PERCEIVED PARENTAL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF
SPIRITUAL MATURITY IN EMERGING ADULTS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Scant research has focused on possible parental factors behind increasing rates of disengagement by millennial emerging adults (18- to 25-years-old) in church attendance and other traditional Christian practices, a phenomenon commonly known as being a prodigal or deconversion. Cluster, quota, and convenience samples of emerging adults (N = 266) who had identified with Christian practices in high school were recruited from social media, Web sites for religious doubt, and various universities and churches across America. Independent sample t tests and regression analyses were performed to explore the effect of selected parent variables (as perceived by the emerging adult child) on that child’s self-reported spiritual maturity (measured by a spiritual assessment inventory). Parental religious emphasis in the home, emotional availability, authority style, sincere
spirituality, and forgivingness as well as continuance of extrinsic Christian practices significantly predicted emerging adult spiritual maturity. In-home religious emphasis and an authoritarian disciplinary style most strongly predicted an emerging adult’s awareness of God and acceptance of God’s actions. Religious emphasis in the home strongly predicted continuance of religiosity into emerging adulthood. Parent attributes appear important to developing spiritual maturity in emerging adults. Separate assessments of mothers and fathers may further discover factors in emerging adults’ spiritual maturity.

Keywords: parent, emerging adult, millennial, spiritual maturity, prodigal, deconversion
Dedication

This work is given to the glory of Jesus Christ, the one who took pity on a miserable young girl and gave her the warmth of genuine love, hope that change was possible, and joyful dignity in service. May she and others remain ready to always serve Him alone.

“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20, New American Standard Bible).
Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude belongs to my dear husband and friend Chris. With great understanding, he has laid down his life for me throughout my years at Liberty University. My beloved parents, now with the Lord, passed to me their curiosity about life and love of learning. My children and other family also constantly cheered and pushed me on to the finish line, forgiving the many times I could not be with them. Friends kept being friends no matter my ability to reciprocate. Supporting churches and friends kindly prayed so many times when I experienced one trial or another. May you all receive great benefits from God for the love and care you have shown me.

Not only family and friends, but also my professors, who spent many hours and great effort in feeding this hungry learner, deserve my profound thanks. You are excellent researchers, communicators, and educators as well as showing godly character. What an impact you have had on us all! May God let you see the results of your sacrifices for your students. Finally, thank you fellow students who let me glimpse your life and dedication as you serve the Lord. May you feel the blessing of God’s spirit as he pours himself through you to others.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The steady waning of interest shown by youth from 18- to 25-years-old, or emerging adults (Arnett, 2000), in church attendance and other common religious activities has caused concern among parents, church leaders, and the scientific community (Bisset, 1992, 1997; Clark, 2004; Clark & Raby, 2009; Dudley, 1983; Finnigan, 1995; Kinnaman, 2011; Powell, Griffin, & Crawford, 2011; Smith & Snell, 2009). This is a problem meriting research because religious practices and inner spirituality are significant factors in the development of the young adult’s psychosocial well-being (Bonelli & Koenig, 2013; Kim, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 1997, 1998; Miller, Wickramaratne, Gameroff, Sage, Tenke, & Weissman, 2012; Miner, 2009; Rosmarin, Bigda-Peyton, Kertz, Smith, Rauch, & Björgvinsson, 2013; Tournier, 1964; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007).

Some researchers have explored the decline in religious activities among emerging adults with results generally implicating the emerging adult’s dissatisfaction with the Christian church (Kinnaman, 2011), an ineffective and disappointing spiritual life (Bisset, 1992; Dudley, 1983), and parents’ non-exemplary practice of religion in the home (Dudley, 1983; Smith & Snell, 2009). Among literature reviewed for this research, most literature in the first two categories above were popular in nature and highlighted the impact the church or religious training might have or the teenager and young adult’s
experiences. Less work was found addressing the parent’s role, and of those, few of an empirical nature inquired into the impact of parent variables in childhood development of spiritual maturity. This was in spite of universal scientific agreement of the parent’s influence upon the child. Most studies that did examine parent variables focused on the parent-child relationship (which Smith and Snell [2009] noted to be of great significance); a few assessed the parents’ marital state or religious interest. Of interest to Arnett (2004) was the complete lack of correlation between the religious training one received as a child and the religious beliefs held later during emerging adulthood.

Research addressing emerging adulthood needs further elaboration (Arnett, 2007a, 2007b, 2013). More specific knowledge of which, if any, parental traits impact the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity could inform parents how they might better encourage healthy child development earlier on as well as relieve angst experienced when the character of their older child fails to meet their expectations for long-term development (Bisset, 1992, 1997; Downing-Matibag, 2009; Seel, 2000). Emerging adults without religious beliefs or practices may forfeit life meaning and satisfaction realized from a secure attachment with God (Kirkpatrick, 1998) with its accompanying religious coping skills (Pargament, 1997). Thus, investigation into the impact parents have on the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity would answer ethical mandates for research where there is a need to better society (ACA, 2014).
Background of the Problem

In the Bible, parents are instructed to follow God’s example as a spiritual father to nurture their children and diligently teach them biblical principles so that healthy behaviors would protect them from harm (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7; Proverbs 4:1). They are encouraged to discipline children without undue provocation when they willfully disobey (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; Hebrews 12:7). A parent’s love was expressed in the great pity they felt for their child (Psalm 103:13), their sufficient provision for the child’s needs (Luke 11:11), and the discipline given to correct disobedience (Proverbs 13:24; I Timothy 3:4-5; Hebrews 12:7-9). Glasser (1975) and Baumrind (1966, 2012) likewise recognized that a blend of parental discipline and love best nurture self-respect and responsibility in the child. A strong spiritual tie to faith in God has been called the ultimate legacy that Christian parents could ever leave their children (Campbell & Chapman, 1999).

Therefore, given the parents’ great responsibility to both love God and to lovingly discipline their children to honor God, one of the most difficult periods of child rearing for the Christian parent occurs when an older child of 18- to 25-years-old and in transition to adulthood, or, as it has recently been distinguished, emerging adult (Arnett, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2007a; Barry & Nelson, 2005), begins to skeptically question and challenge the family’s religious faith, seemingly distancing oneself from God and the family church. Recent large-scale polls (Barna Group, 2013, 2015; Gallup, 2002; Hout, Fischer, & Chaves, 2013; McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2010, 2013) empirically verify anecdotal evidence of greatly increased rates of disinterest in religion.
(up to 48%) by today’s emerging adults, *millennials*, those born between 1980 and 2000 (Stein & Sanburn, 2013). The physical and emotional distance the emerging adult often places between him or herself and his or her parents (Bisset, 1992; Kinnaman, 2011; Setran & Kiesling, 2013; Wright & Wright, 1993), is a process consistent with the psychosocial crisis Erikson (1959/1980; 1968) described as identity versus identity confusion, or diffusion. (This diffusion does not imply a disorder or state of disarray as happens in a centrifugal dispersing. Rather, Erikson referred to a loss of centrality, a confusion, as if a split in one’s self-image and its subsequent dissolution had occurred.) Additionally, biological changes occur during adolescence as the rapidly growing brain pushes for stimulation by means of new ideas and risky behavior (Schwartz & Begley, 2002), ideas which might contradict traditional religious and social values. These biopsychosocial and spiritual changes in the emerging adult all could lead to dramatic changes in beliefs and lifestyle and cause alarm among parents, church leaders, and mental health professionals.

Commonly referred to as being a prodigal after the biblical account of a wayward son who frivolously wasted his inheritance (Luke 15:11-32; Bisset, 1992, 1997), this young person’s experience has been defined in Bisset’s (1997, p. 11) extensive case studies as “…a period of spiritual doubt and disillusion that caused [one] to drop out of church and active Christian fellowship for a period of time.” For the majority of parents who wish their children well, seeing their child put aside traditional family wisdom and practices brings intense sorrow, often borne silently due to threatening feelings of shame, anger, deep grief, and repeated self-questioning (Bisset, 1992). In the family system
where the strength and type of attachment to each other affects one’s overall health (Cozolino, 2010; Siegel, 2012), any rupture or challenge of this sort usually predisposes family members to significant distress (Allen & Land, 1999; Diamond, Siqueland, & Diamond, 2003; Setran & Kiesling, 2013). Intensifying this dilemma, the child’s expressions of independence may arouse great insecurity in parents in regards to how to proceed so as to not provoke the child to distance him- or herself even further (Allen & Land, 1999; Bisset, 1992; Seel, 2000; Setran & Kiesling, 2013).

Much research on the topic of the young adult’s declining religiosity has been done through nonexperimental studies, theoretical works, literature reviews, or through large-scale surveys by church leaders, media, and research groups (e.g., Barna Group, 2006, 2013; Barry, Nelson, Davarya, & Urry, 2010; Beaty, 2009; Dudley, 1983; R. H. Evans, 2013; Goodstein, 2006; Hess, 2013; Kiesling, 2011; Kinnaman, 2011; McConnell, 2007; Nielson, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2010; Safer, 2008; Scharper, 2010; Yoder, 2013). Little empirical work has actually focused on any aspect of the relationship between parental attributes and the child’s disengagement from religious practices (e.g., Hunsberger & Brown, 1984; Leonard, Cook, Boyatzis, Kimball, & Flanagan, 2013). One study specifically examining the religious beliefs of emerging adults did not address parental attributes, other than their level of education and the exposure to religious beliefs they presented in the childhood home (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). It has been well-argued that the uptake of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices is quite complex and may not be reduced to simplistic explanations (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Elkind, 1970; Kirkpatrick, 2005). There must necessarily be various components behind development
or delay of maturation of spiritual interest and practice. Through standard regression statistical research, which may predict the effect of independent variables on a dependent variable, parents might be assisted by findings from a more specific examination of the impression they make on their child’s spiritual maturity. Whether those findings reassure them that they have little to do with that maturity, or point to areas in which they could improve as spiritual leaders in the home, parents could at least gain confidence and direction through the knowledge received.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between certain attributes of parents who identify as Christian (all as perceived by their emerging adult child) and the spiritual maturity of their emerging adult child. First, core parent variables were taken from biblical wisdom and biopsychosocial theory describing an optimal parent/child relational development. Second, inventories which assess those core variables from the perspective of the child, and demographics assessing key descriptors of the child and parent (such as extrinsic religiosity), as well as a spiritual maturity inventory were administered to emerging adults. Third, the self-reported extrinsic religiosity of the emerging adult child was correlated with the results of the spiritual maturity inventory. Fourth, results from the inventories of parent variables were correlated with the results of the spiritual maturity inventory. Finally, analyses were performed to examine the ability of scores on selected inventories assessing specific
parent variables to predict the score on an inventory of spiritual maturity in the emerging adult child.

