs. It might help interfaith discussion happen by giving people a platform to express their ideas and experiences while learning from one another. It is a great tool to share and spread the message of God. By leveraging the power of social media, it could reach a broader audience and connect

with individuals yet to be reached through traditional means. Paige expressed that social media helped her share the gospel of her Christian faith. She stated, "I frequently post about God, and people in my life know that I am a Christian. That is one thing I use it for, to post about my life and to expose people to the gospel." As Paige shared, social media offers the opportunity for awareness and understanding of the Christian faith.

Social media provides an opportunity to gain new insight and learn from others. Mary shared that she gained new knowledge and understanding through others on her pastor's weekly posts. She said:

The pastor of the church I go to posts a series of stories every Friday on his Instagram. It is a Q&A and reading all the questions people ask him and his responses are interesting. Many of them ask really hard questions about their faith and the things they are going through in their faith journey. There are some videos of people sharing what scriptures or chapters of the Bible they enjoy reading, and that has been helpful since I have been trying to read my Bible more and seeing what other people enjoy.

As Mary expressed it was helpful listening to this Q & A post, answering challenging questions, and encouraging her in her spiritual growth. Gabby also shared that she has learned from social media. She said:

I was in a season of learning from social media, and Instagram is the biggest one that I am on now. I have learned. From it, just different ways to spend time with the Lord. Different ways to approach different situations with being a mom. I benefit from it because I use it again to learn different things.

Social media offers information from almost any subject to help a person grow. As Gabby illustrated, she understands the importance of learning new information and different things to

grow. She acknowledges how social media has offered her new insights in order to be a better mom, as well as her growth in her spiritual faith.

Spiritual growth is offered through Christian influencers due to their sharing of encouraging devotionals and Bible verses. Opal said, "it is helpful for my spiritual growth because I follow a lot of Christian influencers who post uplifting things like devotions or Bible verses." Opal acknowledged the need to be encouraged and lifted by others to grow spiritually. Social media has allowed an opportunity for anyone to gain resources and understanding through a variety of platforms, displaying new information, such as new books that could help with one's spiritual growth. Suzy said, "I use social media like the influencers with encouraging posts and share books that help with my spiritual growth." By watching the right influencers, Suzy recognized the positive influence social media can have on her spiritual growth.

Online communities provide a source of learning and education for spiritual matters. A person's faith and spiritual development benefits from online networking and faith communities. These communities allow people to meet others with similar interests, exchange stories, and gain knowledge. Online communities play an essential role in sharing sermons. Various online communities, such as social media groups, forums, and churches, provide a valuable resource for accessing and sharing sermons from different pastors and speakers. Young adults gain exposure to new perspectives and teachings on their faith, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their beliefs. Using social media allowed for the message of God to be shared more widely and effectively, enabling participants to make a more significant impact on their community.

Research Question Results

This research study investigated how social media influences young adults' faith development or spiritual formation. Social media impacted young adult's faith either positively

and negatively. The following questions lead to this qualitative phenomenological research study and constructive narrative data.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of individuals whose faith is impacted by social media?

The impact of social media on young adults' faith through their lived experiences was seen through the participants' stories. Luke revealed how scrolling through social media on his phone became a distraction, keeping him from spending time connecting with God; he said;

I think that there definitely have been times where it is negative or neutral. Just in the sense of where I am at a place where my faith is my own. And so, if I get caught up doing something on my phone that prolongs me from spending time with God or getting in the word, or maybe connecting with a friend that God has put on my heart, or whatever it may be. The social media kick has, multiple times, either neutralized or created the negative effect of it and just kind of pushed it to the side.

Luke's experiences with social media were often negative due to the time wasted scrolling through his phone, and often kept him away from reading his Bible or connecting with others. He shared that spending time on his phone had a negative impact on his spiritual growth in his faith.

Equally, Mary explained how social media pulled her away from her faith. She stated:

I was spending so much time on social media that a lot of the things that popped up did not revolve around spiritual things or Jesus or any of those topics. It was kind of pulling me away from God because I was dedicating hours of my time to basically nothing.

Social media was designed to keep an individual drawn to scrolling through feeds, news, and information. Scrolling through one's phone on social media platforms wastes time that could be used for other important things such as building one's Christian faith. Molly shared how watching others' lives on social media robbed her of time she could spend with her God, family,

and others. She said, “If it is going to limit the time I spend with my family, my time I spend with my God, my time I spend with productive things just to be watching what everyone is doing.” As Molly demonstrated in her comment, social media takes away individuals' productivity. She revealed how she lost time following others' feeds on social media, missing valuable time she could have spent with God, family or others.

Evidence revealed through the participants' stories that social media influenced them on their faith through their lived experiences. They revealed how social media often distracted them from their time with God, devotionals, or being productive in their spiritual growth. The energy they saw themselves put into scrolling through feeds, news, or any information kept them from the time they could have spent with family and friends.

RQ2: How does the influence of social media modify faith development?

Social media influences could modify young adults' faith development positively or negatively. Pam explained that social media helped her grow by watching sermons online and connecting with others with faith. She said:

I tend to rely on that more than getting in the Bible, getting in the word, and setting up personal relationships with Christ, like women and people of faith. I tend to say, okay, well, I can just watch this sermon on YouTube because I did not go to church this Sunday. And so, I think I will take it. I guess taking advantage would be the word.

Pam realized that if she missed church on Sundays, she would be able to watch a sermon on YouTube, taking advantage of social media resources to grow in her faith. The positive influences allowed her to obtain information from any podcasts or sermons at any time of day or night. Many participants confirmed previous research findings that social media networks contribute to sharing religious information for growth through sermons and podcasts (Lewis,

2018). This discovery affirms that young adults could grow faith by watching a sermon or podcast on YouTube (Morehouse & Saffer, 2021).

There are many platforms on social media offering scriptures and encouraging posts for others to grow in their faith. Gabby gave another example of how social media had helped her faith development through seeing Scriptures from the Bible and messages constantly. She stated:

It's encouraging if I am scrolling on social media, and I am constantly seeing Scripture, constantly seeing messages and different things like that. I do think it benefits in that way that it is definitely encouraging, and it allows me to also hear other pastors and also here like other messages, just depending on what season I'm in or you know, what I need to hear. Whatever. I think it helps with that encouragement.

Gabby shared how she gained encouragement for her faith development through social media feeds and messages. She was able to see the positive impact social media had on her faith development, creating a community through accountability, social connection, emotional support, sermons, podcasts, resources, and prayer groups that foster growth in the individual's beliefs, habits, and character (Lewis, 2018).

Although social media influences young adults' faith development in positive ways, it unfortunately also impacts their faith in negative ways. Suzy discussed how social media had a negative impact on her spiritual growth because of the temptations of comparing herself with others. She stated:

It is easy to compare yourself to other girls. I feel like that is where I find myself where I need to be doing this or I am not doing this right, or I need to look this way or stuff which would be a negative influence. I feel the comparison and stuff can be negative on

my spiritual growth because it's like you get in this thought process of thinking why I couldn't have looked like this or why I could not have done this and stuff.

Suzu realized social media affected her spiritual growth because she found the comparison left her with negative feelings about herself. This realization confirmed that social media easily influences young adults due to comparing themselves with others, evoking a need to feel accepted by the prevailing trend (Friedenberg, 2020; Webber, 2020).

The negative effects of social media can influence a young adult's view of themselves. The temptations to compare with others on social media leave them feeling like they are less than and competes with what the Bible says about them. Chase identified with the adverse effects of social media and his generation's faith. He stated:

Our generation can drift off and find, especially with social media, ourselves compared in other areas of our lives. But I find that the best thing to do is to go see what the Bible says. We are meant to grow from failing because that is how life is. If you just escape, it is an easy way out. You will never grow, and obviously, on Instagram, you are comparing yourself. You see, everybody posts their highlights on Instagram and compares somebody else's best to your worst. That is obviously going to mess with your identity.