**Research Questions**

To explore core parent variables that might impact the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult, the following research questions were developed. First, does the continuing religiosity or identification with Christian beliefs from adolescence forward by the emerging adult predict his or her spiritual maturity? Second, does the level of religious emphasis the parents inculcated in the home predict the emerging adult’s continued religiosity and/or identification with Christian beliefs from high school into adulthood? Third, can a certain set of parent variables as perceived by the child predict the self-reported spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child? These questions will be further developed and operationalized in Chapter Three, Methods.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

**Assumptions**

This study assumed various premises to be generally true. First, the authoritativeness of the Bible and its relevant principles was presupposed (Buswell, 1978; Elwell, 2001; Ryrie, 1986). The Bible gives both general parenting principles and specific mandates (Seel, 2000). These principles and mandates helped form the foundation for the direction research will take.
Second, it was assumed that research findings behind empirically supported counseling methods and assessments are assumed to be reflections of a certain biblical principle(s) at a basic level. The assessments used in this research have shown accuracy in clarifying psychological issues, so may also be used for clarification of spiritual issues.

Third, it was assumed that spiritual maturity among emerging adults would manifest itself in religious practices (behaviorally) and spiritual beliefs (cognitively) of some sort. Maturity, or development, in any area follows steady practice of one’s beliefs; it was assumed, therefore, that church attendance and interest in other religious practices would be related to one’s spiritual maturity.

Fourth, due to significant findings from the research polls assessing the religious beliefs of emerging adults (Barna Group, 2013; Hout et al., 2013; McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2010; Smith, Denton, Faris, & Regnerus, 2003), it was anticipated that a sample of emerging adults with declining religious and/or spiritual involvement would be fairly homogenously present in the larger population. Therefore, several sampling approaches were utilized in order to most fully recruit this sample from both formal and academic (from which emerging adults are typically recruited for studies) and informal, nonacademic settings.

**Limitations**

Study limitations include the following issues, the first two having to do with focus. First, although its findings likely would enrich knowledge about different types of deconversion from a religious identity or its practices, or about factors enhancing the attachment bond between parent and child, for present purposes the primary focus here
was restricted to perceived parental attributes and behaviors which could impact the spiritual maturity of an emerging adult child. Different forms of deconversion and an understanding of attachment styles were discussed only as they related to the main focus.

Second, due to a focus on development of spiritual maturity in emerging adults following a Christian upbringing and identification, analysis excluded those emerging adults identifying as having been non-Christian in high school but who later became a Christian.

A third concern is that of drawing valid inferences. A number of potential threats to internal validity (maturation or changes in the participant, effects of pre- and post-testing, test revisions, test administration, attrition, or diffusion of treatment) were controlled by the use of a cross-sectional data gathering method through online surveys. However, possible threats to internal validity which might not have been contained are: individual historical events occurring in participant lives; instrumentation effects of assessing mothers and fathers in a parallel manner; and statistical regression not becoming evident owing to the one-time survey. Selection biases due to the varied sampling procedure might have also affected findings. Although several categories of demographic variables were collected at the end of the survey, information such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and education level functioned as controls and provided clues to sample composition. Inclusion in the study was dependent only on age and willingness to express opinions (about religious beliefs, and about one’s parent qualities and the family environment), a fact which might have allowed other factors to influence results. However, subject heterogeneity was controlled by the homogenous age group. Furthermore, diversity might have actually helped assure that one required assumption of
multiple regression (a normal distribution of all quantitative variables) be met, as well
heed ethical mandates for research taking multicultural populations into account (Hays &
Milliken, 2010; Rohner, 2004).

The cross-sectional nature of the sampling is another limit to the amount and
strength of information gathered. Longitudinal studies typically eliminate cohort effects
(Jackson, 2009; Kazdin, 2003) – the 25-year-olds in the study possibly would have
experienced different significant events and trends than the 18-year-olds. Due to
feasibility, this study could not test the same participants repeatedly to thus be more
assured of their true characteristics. However, this study was not as concerned with how
the behaviors change over time as much as their perception of parenting characteristics.
Additionally, attrition, expense, and time consumption typical of longitudinal studies will
be controlled by studying one group born at a certain time.

External threats which could limit study validity must be addressed (Kazdin,
2003). One such threat involved sample characteristics. This study was limited
insomuch as it could not assume to know and measure the complete list of parent
variables that possibly impact a child’s spiritual maturity. To allay this threat, theory
suggesting populations that could be of interest to this study were examined in order to
ascertain that recruitment to the sample was as wide as possible, thus more representative
of the real-life group (Kazdin, 2003). Additionally, an attempt was made to define from
peer-reviewed literature those qualities and behaviors which research has already
implicated in the biopsychosocial and spiritual development of the emerging adult. To
control for the number of emerging adults needed in the sample, recommended steps to
set a minimum quota of participants were followed (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010; Warner, 2008).

Two other threats to external validity to which Kazdin (2003) alerted researchers included reactivity of experimental arrangements and reactivity of assessment. Both may have influenced responses (e.g., if participants realized the study’s intent to detect differences in spiritual maturity once parent characteristics be known, or if they feel defensive about reporting their parents’ qualities). The survey was, therefore, designed to be as unobtrusive as possible. In this case, the advertisement to garner participation in the research was honest but vague as to its exact purpose. Assessment was computerized, better assuring survey respondents of anonymity of their answers. All were given exactly the same preliminary information, thus reducing the chance for bias arising from that cause. Reactivity to the study content was controlled by survey instructions, and by qualifying statements in the informed consent advising the participant that the material might provoke mild distress or encourage positive management of unresolved issues.

Because issues with construct validity could have affected the quality of inferences, thus, impacting generalizability (Creswell, 2009; Kazdin, 2003), various controls were implemented. First, definitions utilized throughout the study were as precisely stated as possible so that measurements could be more accurate. Concerns about attention and contact with participants were addressed through the indirect recruitment methods as well as the online survey format eliminating a need for an experimenter presence. Second, although single operations could have introduced variations in findings through the use of only one measure per variable, the measures
used were psychometrically sound. Third, narrow stimulus sampling was likely not an issue because multiple predictor variables were entered simultaneously and checked for both their overall and their individual contribution to the outcome variable. Fourth, expectancies of the experimenter or cues of the experimental situation could have challenged validity. For example, the sampling method could have introduced variability of how the participant approaches the survey. A participant might have felt pressured by a professor or youth group leader request to respond to the survey. Someone could have responded with “Christian” answers so as to not feel guilty over “disparaging” their parents. These issues were managed by the introductory written instructions given to all those who came in contact with the invitation to participate. With these controls, generality of findings might have been increased.

A threat to statistical conclusion validity could also have limited this investigation. For that reason, only psychometrically sound measures with proven reliability were used in order to verify that they assessed what they were designed to measure. Data analysis was done by an experienced statistician using a statistical program to control the computational aspects of the study. Throughout the study, attention to these and other threats to the fidelity of measurement and analysis were continued as any assessment would have its own limitations.

**Definition of Terms**

*Emerging adulthood.* This distinct personal developmental period was articulated in a seminal proposal by Arnett (2000) as beginning in the late teens and continuing well
into the twenties, from 18- to 25-years-old. Distinguished both theoretically and empirically from adolescence and young adulthood, these young adults have been primarily characterized over the past 30 years by demographic differences; subjective differences such as self-focus, optimistic outlook on life, and personal instability; and identity exploration (Arnett, 2000, 2007a; Baer & Peterson, 2002).

**Parent.** A parent is traditionally one’s biological mother or father. For the generalizability of this study, in cases in which the child did not live with one or both of the biological parents, this term concurs with Rohner (2004), referring to the mother and/or father figure (biologically related or unrelated) who provided primary caretaking in the child’s life. The emerging adult, therefore, would report this person(s) to be very significant to his or her childhood.

**Parental authority style.** This concept describes parental styles of disciplinary practices during child rearing: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative (Baumrind, 1966; Buri, 1989, 1991; Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, & Mueller, 1988). Parents with permissive styles make few demands on the child, are non-controlling, and promote child equality in decision-making. Authoritarian styles are more highly directive, expect unquestioning obedience, and may incorporate punishment in order to discipline. They may or may not necessarily inhibit autonomy-seeking by the child. Authoritative parenting styles also exhibit firm control, but the intentional discipline coupled with warm regard allows for give-and-take in developing family rules, and flexes when possible as the situation deems best. This variable was operationalized by use of the
Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991; Fischer & Corcoran, 2007; Appendix B). The three parenting styles are assessed in subscales by the same names.

**Parental emotional availability.** Being emotionally available to a child indicates that the parent responds appropriately and sensitively with involvement on an emotional level (Lum & Phares, 2005). The availability may occur both during times of child neediness, or self-sufficiency. This construct will be assessed by the Lum Emotional Availability of Parents measure (LEAP; Lum & Phares, 2005; Appendix C).