Chase explained that social media could affect how people saw themselves by comparing others' best to one's worst. He acknowledged that social media platforms like Instagram could mess with one's identity, causing them to question the way God sees them. Most of the media platforms modify the way young adult saw themselves and the way God said they were in the Bible because of the pictures edited on others' posts that only show the positive highlights of their lives.

The influence of social media was confirmed that it modifies a young adult's faith development through the shared stories of the participants. The availability of social media provides one to watch any sermon, podcasts, or teachings at any setting or time of day allowing an opportunity for young adult's information to grow in their faith. Media also generates platforms such as Bible apps, devotionals, and groups giving support and encouragement in aiding to their spiritual formation. The influences of social media impacting young adults' faith development are not only positive but can have negative effects as well. One of the negative effects include comparison oneself to others, having them question the way God sees them. Another negative impact was due to experiencing negative feelings from feeds on social media.

RQ3: How does one's environment serve as a protective factor regarding the impact of social media?

It is important to develop protective factors against the influence of social media on one's faith. The environment could have a great impact on one's influence regarding social media and faith. The world views through social media create an environmental culture that combats Christian beliefs (Lewis, 2018). It is important for young adults to surround themselves around positive influences in order to protect themselves from an environment that could alter their faith. The environment can impact the development of an individual producing a more positive character (Sauce & Matzel, 2018).

The advance of technology with the increase accessibility to younger and younger youth reveals the critical need for parental and self-control to protect against the negative impact from social media. Paige explained that it was important to have someone monitor or supervise one's time on social media. She shared the importance of maturity on regulating what one sees on social media and the impact on brain chemistry. She stated:

I would say one understanding your brain chemistry and maturity levels; things are posted on social media. Not that I do not trust my kid or not that I trust this kid that I know, but it is the other people on social media that I do not trust because I do not know them. I would probably always start with that. I would probably say there is no shame in having parental supervision on it. There is no shame in that at all.

Paige understood the importance of a parent's supervision in protecting young people from age-inappropriate things they could see on social media that could affect their faith. She recognized the maturity level of her kids and the concern she had about what they would learn from others that they may be too innocent to understand. The mind and the environment are shown through scientific knowledge to affect an individual's brain (Leaf, 2017). Thus, having protective factors through environment setting put in place when a young person could be forming their spirituality or faith development is critical to protect them from the negative impact of social media.

Molly also shared how being intentional about what she saw and whom she followed on social media helped develop her faith. She said, "Being intentional on why do I see what I see or hear what I hear? Why do I follow who I follow and is it honoring God? Or is it just honoring myself or others on social media?" She acknowledged that those she followed or listened to on social media influenced her faith and her stance. Hence, being intentional about the people to follow on social media affects the environment that an individual dwells in and protects them from negative influences on their faith.

Social media presents a false sense of community. It is easy to think one is connected to others from likes and comments from posts, yet never really meet the person on the other side of the computer. This false sense of community often leads to a sense of loneliness. Mary explained how it made her feel connected to the world, but it was not real community, leaving her isolated. She said:

It is a struggle and makes you feel like on social media that you have community, but in reality, it is you scrolling. You feel connected to the rest of the world, but it is also a big isolation tactic. It is important to find real community outside of your phone, building your relationship with Christ.

This false sense of community was demonstrated through Mary's experience. She shared how the environment from the false world leaves people lonely and isolated. Thus, it is crucial for young adults to protect themselves from this environment of loneliness.

Similarly, Missy explained the importance of being intentional about the people to follow on social media. She stated that unfollowing people that influenced negatively created a boundary of protection in the social media environment. Missy posited,

I would say, to have boundaries. To be very intentional in what you are going to see and who you follow. I think getting rid of peer pressure and the feeling of people pleasing. If there is someone that is not positively influencing your life, it's okay to unfollow. It is okay to choose who you are going to follow and who you're going to unfollow. I think it is okay to do that because you matter. Because what you see matters.

Missy illustrated the importance of being surrounded by positive environments. She gave insights into the vital need to protect one's social media environment to eliminate negative influence on one's faith.

Through the stories shared and the supported literature, the participants revealed how important their environment served as a protective factor in regard to the impact of social media. The impact of environmental influences can affect an individual's disposition or identity and how they respond in future situations (Furr, 2018). The results identified the importance of having parental protection for younger children due to negative influences from others through feeds, news, and inappropriate information. The participants' examples also showed that being

intentional about whom they followed on social media was impactful in helping them in protecting their faith. They shared how it is imperative to sometimes unfollow people or groups that may be a negative influence on their mental peace or Christian beliefs. Results identified the crucial need to protect one's environment on social media.

RQ4: What sources of resilience balance the effect of social media on faith development?

One should find balance in the effects of social media on a young adult's faith development. Social media has evolved to offer a wealth of knowledge in almost any subject, but it needs to be monitored in usage (Levounis & Sherer, 2022). Allowing yourself to disconnect from social media for a period helps maintain a healthy mindset. Luke acknowledged that it was essential to disconnect from social media and not let it bring negative feelings from others' glamour posts from their day-to-day real life. He stated:

I would say that social media is excellent as long as you know how to disconnect from it. I think that what social media can do is it is always able to kind of leave you more or less with the craving for more. Thus, if you are one that kind of just gets caught up in everything that's going on and can disconnect yourself from social media, the connection between this is somebody's glamour post and this is not somebody's real day-to-day life and having that disconnect that ultimately, like social media does not have to be a negative thing.

Luke believed it was essential to disconnect when social media brings negative feelings from comparing oneself with others' posts. He emphasized the need to be able to disconnect from it because it could have a negative impact on a young adult's faith by leaving them never contented with themselves or their lives. The importance of taking a break from social media would allow time for face-to-face connections and not compare to others' lives.

Self-control offers a source of resilience when limiting time on social media. This self-control allows for a balanced social and faith life. Gabby noted that having self-control was an important aspect of balancing the effects of social media and one's faith. She said, "I think the biggest thing I would share with young adults would be to have some self-control." Gabby recognized the impact of social media on influencing young adult's faith and the need to balance their time on it with self-control. Equally, Mary underscored the need to limit time on social media. She said, "I tell other young adults to limit your time on social media, and that there are tools built into your phone to help you limit your time on social media." She reminded others of the built-in tools on phones to limit an individual's time on social media. Utilizing the alarm system on phones is a helpful tool when trying to give yourself time limits on social media usage.

It is important to protect your time for spiritual growth. Chase revealed how being intentional on social media helped protect his time with God and others, rather than wasting it scrolling on platforms like TikTok. He said:

A huge thing that I feel like God has been placing on my heart is intentionality. Just being intentional, whether with my friends, family, or anybody I meet. I believe minutes of intention is better than an hour just wandering around and that applies to my quiet time. Just finding random parts of the day where I can just be focused and have quality time with God versus those minutes that I decided to just scroll on TikTok.

Chase recognized the pull social media could have on his faith development and chose to be intentional about his time on it. Therefore, monitoring one's time on social media provides resilience to balance the effects it could have on one's faith. Self-control is a critical characteristic needed as social media continues to pull at young adult's today, affecting their spiritual faith.

Media influence offers opposing beliefs and opinions hindering a young adult's Christian faith (Lewis, 2018). Pam encouraged young adults to stand firm in their faith and not let anyone on social media influence them from what they believed. She stated, "Stand firm in your faith. Do not let anybody tell you otherwise what you believe in. Your faith is your faith." She emphasized the need to stand firm in one's faith beliefs to avoid being easily influenced by others. Suzy also shared the necessity of guarding one's heart because social media exposes people to different opinions and thoughts from others; saying, "Guard your heart. You will be exposed to a lot of different things which might help with your spiritual growth and might not. Remember what is genuine about you and what God says about you, not worldly views." She reminds others that social media exposes one to a lot of different things that may go against their Biblical views and the importance of guarding what they see.