**Parental readiness to forgive.** This construct was developed to describe the tendency of the parent to forgive the child following offenses by the child (Maio, Thomas, Fincham, & Carnelly, 2008). Forgiveness has been described as the decisive use of positive, kind emotions and cognitions in the face of negative emotions or passion subsequent to perceived trauma, offenses or hurts (Lin, Enright, Krahn, Mack, & Baskin, 2004; Worthington, 2003). Worthington (2003) pointed out that forgiveness does not necessarily include reconciliation, a separate act focusing on rebuilding a trusting relationship after that trust was violated, although its timely use can safeguard the relationship and prevent further damage (Maio et al., 2008). The tendency of the parent to forgive the child was reported by the emerging adult child by use of the Mother/Father (Parent) Forgive Child subscales from the Family Forgiveness Questionnaire (PFC; Maio et al., 2008; Appendix D). This inventory assesses the degree to which a parent forgives or holds grudges, and the maintenance of a positive or negative image of the child.
**Parent spirituality.** This construct has to do with the parents’ implicit quest for relationship with God and their attempt to consistently practice their beliefs about God in everyday life. Authentic spirituality in parents was related to higher levels of spirituality in children (McDonald, Beck, Allison, & Norsworthy, 2005). Parental spirituality was assessed by the Parental Spirituality Scale (PSS; McDonald et al., 2005; Appendix E).

**Religion.** This term and its variants refer to the more concrete, tangible set of beliefs and practices adhered to by a religious community (Cashwell & Young, 2005). It typically signifies a more practical expression of one’s life meaning and worldview.

**Religious emphasis in the home.** This is the extent to which parents promoted the practice of religion in the home, with actions such as prayer and reading the Bible, discussions of morals, observance of religious days, and behavior in line with religious teachings. This does not tap implicit spirituality in the home, but rather the external practices. The Religious Emphasis Scale (RES) assessed the child’s perspective of their home (Altemeyer, 1988; Hunsberger, 1999; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984; Appendix F).

**Spirituality.** Spirituality refers to one’s beliefs, awareness, values, purpose, and meaning in life as one attempts to find a personal connection to something or someone more powerful, encompassing, and enduring than oneself (Cashwell & Young, 2005).

**Spiritual maturity.** The concept of maturity in general is defined as the state of being fully developed or grown, complete or ready (Guralnik, 1972). As this study is concerned with one’s beliefs in the Christian faith, spiritual maturity here is defined as the purposeful development of an implicit, relational faith and trust in God, resulting in explicit, stable, and predictable choices of behavior modeled after biblical virtues.
Spiritual maturity was operationalized and measured by the self-reporting Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; Hall & Edwards, 1996, 2002; Appendix G). The SAI, based on object relations theory, was based on the supposition that as with any interpersonal relationship, one’s relationship to God is developmental in nature. It inventories two dimensions of spiritual development – Awareness of God, and Quality of Relationship. Within the Quality of Relationship dimension are four relational factors found in spiritual maturity: disappointment, realistic acceptance, grandiosity, and instability. An impression management subscale is included as well.

**Significance of the Study**

It is hopeful that findings from this research will add to professional and pastoral counseling knowledge of the spiritual state and spiritual needs of emerging adults, as well as better equip fathers and mothers in their parenting skills. Much more research must be done to train parents of adolescents and young adults more effectively (Steinberg, 2001) and to do it in such a way that leaves the parents encouraged to continue (Howard, Friend, Parker, & Streker, 2010). Evidence-based parent training programs led to healthier lifestyle choices in adolescents (Morton, Barling, Rhodes, Mâsse, Zumbo, & Beauchamp, 2011).

Second, this study added to knowledge indicating which basic parenting qualities or attributes tend to improve or worsen the outlook for spiritual maturity, and thus impact religious practices such as church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer in
the emerging adult. Ultimately, parental distress might be alleviated, a benefit which could improve the quality of parent-child relations.

Third, this research assisted in clarifying the limits of the theoretical construct of emerging adulthood. First described about 15 years ago (Arnett, 2000), emerging adulthood as a life stage is still a relatively new concept, and thus must have more validation of its credibility and usefulness to the mental health field.

Finally, this study provided information that could help emerging adults learn of the existence of factors predisposing them to greater philosophical and religious exploration than is common for even that time of life. Consequently, they might then feel relief from some of the self-recrimination inherent with adopting a different lifestyle from their parents (Bisset, 1992, 1997).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Research into the issue of an older child leaving earlier practices of faith revealed several common theoretical or conceptual frameworks. These assisted the organization and direction of this study.

Biblical Parenting Principles

General principles for parents to follow in childrearing were given in the Bible. For example, general parenting advice would include honoring God before one’s children (Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 18:29); the father leading the family well (I Timothy 3:4-5); understanding a child’s propensity to commit sin (Psalm 51:5, 58:3); earnestly teaching truth (Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4); and correcting error (Ephesians
Parents are specifically advised to discipline in ways that are memorable to the child (Proverbs 13:24; 23:13-14); to speak frequently of God’s commandments (Deuteronomy 6:7); and to refrain from provoking children and causing discouragement (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21). Christian parents hope to safeguard their child’s spiritual future by following these principles (Campbell & Chapman, 1999; Seel, 2000).

**Life Stages**

Various theories have described normal behavior for this stage in lifespan development. The 19th century theologian and thought-to-be developer of the originally theistic existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard (Eller, 2001; C. S. Evans, 1985; Hong & Hong, 2000; Storm, 2011), postulated that a person may pass through or live in one of several stages or spheres of spiritual maturity. Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson’s life stage theory (Erikson, 1968) described the identity-versus-identity-confusion stage as encompassing the 12-20 year-old period of life. This stage included a search for autonomy and decisions about to whom or to what one will commit one’s life (fidelity). Building upon Erikson’s work, psychologist James Marcia (1966) theorized that adolescents pass through stages dealing with exploration and commitment. Someone may put off commitment, and be *diffused*; prematurely committed, or *foreclosed*; indecisive, or in *moratorium*; or fully committed and in *identity achievement*. What these theorists seem to agree on is that normal life development includes progression through life stages.
Emerging Adulthood

More recently, Arnett (2000, 2007a) continued developing the notion of stages in psychosocial child development. In contrast to the adolescent stage moving directly to the adult stage, he introduced the concept of emerging adulthood, the stage of life encompassing the 18- to 25-year-old period. One commonly recognized behavioral distinction of this stage is the drive to explore life options. Medical research adds credibility to this distinction. Exercising new neural circuitry from a surge in production of gray matter during puberty (Jeeves & Brown, 2009; Savage, 2009; Schwartz & Begley, 2002), the older child usually is impelled toward stimulating new ideas and verification of personal beliefs by use of experience. From a social perspective, researchers have noted that emerging adults who had secure relational styles with their parents typically relate more adaptively and confidently in later social relationships and academic settings (Allen & Land, 1999; Grossman, Grossman, Kindler, & Zimmerman, 2008).

Building on their own work with families and Arnett’s (1999) recognition of changes the adolescent makes while maturing to adulthood, Parrott and Parrott (2002) suggested that adolescents truly find religion of interest, but wish to examine beliefs taught during childhood for themselves. This questioning for the purpose of finding lasting meaning for life - what Kierkegaard (Storm, 2011) deemed the most authentic existence - may lead naturally to skepticism of seemingly empty religious practices. Parents may possibly misinterpret this search for truth and integrity (part of Erikson’s identity exploration stage) as signs of doubt and a loss of interest in spirituality.
However, from one vantage point, questioning one’s religious identity and spiritual values may merely be a necessary distancing inherent to the developmental tasks the young adult must pass in order to arrive at a later biopsychosocial and spiritual maturity (Allen, 2008).

**Emerging Adulthood and Religious Involvement**

Parents, pastors, and psychologists have puzzled over apparent contradictions in the way the emerging adult relates to his or her religious beliefs. Overall findings from one longitudinal research indicated that unmet needs for relationship among college students along with impulsive decision-making about involvement in activities were measurable within two weeks of arrival. Once students had begun college, assessments suggested that those students with no previous alcohol use or sexual activity while attending church youth group in high school reported the greatest increase of these risky activities after getting to college, more than those who already had high school histories of alcohol use and sexual activity (Powell et al., 2011). There appeared to be no guaranteed long-lasting effect of earlier religious socialization (Arnett, 2004).

Recently, the concept of one’s religious identity formation and development has been studied further. As Edgell and Meier (2005) identified distinct pathways adolescents use to take on their religious identity and involvement, they and others (Arnett, 2004; Arnett & Jensen, 2002) noted that during the late teens and early adulthood, the probability of decreasing one’s religious involvement was greater. Similarly, Paloutzian, Murken, Streib, and Rößler-Namini’s (2013) study distinguished differences in the way one leaves religious faith, falling on a continuum from total
deconversion to lifelong quests for different spiritual goals. Based on numerous surveys and extensive qualitative research conducted by the Barna Group, Kinnaman (2011) postulated that declining church attendance by emerging adults, or the “dropout problem,” is actually a lack of growth toward faith maturity. He distinguished current forms of religious uninvolved, that of the person who continues Christian identification but feels lost between church and culture; that of a Christian who does not attend church; and that of a person who once identified with Christianity but no longer does. Kinnaman agreed with other researchers that changing one’s faith likely is related to one’s stage of identity because of its common occurrence between the ages of 18 to 29, but insisted that being common does not mean it is ideal for later spiritual growth.