The shared stories revealed how crucial the need for young adults to guard their eyes and hearts when they are on social media because it will expose them to a lot of different views, opinions, and beliefs that will conflict with what God would want them to know. They showed how important they needed to have self-control in protecting themselves from the pull of social media, a source of resilience in balancing the effect of social media on their faith development. The need to limit time, as well as sometimes allowing disconnect, was shown as a critical need in balancing the effects of social media and faith. The examples align with the literature providing evidence that conceptions of strength are vital in counteracting the impact of social media on a young adult's faith development in their spiritual growth.

Summary

The data analysis points to three themes. The first is that the common influences on spiritual formation and faith development; the second was the negative impact of social media and the third was the positive impact of social media. The research questions were fully

addressed and supported by the literature review and previous assumptions about this phenomenon. The themes illustrate how a young adult's lived experiences were impacted by social media, how it modifies their faith development, how important one's environment serves as a protective factor, and the sources of resilience needed to balance social media and faith.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study sought to illuminate the impact of social media on the spiritual formation and faith development process of young adults. The results provide insight into both the positive and negative impact of social media as well as other influences including family, peers, and protective factors such as healthy church communities. This chapter provides a summary of findings, a discussion of the results, a presentation of implications, limitations, delimitations, and recommendations for future research. It is anticipated that the discoveries can assist educators, therapists, youth pastors, and anyone working with young adults to understand this phenomenon and glean insight to the varying implications of social media.

Summary of Findings

The study was guided by four research questions and the data analysis process provided rich contextual responses that confirmed the findings regarding the influences of social media, protective factors of church culture, family, and peers, on faith development and spiritual formation. The first research question inquired about the impact of social media on an individual's faith development. The findings of the study clearly illustrated that social media has a direct impact on young adults as it created challenges to faith when time is consumed by casual yet obsessive engagement of cultural content. It seems that social media can be a significant distraction and draw one's attention and focus away from time with others in meaningful conversations and experiences that build faith and engage the individual in opportunities for spiritual development.

The second research question investigated how social media modified faith development. Interestingly, there was evidence of both positive and negative modifications of faith development through the stories of the participants. It is easy to understand that the more an individual engages in non-religious content through social media, that time consumption draws one away from spiritual disciplines and personal time with other believers or in church activities.

However, there was consistent evidence that suggested an opportunity for social media to serve as an alternative avenue in which to contribute to faith development. Accessing scripture online, subscribing to daily devotions, taking part in religious groups, and following the accounts of influential Christian personalities can serve a positive role in furthering one's faith and spiritual development. Christian content is easily accessible on social media but must be intentionally pursued among the distractions of trending content that is positioned to consume one's time.

The third research question examined the role that one's environment serves as a protective factor regarding the impact of social media. Undoubtedly the participants' stories created vivid illustrations of how being raised in a family that pursued Christian values and spending time engaged in church activities provided a protective framework for one's faith development process. When children are a member of a healthy religious family environment, even when they might explore other lifestyles or become "lost" in what they believe as young adults, having a foundational knowledge of the Bible and a strong moral compass pointed them back to their faith and a longing to reengage in a growing personal relationship with Christ and fellowship with other believers.

The fourth research question inquired to sources of resilience that balanced the effects of social media on faith development. Many participants had a keen awareness of how social media easily drew them away from spiritual growth, but they maintained a sense of connection to their faith because of prior experiences in a healthy family and church environment. Many of the participants attribute the positive role of youth pastors, peers and other significant individuals in their life that helped them maintain some essence of spiritual formation and faith development. People and relationships were the primary sources of protection and resilience to the inundation and consumption of social media.