**Development of Spiritual Maturity**

Maturation is the culmination of developmental processes, an accomplishment dependent on the ability to engage, focus, and attend in relation to another person (Greenspan, 1997). Ohlschlager and Clinton (2002) furthered this idea in that maturity enabled the person to be “better off” (p. 78) than before, a goal allowing the person to experience less distress and realize greater self-control and beneficial impact on others. Hindson, Ohlschlager, and Clinton (2002) distinguished spiritual maturity as a developmental transformation occurring over time, resulting in positive, overall strengths and closer relationship to God. Therefore, when spirituality (one’s beliefs, values, and life meaning gained by relating to a greater being) develops sufficiently so that both implicit and explicit behavior show its effects, spiritual maturity is seen as the end result (Vernick & Thurman, 2002).
Normal though religious questioning may be, Kinnaman’s (2011) concern for healthy transitions to spiritual maturity reflected concerns Kierkegaard wrote of much earlier. Kierkegaard’s theistic existentialism (Eller, 2001; C. S. Evans, 1985; Jones & Butman, 1991; Tietjen, 2013) described humans as God-created beings who may develop, or deepen inwardly, toward selfhood through several stages. In his primer on Kierkegaardian motifs, Storm (2011) explained Kierkegaard’s view of the person as living in either initial self-centered gratification (esthetic sphere), a more outwardly focused stage employing guiding principles (ethical sphere), or an attained stage in which genuine selfhood can develop - an intimate and complete trust in the all-powerful God (religious sphere). In any sphere, according to Kierkegaard’s theory (Storm, 2011) God can be acknowledged, but the esthete might approach God or the Bible hedonistically for the artistic, musical, or cultured pleasure brought. The ethical person might sense a duty to God and country, adopt guiding principles, and thus find life meaning. The religious person might either sense God’s immanence and passively respond with guilt or suffering, or give way to God’s transcendence, and sense contentment and joy by placing complete faith in God’s wise management and Christ’s sacrifice for sin. Tietjen (2013) emphasized that this all-encompassing conversion superseded a mere act of cognition – it involved an intimate relationship with the truth. Thus, according to Storm’s (2011) understanding of Kierkegaard, the person was seen traversing a path toward the religious sphere, toward complete trust in God.

According to Kierkegaard, when one does not exercise free will to submit passionately to God, the person is seen to be in a state of despair, a sense of not being
themselves, or inauthentic (Storm, 2011). Because Kierkegaard viewed staying in the esthetic and ethical stages as less healthy, he encouraged others to walk (or grow) toward becoming who God designed them to be in order to feel the most joy in life and advance God’s work. Kierkegaard’s final religious stage is the highest, and epitomizes what the Bible describes as maturity – a submission to the working of the all-powerful God of peace and virtue, and to his son, Jesus Christ, who made human spiritual maturity possible by his sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 11, 13:20-21; I Peter 1:3-8). Based on literature presented thus far, spiritual maturity was defined here as the purposeful development of an implicit, relational faith in God, resulting in stable choices of virtuous behavior modeled after biblical teachings.

**Impact of Developmental Processes**

When these biopsychosocial and spiritual processes of increasing independent thinking and authenticity motivate today’s emerging adults, a generation called millennials due to being born between 1980 and 2000 (Stein & Sanburn, 2013), to question or even alienate themselves from their previous religious identity and practices, mental health professionals and the Christian church have taken note as well (Powell et al., 2011; Steinberg, 2001; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). The world of mental health recognizes the specific protective effects against psychiatric illness and social problems that morality and personal faith lend (Bonelli & Koenig, 2013; Kim, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 1999; Miller et al., 2012; Miner, 2009; Pargament, 1997; Rosmarin et al., 2013; Sperry, 2010, 2012; Uecker et al., 2007). Christianity teaches that God as a spiritual father wants a loving relationship with his children (I John 4:7-10) and gives
general principles for parents to follow in childrearing. Thus, spiritual maturity is of interest to greater society, not just the growing child.

The hopes of Christian parents, however, that their child would continue to cultivate religious practices and spiritual beliefs taught in early years typically turn to fear as adolescents begin exploring different religious identities (Campbell & Chapman, 1999; Setran & Kiesling, 2013). One long-time pastor and counselor noted that anxious parents often determine to manipulate outcomes in order to try and guarantee a positive change in their child (D. Shores, personal communication, July 29, 2013). Conversely, they may become paralyzed and abdicate responsibility lest anything they do further erode their child’s religious identity or practices (Seel, 2000). Some parents may see questioning of beliefs as disrespectful (Exline & Rose, 2013), and respond with outrage and unforgiveness, both of which may lead to psychological damage in the unforgiven person (Campbell & Chapman, 1999; Cheong & DiBlasio, 2007; Dmitrieva, Chen, Greenberger, & Gil-Rivas, 2004). Even though forgiveness is highly mandated in the Bible (Matthew 18; Ephesians 4:2), withholding it from the emerging adult could further augment the natural impulses to question traditional religion, effectively inciting more conflict with parents.

With few empirical studies of the emerging adult, researchers have noted that knowledge of parent and child interactions and how they impact religious and spiritual development in the emerging adult remains incomplete (Barry et al., 2010; Edgell & Meier, 2005; Levenson, Aldwin, & Igarashi, 2013). Further, of those studies found, most have studied the more objective religious practice (e.g., the number of times each month
one attends church), and the physical and social reasons given for the decline seen (e.g.,
going to college, people being unwelcoming). The Bible encouraged religious practices
(such as the regular gathering together of Christians), but it was so that they might mature
in spiritual disciplines, such as giving encouragement, showing love, growing in ability to
withstand trials, and being kind to others (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Although discussed at length in popular literature (Beaty, 2009; Bisset, 1992,
1997; Clark, 2004; Clark & Raby, 2009; Finnigan, 1995; Kinnaman, 2011; Nielson,
2013; Powell et al., 2011; Rainer, 2003; Scharper, 2010; Seel, 2000; Wright & Wright,
1993; Yoder, 2013), fewer empirical studies located in databases of peer-reviewed work
attended to the actual relationship the emerging adult has with God and, of those, any
parental factors possibly influencing the development of that personal relationship were
scarcely mentioned. After reviewing theoretical and empirical work on the development
of religious and spiritual identity in emerging adults, Barry et al. (2010) recommended
expansion of studies of emerging adults, taking care to include those outside of higher
education settings. Arnett (2000) likewise made note of the dearth of studies using “the
forgotten half” (p. 476), or non-academic young people (and subsequently included them
in a study on religious beliefs and practices among emerging adults (Arnett & Jensen,
2002). Additionally, Barry and colleagues found the need for studies examining how
high versus low levels of religiosity and spirituality affect development in emerging
adults. One final recommendation pertinent here was to focus on developing theoretical
bases explaining how emerging adults develop their religious and spiritual beliefs, and
the socialization process encouraging those beliefs.
Thus, calls for more knowledge from diverse areas about spiritual maturity in the emerging adult have been made. Society wishes to improve health outlooks, the Christian church seeks to lead children closer to God, parents wish for solid spirituality and regular religious practice in their children, and the scientific community sees a need for more understanding of processes leading to healthy identity development.

**Organization of the Remaining Chapters**

First, Chapter Two will give a more extensive review of the literature dealing with the recent phenomena of declining interest in religion by emerging adults. Additionally, known parent factors affecting normal child development will be highlighted, and related to the need for a closer examination of parent factors which may also affect the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult. Characteristics and needs of the emerging adult will be described. Second, Chapter Three will develop the method to be used in this study: the selection of participants, a description of the instrumentation, and the research procedures involved. The plan for data analysis will be given, along with the applicable null hypotheses. Chapter Four will outline the results of the data collection and analysis and present data in practical ways. Finally, Chapter Five will summarize the issue of the spiritual maturity of emerging adults and their perception of parent variables, the methodology, and the findings.
Chapter Summary

As early as biblical times, parents have been mandated to assist child development through normal life stages to holistic maturity by means of nurture, example, and correction. Most adolescents eventually emerge into adulthood without overwhelming difficulty and become productive members of society. However, current literature suggests that fewer emerging adults are retaining their parents’ faith practices, with some rejecting religion altogether. Literature suggests that practice of religion and interest in spirituality offer protection against psychosocial difficulties, but that some parent qualities seem to be inversely related to implicit faith in God or participation in religious practices. In order to inform parents who identify with the Christian faith about possible factors under their control that might help their child develop an interest in religion and spirituality, this study assessed which parent variables are most strongly predictive of their emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between a selection of behavioral and essential characteristics of parents who identify as Christian (all as perceived by their emerging adult child) and the spiritual maturity of their emerging adult child. This research first identified those variables from scholarly and biblical sources, and then assessed those variables by use of reliable measures already utilized in a related study. Next, the emerging adult’s extrinsic religiosity was correlated with his or her spiritual maturity, and the results from the inventories measuring parent variables was correlated with the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity. The ability of parent variables to predict the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity was then noted.

In this review of literature, pertinent information gathered was organized around developmental themes and presented here. First, the phenomenon of overall religious decline among emerging adults is discussed as well as situations which may have prevented needed clarity from being fully developed. Second, literature examining parent characteristics already reported to affect the maturity of children and emerging adults is highlighted. Next, literature found which examined the characteristics and needs of today’s emerging adult (the millennial) is collated by theme. Then, a summary of research issues is given so that gaps in the research on the emerging adult as they pertained to the study of parent attributes might be seen. Following that section, an
explanation for why the dependent variables were selected is related. Finally, research questions are delineated.

Problem Context

Based on the 2010 United States Census, it was estimated that there were 31,457,653 persons between the ages of 18 to 24 out of an estimated total population of 316,128,839 in 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Although only around 10% of Americans are emerging adults, this segment represents those who often have every dimension of their lives in flux even as they are laying the foundation of their life’s work and purpose (Arnett, 2000). Additionally, the prefrontal cortex (PFC), the center of higher thought, judgment, logic, and reasoning, is the last cerebral area to attain its potential maturity - in very late adolescence (Jeeves & Brown, 2009). Jeeves and Brown’s (2009) research noted that both cortical thickness and myelination benefit from the late pruning of nerve branches and connections, a process interacting with the child’s experiences with the environment. This strong push for growth makes up the fifth and final spurt of rapid neurodevelopment in the child, a stage especially seen in the 18- to 21-year-old age group (Savage, 2009). With the neurological and psychosocial reorganization of one’s childhood world and pending life decisions to be made, the life of the emerging adult may become very complex indeed.

Decisions about to what religious practices or to whom one can dedicate one’s spiritual life are made amidst this tumultuous time (Bisset, 1992; Kinnaman, 2011). For Christian parents who consider these decisions to be life altering, these years can be
stressful as the emerging adult develops a personal religious identity which may or may not coincide with the values of the parent (Allen & Land, 1999). Often conflict over behaviors and ideals accompanies the maturation process, surrounds the interpersonal relationships involved, and tempts parents and/or the child to place limits on the relationship intimacy in order to find peace of mind (Bisset, 1992; Seel, 2000; Wright & Wright, 1993).

In order to locate current and past studies on the topic of declining religiosity among emerging adults, key words and combinations of those words were searched in libraries and electronic databases dealing with Christianity, religion, philosophy, psychological and behavioral health, and social science. Principal words researched were parent, adolescent, emerging adult or adulthood, adult child, millennial, conflict, faith, spirituality, and religion. Journals, books, and surveys on these topics were investigated for any information dealing specifically with emerging adults, their religiosity or spirituality, and the role or reaction of parents in regards to their emerging adult child. Special attention was paid to literature taking into account the holistic manner (biological, psychological, spiritual, and social) in which the emerging adult develops. Current media articles pertaining to these topics were also used to gain potential resources for study.
Declining Religiosity among Emerging Adults

Enigmas

Although levels of anger and depression decrease and self-esteem increases overall during the adolescent’s transition to adulthood (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006), researchers have noted a declining interest in church attendance and other religious practices among these emerging adults over the past several decades (Dudley, 1983; Hess, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2010). Many in their twenties (61%, Barna Group, 2006; 43%, Barna Group, 2013; 40%, Gallup, 2002) disengage from God even after Christian involvement during high school. In 1991, the General Social Survey found results indicating that 9.7% of 18- to 24-year-olds had no religious preference; by 2012, that percentage had tripled to 32% (Hout et al., 2013). One survey of 1,300 emerging adults found that only .4% could articulate a salvation experience (Rainer, 2003).

These figures accompanied by anecdotal evidence among Christian groups and the media sparked an increase in popular literature on that topic written by concerned Christian parents, church leaders, and helping professionals (Beaty, 2009; Bisset, 1992, 1997; Clark, 2004; Clark & Raby, 2009; Dudley, 1983; Finnigan, 1995; Kinnaman, 2011; Nielson, 2013; Powell et al., 2011; Rainer, 2003; Scharper, 2010; Seel, 2000; Wright & Wright, 1993; Yoder, 2013). Each has been both curious and distressed by the religious disengagement emerging adults often show, as research has suggested that one’s religious faith improves family relationships (Kim, 2006); acts as a protective factor against major depression and its recurrence (Miller et al., 2012); is correlated with increased self-
esteem and mental health overall (Kirkpatrick, 1999; Sperry, 2012); and brings comfort in crises and loneliness (Kirkpatrick, 1999; Pargament, 1997). Pargament’s (1997) review of literature suggested that those who stray from childhood religious practice are seen by others as sinners; they have decreased coping abilities; they are more vulnerable to mental and spiritual distress; and God is portrayed as one who is not really in control. Therefore, many people consider declining religious faith a concerning issue.

**Dilemmas**

As trends in the American socio-political culture have continued to evolve over the past several decades, a growing interest in young adults’ attitudes toward religion and spirituality is also evident (Arnett, 2004; Buri & Mueller, 1993; Exline & Rose, 2013; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Levenson et al., 2013; Milevsky & Leh, 2008; O’Connor, Hoge, & Alexander, 2002; Pearce & Haynie, 2004; Seffrin, 2008; Setran & Kiesling, 2013; Uecker et al., 2007). With many points of view, however, and even more suggested causes for the attitude changes, results on how serious the problem of decreased church attendance among emerging adults is and what that decline means for the individual have varied from author to author. This has left some parents wondering what, if anything, they should do differently.

**Uncertain Focus**

Understanding the development of religious disinterest among emerging adults may also be fostered by the confusion over exactly what quality it is that the parent should try to encourage in their child – deeper, dynamic spirituality, more frequent
practice of formal religion, or both. A distinction between the two was made in *How to Be a Christian Without Being Religious*, a work whose title cast doubt on the benefit of religiosity (Ridenour, 1971/2002). So, some parents may be unsure of whether the beliefs their child currently holds or practices are sufficient to gain God’s favor.

For centuries, the terms spirituality and religion have been used both interchangeably and distinctively by theology, psychology, sociology, and medicine (Oman, 2013; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999) when discussing one’s relationship to the divine. In Erickson’s (1992) psychological study on religious development processes in youth, he used terms such as *parental religious activities* to denote practical church attendance and the seemingly more personal prayer, *religious education* to denote both church and parental instruction in one’s religious teachings, and *home religious behavior* to include private worship, Bible reading, and devotional beliefs. For example, the Religious Belief and Commitment Scale (Erickson, 1992) includes items measuring both one’s formal practice and one’s dynamic attitude about their religion (e.g., “My faith shapes how I think and act every day,” “I help others with their religious questions and struggles,” and “I have a real sense that God is guiding me”). The past use of the term religion encompassed a broad spectrum of activity, devotion, and beliefs.

Complicating matters, though, are current perceptions of religion and spirituality. Religion, for example, has over the past several decades come to have a new connotation – it is linked to formal institutions and practices, or *works*, performed without significant personal meaning involved. Spirituality likewise still refers to a sincere belief, but can now include many other forms of faith and not just one of Judeo-Christian roots.
Illustrating that expanded definition, Adler’s Individual Psychology (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967/2000) described life tasks one must master, the fifth of which was an existential endeavor. This unnamed life task implicated both one’s behaviors as well as intrinsic beliefs, a definition once reserved solely for religion (Zinnbauer et al., 1999), but now sounding similar to that of spirituality (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967/2000). Decrying the problematic distinctions, some researchers have encouraged a less polarized view of one’s approach to the divine, but have recognized the universality of the differing concepts (Zinnbauer et al., 1999). Thus, these varied and overlapping uses of the terms could contribute to parental indecisiveness as to what issue in their child is the real focus.

After reviewing the various meanings of the terms, Cashwell and Young (2005) clarified current usage of the terms religion and spirituality in the following way. Spirituality has to do with one’s beliefs, awareness, values, and purpose and meaning in life as one reaches to trust in something greater than humanity. Religion refers to the more concrete, tangible set of beliefs and practices adhered to by a religious community.

As such, Cashwell and Young (2005) noted, spirituality would be more encompassing and subjective; religion would be more practical. Neither one is inherently good or bad. Relating this to parental concerns, declining church attendance (a religious practice) may hint at underlying problems in the beliefs, values, and life meaning (spirituality) in the emerging adult (Kinnaman, 2011). Although these terms are at times overlapping, attempts to guard these distinctions were made in this study.
Underutilized Developmental Stage Theory

Another concern addressed in literature complicating a parent’s lack of ability to move definitively forward in spiritual leadership of their emerging adult child could be the lack of well-developed theory about the child’s religious development (Edgell & Meier, 2005; Erickson, 1992). For over one hundred years, various theorists have described differing aspects of the stages or processes in which the person passes from childhood to maturity. For example, Bowlby (1988) studied the child’s attachment to his or her parent. Erikson (1968) identified eight psychosocial tasks to develop ego virtues. Greenspan (1997) theorized that healthy ego development takes place in progressively more complex stages. Piaget’s (1984) studies led to extensive descriptions of four stages of individual cognitive development. Building on Piaget’s work, Kohlberg (2008) taught on development of one’s moral life. Psychosexual development was described by Freud (Rickman, 1937/1957). Sullivan (1970) elaborated upon the development of a complex self-system resulting from the influence of parents on one’s well-being. Thus, in regards to a child’s normal growth from total helplessness to capable independence, society and science have been well informed (Feldman, 2008). However, theory which organizes the psychology of religion, especially as it pertains to the development of spirituality or religiosity, has been largely neglected (Erickson, 1992; Meier, Minirth, Wichern, & Ratcliff, 1991), until just the past ten years (Paloutzian & Park, 2013).

When certain aspects of the progress toward spiritual wholeness from childhood to adulthood have indeed been alluded to or studied by psychologists (Elkind, 1970; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Kimball, Boyatzis, Cook, Leonard, & Flanagan, 2013;
Ratcliff, 1985; Tournier, 1964), potential benefits to the spiritual maturity of the child were suggested. Those doing these studies agreed that the being of God and other such transcendental concepts were expressed and understood differently corresponding to the developmental level of the child. One review of related research, however, found that respected theory describing developmental capacity was not consulted as often as it should have been when scholars wrote for religious education (Ratcliff, 1985). Therefore, lack of theoretical knowledge about spiritual development may lead to parental ignorance of how to guide an emerging adult child’s religious choices.

**Insufficient Empirical Research**

Although scholarly databases and libraries were accessed for literature which described research undertaken to understand religiosity in contemporary emerging adults or to gain specific ideas about the role that parents play in the emerging adult’s faith development and maturity, scant material was found. This deficit could impede scientific understanding of normal parameters of religious and spiritual behavior in emerging adult children, leaving parents with many unanswered questions.

**Earlier Studies**

Some earlier literature of interest to this current research has studied the young adult and his or her interest in religion. Hunsberger and Brown (1984) assessed college students (N = 836) for factors behind apostasy development. An intellectual orientation and a weaker emphasis on religion in the home environment, especially a lower religious commitment of the mother, were emphasized as predictors of apostasy.
Hayes and Pittelkow (1993) examined religious belief, transmission of that belief, and the role of the family in a nationally representative sample of 1,084 Australian adult respondents aged 16 years old and older and their married parents. Transmission of religious belief was defined as the child’s acceptance of the same Christian beliefs regarding God, the afterlife, hell, heaven, and the devil as their parents. Study findings indicated that parental religiosity was a strong predictor of the older child’s religious beliefs, especially in relation to the religious supervision and commitment of the mother, and the moral supervision and religious commitment of the father.