Discussion

This research study established the implications supporting the literature review. These implications bring into line with the three substantial themes of the study, (a) common influences on spiritual formation on young adults' faith, (b) negative effects of social media and faith, and (c) positive effects of social media and faith.

Common Influences on Spiritual Formation on Young Adult's Faith

This study established the common influences on young adults' spiritual formation or faith development. The participants identified the impact of family, church, role models, peer and community influences. These influences helped developed their faith in positive and negative ways. There is limited research on this topic, but it is becoming more of an interest due to the increase in young adult's leaving their childhood Christian faith.

The findings confirmed that families have an impact on their child's faith development providing an environment molding faith and values of children from birth to the time they leave home. Parental influence is a dominant source of a child's first faith influence (Goodman & Dyer, 2020). Fourteen of the sixteen interviewees shared their childhood experiences of how their families influence offered a strong foundation for their faith development or spiritual formation. Family influence is critical in creating a young child's faith (Young, 2017). Another factor of a common influence was defined by the participants church involvement with other peers throughout their childhood. Childhood religious peer networks predict one's church commitment as an adult (Tratner et al., 2017).

Another common influence was exhibited through role models in these young adult's faith. These role models came from pastors, small group leaders, and mentors. The encouraging support from these role models helped their growth as they navigated through their teen years. Environmental experiences in adolescence will have an impression on an individual's growth process (Palumbo et al., 2019). Community and peer influences were also dominant

factors in the participants shared stories of influences on their faith. Fundamental phases of a young person's life is found in their social ties and the significances of peer pressure.

The desire to "fit in" strongly predicts that peers influence other peers' participation in religious services and activities (Tratner et al., 2017). The participants shared stories of how their peers were negative as well as positive influences in their choices throughout their adolescent years, thus impacting their faith.

This study established the influence that social media has on a young adult's spiritual formation or faith development. The results revealed that social media impacts a young adults faith through positive and negative influences. The study also showed the importance of having a strong foundation of faith at a young age has a great impression as they grow into young adults giving them tools needed for managing the influences of other's opinions or beliefs on social media.

The Negative Influences of Social Media on Young Adult's Faith

The research study revealed that social media obstructed negative influences on a young adult's faith development or spiritual formation in several ways. A young adult's faith can be wounded by the influences of social media (Webber, 2020). The participants shared how social media had a negative impact on their self-esteem, confidences, and identity.

These negative influences were seen through comparisons and competition with others, addictions, negativity, misinformation and fake lifestyles, and a decrease in face-to-face interactions. Young adults are easily influenced by social media and comparison, evoking a need to accept what the norm is exposing in hopes of feeling accepted (Friedenberg, 2020; Webber, 2020). Out of the 16 interviewees, 10 expressed the negative impact social media had influenced them in their lives, as well as their faith. They shared the struggle of comparison and competing with others on social media. They identified the potential for addiction social media caused, and

the hours of time wasted strolling through feeds. The pull on social media led many of them to turn away from growing in their spiritual faith. Social media addictions are progressively prevalent as technology continues to grow and assimilate into every aspect of an individual's life (Levounis & Sherer, 2022).

Negativity, misinformation and fake lifestyles were other negative influences that were identified through the participants shared stories. The influences of social media impair a young adult's faith from the opposing sources, opinions and misinformation they are exposed to (Lewis, 2018). The participants share the effects of fake news on social media on their beliefs. These harmful influences can bring negative feelings, disheartening their spiritual beliefs (Thianthai, 2018). Lastly, the decrease in face-to-face connections were identified in the participants input from the interviews. They revealed the more they found themselves spending hours upon hours scrolling on social media platforms, feeds and YouTube, the less they desired being around other people.

The Positive Effects of Social Media and Young Adult's Faith

Social media was also confirmed to be a positive influence in young adult's life. 12 out of the 16 participants revealed the impact of growing in their faith due to the increasing opportunities they received from social media. Social media provides a positive influence on individuals faith development (Siles et al., 2021). The positive effects were recognized as an opportunity for increase access to spiritual resources, abilities to connect with other like-minded individuals, and it created an awareness and understanding.