Wilson and Sherkat’s (1994) ex post facto study of longitudinal youth and parent data assessed parent/child closeness, church participation, attitude about the Bible, gender, parental contact, and marital and parenthood status among other factors. Their findings described both a private and a public rebellion against religion occurring in some older adolescents and young adults. Life course transitions such as marriage and bearing children correlated with the timing of one’s return to church. Strong ties to one’s parents correlated with less risk of leaving church. Current cultural factors (e.g., political and counter-cultural movements) also affected one’s church participation. Women disaffiliated themselves from church less frequently than men, and but those who did drop out of attendance did not often return after having had children.

In a national longitudinal study of high school seniors from 1972 to 1986, Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite (1995) examined the effects of age and family life cycle events (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, divorce) on religious participation as measured by church attendance. They found that age effects and family formation effects were
integrally related to each other as well as correlating with the rate of religious participation. The presence of a childhood religious upbringing had a positive statistically significant effect on church attendance in early adulthood.

Another longitudinal study which is older but still of interest (Myers, 1996) examined parent/family factors affecting the transmission of religious/spiritual interest from parents to their young adult children. From phone interviews of parents (one per household; N = 468) in 1980, 1983, 1988, and 1992 and a random sample of their offspring who lived at home in 1980 and were at least 19 years old in 1992 (N = 468), Myers (1996) measured religiosity in the adult offspring and one parent. Items in the measure of religiosity were the daily influence of religious beliefs, and the frequencies of Bible reading, viewing/listening to religious broadcasts, prayer, attending church, and attending church-related activities. Moderating parent qualities or behavior variables included levels of education, income, hours worked per week, marital happiness, parent feelings about the marital relationship, parental power and strictness, and maternal/paternal support. Adult offspring were assessed for education status, marital status, parenthood status, social involvement, social integration, and number of friendships. Control variables were age, sex, race, and denomination. Results indicated a significant positive effect of the parent’s religiosity on the existence of religiosity in the adult child, an effect remaining large even after that child’s recent experiences were accounted for. The greatest religiosity was apparent when the parent tested at moderate or low religiosity, and when the parent and child had approximately the same levels. Positive correlations were indicated between levels of adult child religiosity and all of the
following: parental religiosity levels, a more conservative Protestant upbringing (as opposed to Catholicism or liberal or moderate Protestantism), a father’s higher education level, a greater number of hours that the father worked, a greater decisional power held by the father, the intact and satisfactory marriage of one’s biological parents, and a combination of higher levels of parental support and moderate levels of parental control. A mother’s higher education level, her greater hours worked, or the child being from a stepfamily or other non-intact family structure correlated with less religiosity in the child. (Curiously, a mother’s own religiosity was negatively correlated with her level of education.) Parental income seemed to have no correlation with adult child religiosity. Earlier literature seems to corroborate the ability of some parental variables to impact a child’s spiritual maturity.

**Current Literature**

Parents and Christian leaders have used popular literature to express their concern over the increasing numbers of millennials who have left their earlier religious involvement. Of the several more strictly controlled studies that were found which investigated the impact that specific parent characteristics might have on the development of religiosity or spirituality in emerging adults, all had significant results affirming an impact of the parent on the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity. Parental religious beliefs and supportiveness (Leonard et al., 2013) and parental divorce (Zhai, Ellison, Glenn, & Marquardt, 2007) were found to significantly relate to religious practice in the emerging adult.
Specific benefits could be realized by the parent with greater knowledge developed from findings in controlled research. For example, Ratcliff (1985) noted that younger children have been seen to understand religious concepts differently than older children. He suggested that research clarifying the child’s changing religious and spiritual understandings could be used to inform religious education (such as the correlating of Piaget’s developmental stages with the writing of age-appropriate religious education materials). This information could further assist confident parental leadership. Therefore, insufficient research findings could directly impact the spiritual maturity of emerging adults.

Various issues have perhaps prevented a clear focus or ability to more fully study the religiosity and spirituality of the emerging adult. Literature that focuses on understanding and describing the impact that a parent has on the child’s psychosocial and spiritual maturity is reviewed in the next section.

**Impact of Parent Characteristics on the Child**

Public opinion polls and surveys addressing explicit and implicit practice of religion (Barna Group, 2013; Hout et al., 2013; Gallup, 2002; McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2010, 2013; Ranier, 2003; Smith & Faris, 2002) have been administered to millennials, or today’s emerging adults, with results strongly defending the common belief that many of these young adults are decreasingly active in church and religious practices. However, in spite of their usefulness, these surveys focused primarily on who was departing and how. None suggested specific parent attributes as an underlying
factor. In an attempt to understand those factors, this research effort was dedicated to assisting parents of emerging adults with greater knowledge of their own characteristics which might correlate with declining religiosity among their children. This section will review scholarly literature (both empirical studies and reviews of empirical studies) which examined parental attributes appearing to negatively impact child development. Findings regarding the parent’s impact on both the psychosocial and spiritual maturity of the younger child will be presented first, followed by the impact on the maturity of the emerging adult.

**Impact on Maturity of the Younger Child**

**Psychosocial maturity.** Due to the relative newness of Arnett’s theoretical model (2000) of emerging adulthood, relatively few empirical studies were located that dealt with the religious and spiritual decisions and practices of the emerging adult in relation to their parents’ attributes. Therefore, in order to enrich the scant scholarly knowledge of the emerging adult, and because developmental psychology has defended a continuity of development across the life span (Bowlby, 1988; Feldman, 2008; Greenspan, 1997; Sroufe, 2005), the impact of parent attributes on a younger child’s maturity was reviewed as well. If parent attributes are able to impact the maturity of the younger child, then research ethics would recommend investigating that likelihood in older children as well (Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011).

Several parental factors have been reported to negatively affect a child or adolescent’s psychosocial development. Attachment theorists cited multiple empirical studies with results suggesting that the parent’s harsh criticism, conflict, inability to
engage or attune emotionally to the child, and neglect impede the child’s creating healthy personal and interpersonal coping skills (Diamond, Diamond, & Hogue, 2007; Diamond et al., 2003).

Other parent variables implicated in an adolescent’s decreased psychosocial maturity were poor mental health (Diamond et al., 2003; Steinberg, 2001), negativity (Moran & Diamond, 2008; Paz Pruitt, 2007), allowance of high levels of family conflict (Diamond et al., 2007; Steinberg, 2001); dysfunctional authority style, insincere or rigid belief and practice of faith, and lack of warmth and security shown the child (Kirkpatrick, 1997, 1998, 1999; Lee et al., 2013; Steinberg, 2001; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). Naturalistic observations of teenagers suggested that they often feel abandoned by their parents and other significant authority figures, and rejected by those around them (Clark, 2004; Clark & Raby, 2009). Other researchers noted that harsh discipline techniques (Kazdin, 2005), disruption in attachment (Bowlby, 1988; Wood & Miller, 2005), increased levels of parent-child conflict (Dekovic, 1999; Kim, 2006), and hopelessness (Weis & Ash, 2009) correlated positively with a decrease in child maturation.

**Spiritual maturity.** As an object figure, findings suggested that parent characteristics may also impact the child’s spirituality both adaptively and maladaptively (Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, & Pike, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 1997, 1999; Noffke & Hall, 2007; Surr, 2011). Miner (2009) summarized recent attachment research findings as showing that parents who acted as secure havens had children with a higher sense of existential well-being and the lowest rates of anxiety; parents fostering insecure attachments had
children who reported the highest levels of anxiety and lowest on existential well-being. Various academics have noticed that disrespect shown to children by their parents and ignorance of their needs discouraged the child’s genuine interest in God (Lewis, 1963; Habermas & Sibcy, 2011; Willard, 1997).

**Impact on Maturity of the Emerging Adult**

*Psychosocial maturity.* As with younger children, parent variables have been studied and found to impact the emerging adult’s psychological resilience both positively and negatively. Positive parent behaviors were related to the prediction of emerging adults’ adaptive cognitions and the subsequent amelioration of stress (Donnelly, Renk, & McKinney, 2013). The mother’s unconditional support and her modeling of flexibility in career planning and ethics have correlated significantly with the emerging adult’s ease of transition to the workplace (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010).

Lack of adequate parental monitoring or knowledge of the child’s risky behaviors correlated with increased substance use and delinquency in the 18- to 22-year-old (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Madsen, & Barry, 2008). Parent intrusiveness, unsupportiveness, and drinking correlated indirectly with alcohol use problems among emerging adults (Fischer, Forthun, Pidcock, & Dowd, 2007). Perceived acceptance and supportiveness by parents, especially the father, was positively related to risky behaviors in emerging adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2009). In one study, emerging adults reacted to parental invasiveness with increasing withdrawal from the relationship (Ledbetter & Vik, 2012). Chronic parental depression (Miller et al., 2012) and the emerging adult’s perceptions of parental negative attitudes and emotional
availability following conflict over the child’s values (Renk et al., 2006) significantly impacted the emerging adult’s psychological well-being.

**Spiritual maturity.** Using data from the longitudinal College Transition Project of 2004-2010, Powell and colleagues (2011) noted that whether through examples of genuine or insincere faith practices, parents were usually the greatest factor in their emerging adult’s development of faith maturity. Myers’ (1996) study using an intergenerational data set (interviews with parents in 1980, and with offspring in 1992) had final results suggesting that parental religiosity was the primary influence on the young adult’s retention of family faith practices. Additionally, having both biological parents happily married with traditional gender roles, and disciplining warmly and authoritatively increased the likelihood of religiosity as an adult.

Parents may negatively affect the emerging adult’s spiritual choices through inadequate answers to doubts, over-controlling faith, and materialism and status concerns (Bisset, 1992, 1997); insecure attachment (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004); abusiveness, especially when alongside religiosity (Lyon, 2010; Seffrin, 2008); and their marital dissatisfaction or divorce (Kiesling, 2011; Milevsky & Leh, 2008; Zhai et al., 2007). Hunsberger and Brown’s (1984) study of college students suggested that less emphasis given to religion in the home and a poorer relationship with the parent both predicted apostasy (no religious belief).

In addition to empirical studies, psychosocial theory has explored and described the impact of different types of parenting on the child’s spiritual maturity. Parallels between the development of a child’s spiritual maturity and the level of object relations
development have been noted (Hall et al., 1998; Noffke & Hall, 2007; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). Tournier (1964) learned through his practice as a psychiatrist that adolescents who saw hypocrisy in their parents’ spiritual and social life usually had a crisis in their own faith. Erickson (1992) and Hunsberger and Brown (1984) spoke of the religious socialization taking place between parent and child. How a child perceives a parent’s influence affects that child in multiple ways.

Although not dealing specifically with a parent trait, but highlighting the complexity of the effect that parents have on their children’s later spirituality even into adulthood, multiple studies indicated that an insecure attachment bond between the parent and child sometimes ultimately catalyzes that child strongly turning to God for security and love not given by the parent (Kirkpatrick, 1997, 1999). Kirkpatrick interpreted this as a compensatory action - the seeking of love and unconditional support from a personal, nurturing God.

**Millennial Emerging Adults**

**General Characteristics**

Around 80 million children who were born approximately between 1980 and 2000 and who began coming of age around the turn of the millennium (Barna Group, 2013b; Pew Research Center, 2010; Twenge, 2010) are today’s emerging adults. Distinguished both theoretically and empirically from adolescence and young adulthood, these young adults have been primarily characterized over the past 30 years by demographic differences, subjective differences, and identity exploration (Arnett, 2000).
Arnett’s (2000) ground-breaking work on emerging adulthood expressed that compared to as recently as the 1970s, 18- to 25-year-olds have shown greater demographic instability and unpredictability in many areas such as status, choice of where one lives, and freedom from prescribed life roles than any other developmental period. Results from two studies sampling a range of 18- to 28-year-olds about the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett, 1997) noted that most participants were uncertain as to whether they had yet reached adulthood. They described the shift in more intangible and psychological terms than was done in the past. In contrast, by their late twenties and early thirties, most people did believe they had reached adulthood as shown by their increased self-responsibility and decision-making, financial independence, and parenthood.

Arnett’s (2000) review of research results suggested that identity and role exploration often occurs subjectively throughout one’s worldviews, work and education, and love. Adolescents typically begin processing these areas of their life, but do not finish them until they are at least in their twenties. The area of worldview encompasses that of cognitions and beliefs, perspectives which almost all young adults, in academic settings or not, believe they must challenge and formulate on their own as part of their attaining adulthood. Apart from these three notable differences, Arnett (2000) suggested that risk behavior and family relationships have also shown distinctive qualities in the 18- to 25-year-old age group, but need further study.

With certain distinguishing characteristics, different perspectives of emerging adults have been described in research. This group was raised primarily by both parents.
Possessing exemplary technological abilities with a hard working mentality (Safer, 2008), emerging adults seem to have high expectations for their success (Stein & Sanburn, 2013; Twenge, 2010). These young adults show altruistic desires as often or more so as other generations (Arnett, 2013; Twenge, 2010). Some research seemed to indicate that emerging adults exhibit greater narcissism and independence from others (Carlson & Gjerde, 2009; Meriac, Woehr, & Barister, 2010; Safer, 2008; Twenge, 2010), but Arnett (2013) found studies indicating that they are more tolerant of diverse cultures and given to community service. In spite of most parents attempting to control their choices, many millennials still experienced instability at home growing up (Collins & Clinton, 1992).

In Pew Research Center’s (2010) comparison of marital status among all generations at ages 18 to 28, millennials were least likely to marry, differing significantly from the other generations at that same life stage. By 2009, 21% of millennials had married, and 4% were divorced or separated, compared to 1963 statistics showing 54% of that age group being married, 3% divorced or separated. In 1978, statistics showed 42% of the 18 to 28 year-olds were married, with 6% divorced or separated. Pew Research Center’s 1995 statistics reported a 29% married group and 5% divorced or separated.

Identity in Flux

The value that the millennial emerging adult places on independence from parents in belief and value formation was noted by Nelson et al. (2007). After assessing parents’ and their emerging adult children’s perspectives on criteria necessary for consideration as
an adult, the ability to decide for oneself about beliefs and values (independently of the
parent or other influences) was one of the top four most frequently answered yes. It was
not deemed to be among the top four most important criteria, but was among the most
necessary for achievement of adulthood. Parents did not include that ability as one of the
most necessary or important. Arnett’s (1997) studies had similar findings suggesting that
independent decision making and accepting responsibility for the consequences of one’s
actions denoted the attainment of adulthood.

**Family identity.** One study (Lefkowitz, 2005) of 220 18- to 25-year-old students
at a large public university found that time which emerging adults spent away from
parents correlated with increasing “closeness.” Those who lived at home did not report
this closeness to the same extent.

**Religious identity.** Today’s emerging adults have been polled to analyze their
religious identity. These adults, the millennial generation, currently seem the least likely
to believe in God (Pew Research Center, 2010), with one in four persons under 30 years
of age saying they are “atheist,” “agnostic,” or “nothing in particular.” This was
compared to 10% of those aged 60 and older, about 15% of those in their 40s and 50s,
and 19% of those in their 30s. Research by the Barna Group (2013a) showed that 57% of
millennials who identify as having a Christian background (either Protestant or Catholic)
are less active in church today than when they were 15 years old. Exactly half expressed
that they had at one point been significantly frustrated about their faith, and 59%
indicated that they remembered a time in which they stopped attending church services.
after regular attendance earlier. Also, 38% had experienced a period of significant doubts about faith, with 32% admitting that they had felt like rejecting their parents’ faith.

Lefkowitz, Gillen, Shearer, and Boone (2004) studied the association between religiosity, sexual behaviors, and sexual attitudes of 205 18- to 25-year-old public university students (almost entirely Catholic, Protestant, atheist, agnostic, or Jewish). Religious behavior was found to be the strongest predictor of sexual behavior. However, one’s attitudes did not fully predict behavior. The older the person, the less that person practiced religion and considered their religion to forbid their active sexual practice.

Lefkowitz’ study (2005) noted that half of participating college students interviewed said their religious views had not changed after leaving home. The other half of participating college students had changed in various ways, expressed often through decreased attendance at services and heightened religious questioning. An increased spirituality was seen in 8% who also began to decrease their religiosity.

**Sexual identity.** Formation of a sexual identity (how one categorizes oneself, e.g., heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual; [Savin-Williams, 2014]) during emerging adulthood has yet to be well-studied, but present findings indicate that maturation during emerging adulthood coincides with development toward maturity of one’s perspective on sexual identity (Arnett, 2000; Lefkowitz, 2005). Arnett’s (2000) research suggested that emerging adults typically developed more intimate relationships as they explored the type of person with whom they would wish to spend their life. In the study of various developmental changes made during and after a child left for college, Lefkowitz (2005) noted that almost half of the participants changed their beliefs about their sexual identity,
with accompanying changes in behaviors. The greater the time spent in college, the more likely that change in beliefs would occur. One’s sexual identity did not necessarily predict sexual orientation (an internal mechanism thought to guide one’s sexual or romantic attraction toward females or males, or both) among millennial emerging adults (Savin-Williams, 2014).

In addition to a large longitudinal study with findings indicating that one’s sexual identity remains fluid in its development even into emerging adulthood (Ott, Corliss, Wypij, Rosario, & Austin, 2011), that identity was implicated in the level of one’s psychosocial well-being. That is, in a study of sexual identity, sexual attraction, and psychosocial well-being among emerging adult females (Johns, Zimmerman, & Bauermeister, 2013), identification with a sexual minority (e.g., lesbian or bisexual) was one factor negatively associated with psychosocial well-being.

Needs

**Psychological needs.** Empirical studies focusing on factors which might affect the rate of psychological resilience among adolescents and millennial emerging adults had results strongly suggesting that stress is more easily handled when one personally practices faith (a set of beliefs). For example, those who valued their spirituality or religious practices reported higher levels of self-efficacy and happiness with themselves and life in general (Donohue & Benson, 1995; Mosher & Handal, 1997; Regnerus, Smith & Fritsch, 2003; Sherkat & Ellison, 1999; Smith et al., 2003). Interest in academic excellence, rule compliance, and community participation increased (Smith & Faris, 2002) while decreases were assessed in risk-taking, substance abuse, and delinquent
behaviors (Pearce & Haynie, 2004; Meier, 2003) and sexual media use (Davies & Davis, 2013).

Because empirically-based treatment manuals for children continue a primary focus on non-religious areas of concern such as substance abuse, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), child abuse, depression, sleep deficits, attachment problems, intellectual disability, eating disorders, oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, gender identity issues, and anxiety (Carr, 2009; Gabbard, 2009; Ingram & Smith, 2008; Nathan & Gorman, 2007; Seligman & Reichenberg, 2012), the ACA has emphasized the need for holistic assessment of both religious and spiritual dimensions in all clients (Cox, 2013). Therefore, society will have a vested interest in helping emerging adults negotiate a religious identity, coming to peace with what practices will help maintain that identity.

**Biological needs.** Along with the psychosocial changes noted in the emerging adult by Arnett (2000) are neurological changes in the person’s frontal temporal brain region, especially the prefrontal cortex (PFC; Feldman, 2008; Savage, 2009; Siegel, 2012). As mentioned briefly before, the frontal temporal region is the site of the last great surge of growth to accomplish brain maturation, beginning around the seventeenth or eighteenth year of life and continuing into the mid-twenties. Up until this time, brain growth focuses largely on other regions – now the focus will shift to the executive function that may develop from the brain growth, neuro-connections, pruning and refinement occurring in the emerging adult (Savage, 2009). This growth depends upon appropriate levels of cortisol, a hormone used to energize the person during brief
moments of high stress. Rich brain growth is prompted by stimulating experiences and imaginative thoughts, thus creating a driving need for millennial emerging adults to seek ways to find fulfillment (even risky ones) if opportunities for challenge are not presented (Cozolino, 2010; Savage, 2009; Schwartz & Begley, 2002; Siegel, 2012). Prolonged anxiety or danger leads to extended release of cortisol and adrenaline which limits PFC function, stops neural growth, and acts as a toxin in the entire body (Cozolino, 2010). Therefore, an environment for emerging adults which allows for both challenge and safety may create the most conducive situation for optimal PFC growth (Cozolino, 2010; Siegel, 2012). With a rich network of interlinking neuronal clusters, the mature brain has more capacity for wisdom, judgment, imagination, emotion and impulse regulation, and thoughtful consideration of others’ states of mind (Savage, 2009; Siegel, 2012).