Many of the participants shared the capability for them to grow in the Christian faith due to the substantial opportunities of resources through social media. The ability to access resources through social media is offered at any time of day or night from all over the world (Elsayed, 2021). They shared they were able to access sermons, podcasts, worship music, and community

through the impact of social media. They shared how positive it was that they were able to watch church online when they were not able to go in person. Online sermons or podcast on YouTube and other social media platforms offer an opportunity for one to grow in their faith (Morehouse & Saffer, 2021).

The ability to connect with others through social media were explained through the participants shared stories. They expressed the positive impact they experienced having the availability to find other peers with the same beliefs in their faith through social media. Social media generates an opportunity to build community fostering accountability, social connection, emotional support, and prayer or other special interest groups helping in their faith growth (Lewis, 2018). Lastly, social media was found to create awareness and understanding in young adult's faith development or social formation. The participants were able to grow in their faith through the resources they accessed on social media. They were able to access bible studies, faith-based books, and other faith-based materials needed in their spiritual growth. Social media provides an individual access to faith-based material and content (Radstake, 2021).

Implications

The implications of this study provide insight for youth pastors, therapists, educators, families and anyone working with young adults. With the rapid growth of technology and almost every young teen being exposed to social media, it is crucial for those involved with young adults to be familiar with the impact it has. The study will help in understanding the connection of social media and a young adult's faith and the implications for various professionals, and laypersons are detailed below.

Youth Pastors

The results of this study point to the meaningful influence that youth pastors have on a young adult's spiritual formation or faith development. Pastors working with youth and young adults are positioned as role models having a noteworthy impact on their spiritual growth and understanding. The participants shared examples of how vital pastors were in their growth throughout their adolescence and young adult life taking a genuine interest in their day to day lives. The pastors working with youth modeled a confident example of their Christian faith and were encouraging in helping young adults in their faith formation. Youth pastors can glean insight into the potential consequences of over consumption of social media; however, the results can also confirm that being creative in using social media to engage youth in positive, affirming content that creates online community and presence, can be a tool in which to reach this age group.

Therapists

Therapists who work with adolescents and young adults can garner insight from the results of this study. Assessing a young adult's use of social media and determining how much time is being consumed and what type of content is being consumed could be a useful tool. Also exploring one's upbringing in regard to foundational values of the family can be explored as a protective factor if a young adult is questioning personal values and seeking to reengage a church community or personal relationship with Christ. Exploring ways in which to use social media as a positive mitigation of faith development is a potential instrument that could be used in a counseling or coaching relationship.

Educators

Educators can benefit from understanding young adults and the influence of social media. Being mindful of the time adolescents and young adults are consumed by social media can serve as an intentional framework in which to engage in valuable conversations about time, priorities,

and how content can be a distraction or serve as a valuable tool. Educators have an important role in not only instructing in academic content but also in forging teaching moments in regard to engaging and consuming information online and in traditional formats. The more we caution young adults to the potential harm of social media, the better informed decisions they can make about the impact to their values, decisions, and lifestyle choices.

Families

Family influences were identified as having a central impact in young adult's spiritual formation or faith development. This central influence reveals the significance of parent's role in a young adult's faith. This study will benefit parents and families in utilizing the information for a better understanding of their young adult's Christian beliefs and the impact social media has on them. It will help them support their teen or young adult in their faith beliefs. It will aid in helping families in encouraging their young adult family members in their social media usage and comprehend the positive and negative impact it has on them. Parents or families can use this study to help aid in supporting positive influences in their children and adolescents spiritual formation or faith development. The study will help encourage the impact their modeling has on their children, teens and young adult family members.

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations were purposeful boundaries that created a focus on the age group considered young adults which was defined as individuals ages 18-30. Other age groups were omitted as the purpose of the study was to compartmentalize this age group because of their experience with social media. Older adults have not been inundated by social media during their formable years of faith development including adolescence. The current population of young adults have spent most of their life using social media and provided the ideal pool of participants

in which to take a deep dive into the context of understanding the influence of social media on faith development and spiritual formation.

A second delimitation was including only individuals who have some type of experience in Christian culture. Whether they had been raised in a Christian home, had been involved in a church community as a child or adolescent and left the Christian lifestyle, or had some crisis of faith and returned, experience with social media AND being a Christian at some point in their life was a requirement for participation in this study. Because all of the research questions pointed to the relationship between social media and faith development, it was important for the participants to be able to speak of the role of religion and faith as part of their story.

There were limitations to this study that impacted the results and how they can be used to inform other groups. The qualitative design allowed for only a small number of individuals to be interviewed. Likely if the study was expanded to include individuals from various religious groups and larger samples, the results might provide a broad understanding of how social media impacts young adults within different religious groups.

A second limitation is that the study aimed to inquire about change, influence, and mitigating factors to the longitudinal development process. This was a cross-sectional design that only captures a screenshot of an evolving experience. The young adults that were interviewed continue to be inundated by social media and continue to strive to maintain some engagement and growth spiritually. Understanding this phenomenon from a longitudinal perspective would add a robust level of insight and awareness to how social media influences faith over a long period of time, considering life circumstances, decisions and personal change through young adulthood.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research can strengthen the understanding of the relationship between social media and young adults' faith development and spiritual formation processes. With the continued evolution of social media and younger and younger children accessing it, there is a clear need for further and continued research to bring more awareness of the impact it has on an individual's beliefs, faith and identity.

One recommendation is to conduct a longitudinal study following young adults through their late teens and twenties to understand the process of faith development and spiritual formation as we continue to be inundated by social media. What does that look like over the longevity of 3, 5 or 10 years? Understanding this phenomenon across time, maturity and development would provide a unique growth perspective.

It would be beneficial to examine the influence of social media from different religious lenses. Do young adults from other religious groups have the same experience as Christians? Are the protective and environmental factors the same? Are there unique considerations? This study focused on young adults who had experience in Christianity but expanding the religious representation could shed light on varying protective factors or ways in which young adults from various religious groups manage or use, social media in relation to their faith development and spiritual formation.

Another approach to continued investigation would be to seek to understand faith and spiritual formation and the impact of social media for young adults who did not have families who raised them in a church environment. Without these protective factors, what support systems help them move forward regarding faith development and spiritual formation? Because having a Christian upbringing was key to establishing a Christian foundation when faced with cultural distractions, how to young adults without it stay anchored to their faith?

It was obvious that social media has the potential to be a positive influence on one's faith development, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when churches could no longer gather for face-to-face fellowship. It would be useful to investigate how to encourage young adults to use social media to connect with peers, churches, and other positive interfaces that provide content that promotes spiritual formation and faith development. Pointing young adults to content that aligns with their Christian principles, and that presents an engaging and active presence, could be a tool to using social media in a constructive framework.

In a more controlled environment, using a quantitative instrument can be used to measure spiritual formation, establishing a baseline. A control group could be instructed not to use any form of social media for a designated period, while another group is asked to continue using social media. The measure of spiritual formation could be repeated at the conclusion of the study to determine if there is a measurable difference between a group that eliminated social media, versus those who use it daily. This design could provide quantitative evidence to the impact of social media on spiritual formation.

Summary

This study provided the connection of social media influencing young adults in their faith development or spiritual formation. The research shows how influential social media is in individuals' faith and the positive and negative impact it has on an individual. It shows the unrelenting growth social media has on young adults being influenced by other's opinions and feeds on many platforms. The researcher concludes social media does impact a young adult's faith development or spiritual formation. The influences reveal that social media has a negative impact resulting in a pull from their childhood faith beliefs. It also reveals that social media can have a positive impact on young people's faith growth if protective factors are put in place.

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