**Spiritual identity needs.** As well as psychosocial and biological needs, theory and research have distinguished a need in emerging adults to develop their spiritual and religious identity (Arnett, 2000; Milevsky & Leh, 2008). Emerging adults have rated independence from their parents as one of several important goals that they must accomplish in order to know they have reached adulthood (Morton & Markey, 2009). The need for independence may relate to achievement of religious identity. Emerging adults have reported that part of being adult means that they have reexamined their religious beliefs and worldviews based on their personal experience, and then have come to their own independent conclusions, or religious identity (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1959/1980, 1968; Marcia, 1966; Savage, 2009).
Needs for self-identity behind the spiritual maturation process in the emerging adult were examined in a longitudinal study, the 2004-2010 College Transition Project (Powell et al., 2011). They followed the spiritual maturation and commitment process of high school students in youth groups from 28 diverse churches through their attendance at a mix of public, private, and Christian colleges and vocational schools. The majority of participants were from intact families with 59% female and 41% male. Powell and her colleagues incorporated Marcia’s (1966) model of ego identity development (which built upon Erikson’s [1959/1980] psychosocial model) into their design and interpretation of findings. At one pole of the model is identity diffusion (Erikson, 1959/1980; Marcia, 1966) occurring when a student decided to avoid difficult religious questions or to make any religious commitment for some time, focusing instead on self-pleasing activities such as college parties (Powell et al., 2011). A second way of developing one’s identity was to foreclose, or refrain from exploring spiritual life options by prematurely choosing someone else’s commitments (Marcia, 1966), usually those of the parent (Powell et al., 2011), and thus avoid disapproval from one’s superiors. A third method of handling the need to determine one’s spiritual identity was that of moratorium (Marcia, 1966; Powell et al., 2011). A crisis may have forced the young adult toward some self-examination and diverse management of stress – yet commitment still was set aside and the person remained spiritually indecisive. Those students who dealt with crises of faith or religious doubts, explored options for meaning and identity, and then made a commitment to an ideal as suggested by Erikson (1959/1980), were assessed as having achieved the need for
their own spiritual identity, a milestone on the path to spiritual maturity (Powell et al., 2011).

Students who remained spiritually committed throughout the study reported behaviors that indicated that their involvement was the result of choices they made. Results indicated that one’s implicit spirituality and spiritual maturity correlated more strongly with sustained practice of one’s faith than did religious practices such as praying, going to church, or reading the Bible (Powell et al., 2011).

Other research focused on the spiritual needs of emerging adults. After interviewing over 27,000 emerging adults in 200 different research projects for over a decade, the Barna Group (2013b) reported that during the first decade of their adult life, 59% have left either their faith or the institutional church. About one-quarter of Christian millennials reported having attended church at least once monthly and affirmed that their religious faith was very important to them. The Barna Group also reported significant negative correlations between religiosity and risky behaviors. A similar negative correlation was noted between practice of one’s faith and participation in risky behaviors (Barry & Nelson, 2005) and sexual media use (Davies & Davis, 2013).

Biblical wisdom taught of how God seeks wandering children; those who are weary and disappointed with life were described as needing a caring God (Matthew 11:28). Jesus told of one lost sheep relentlessly tracked down by its shepherd (Luke 15:3-7). Each person, carefully crafted in God’s image and filled with God’s own breath, delights God and has purpose in being (Genesis 1:28, 2:7, 21-22, 15, 18). God enjoys
friendship with each one and does not want any to miss the kingdom of heaven (II Peter 3:9; Kreeft, 1989; Willard, 1997).

Erickson’s (1992) empirical findings supported the biblical wisdom, indicating that even while rebelling against family traditions, children retain a faith framework in their cognitive structure as they sense no equilibrium without religious roots. Additionally, researchers in one study (Morton & Markey, 2009) examining parent-college student dyads noticed an overall tendency for the parents’ ratings of religious and other life goals to positively correlate with the same goals in the student. If the parent could be able to contribute to the healthy exploration and development of a religious identity and mature spirituality in their emerging adult child, they might not be just helping their child’s overall well-being (Milevsky & Leh, 2008), but also their own relationship with the child and that of the child’s social network.

**Summary of Research Issues**

This research strove to discover what impact, if any, that parental factors as perceived by an emerging adult child have on that child’s spiritual maturity. Emerging adults, only recently studied as being in their own developmental stage, represent a sizeable portion of the American population and are a group in the midst of great life changes and decision-making. Identity exploration occurring within this age group seems to be common and normal, and often leads to deeper and more meaningful spiritual growth and relationship to others. Occurring simultaneously with identity growth but of significant concern are the increases in novel ideas and risky behaviors that correlate with
decreases in religious activities about 50% of the time, along with discouragement in
traditional views of God and the church. Given that psychological gains usually
accompany religious behavior and spiritual beliefs, Christian parents and leaders often
worry about how to assist their emerging adult family and friends without arousing
irritation or distrust on the part of the emerging adult. A summary of parent
characteristics implicated in child development follows.

Parent Factors Implicated in Religious/Spiritual Development

A limited number of empirical studies found for this research indicated that
certain parent factors help lead emerging adults into or out of their religious and spiritual
foundation. The likelihood of transmission of the parent’s Christian beliefs to their
emerging adult child were enhanced when there were meaningful practice of religion at
home, paternal moral supervision and decision-making, paternal education and hours
employed greater than that of maternal, strong family bonds, marital satisfaction,
Protestant beliefs, and a combination of high parent support with medium levels of parent
control. Parent variables that were implicated in decreased religiosity were being a
Catholic or a liberal or moderate Protestant, promoting greater intellectualism, a low
emphasis on religion at home, the mother working outside the home, and having a
divorce or step-family situation.

Parent Factors Implicated in Overall Child and Emerging Adult Maturity

Developmental theory and research have strongly supported various parental
qualities as critical components affecting child maturation in general. A summary of the
parent factors mentioned in this research which correlated with a decrease in the maturity
of the developing child could be generally organized into six categories. The first category could include the emphasis the parent placed on religion in the home (low emphasis on religion, rigid control of religion, or lack of practice of religion). The second category would include the peace-making style shown (high levels of parent/child discord, values conflicts, and unforgiveness by parents). Third, sincerity of beliefs was implicated in maturation (insincere and rigid religiosity, status-orientation, and materialistic concerns). Fourth, the parent’s emotional availability to the child was implicated (negativity or coolness shown; neglect, abuse, or abandonment; insecure attachment; conditional support; disrespect; ignoring child’s doubts; inflexibility when challenged; and invasiveness). Fifth, authority style was noted in several studies (rigid and authoritarian parenting styles, harsh discipline, disrespect while disciplining, and either low parent monitoring or intrusive vigilance). Finally, a greater orientation toward liberal religious and social beliefs appeared to negatively impact the child’s religious and spiritual activities (nontraditional marriage, gender, and employment roles, and divorce, remarriage, and/or stepfamilies).

The next section will give an overview of the issues facing this research. First, evidence of the relative lack of empirical study on the decline of religious and spiritual practice among emerging adults will be presented. Second, the utility of including perceived variables as variables of interest will be discussed.

**Gap in Research**

Problem behaviors and mental distress in the child and adolescent have been frequently studied and correlated with certain parent characteristics and behaviors
(Branje, van Doorn, van der Valk, & Meeus, 2009; Kazdin, 2005; Keijsers, Frijns, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Montgomery, Fisk, & Craig, 2008). Empirical studies have acknowledged the protective effects of spiritual maturity in children against development of problem behaviors, yet hindrances to and encouragers of the child’s spiritual maturation are infrequently studied by the scientific community (Leonard et al., 2013; Uecker et al., 2007). Similarly, current popular and theological literature (Kinnaman, 2011) has increasingly focused on millennials “leaving the church” but little has been published in peer-reviewed journals about how parental factors might affect the formation of the spiritual identity and maturity of their emerging adult child.

In an interesting survey of 481 Christian college alumni with an average age of 23, Leonard et al. (2013) examined several parental factors as perceived by emerging adult children, but only one factor was parent-focused – that of parent religiosity. The other three were relationship-focused (similarity to parents’ religious beliefs, parental supportiveness, and attachment style). Additionally, the exclusive sample, while culturally informative, did not allow for those who did not attend college to be interviewed; similarly, the sample did not include younger emerging adults. Leonard and her colleagues suggested that more research be carried out studying the religious development of the emerging adult with a view to the role in it that parents play.

More than anyone else, parents, aware of the powerful influence they have on their children, wonder if their way of being or something for which they themselves are responsible has either fostered religious doubt which pushed their child away from a practice of faith, or has possibly deepened the divide between past and present religious
involvement (Bisset, 1992, 1997; Seel, 2000). The Barna Group (2013b), Kinnaman (2011), and Powell and colleagues (2011) encouraged parents to inform themselves as well as possible about their millennial children so as to be able to best engage them spiritually and foster spiritual growth.

**Perceived Variables**

Aforementioned studies have found correlations between some parental attributes as perceived by the child and that child’s psychological maturity (e.g., Dekovic, 1999; Diamond et al., 2007; Keisling, 2011; Kim, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 1998, 1999; Lee et al., 2013; Steinberg, 2001; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011; Weis & Ash, 2009) and spiritual maturity (Hall et al., 1998; Noffke & Hall, 2007; Surr, 2011). It is assumed here that parent variables found to impact psychological maturity will also impact spiritual maturity, but to what extent is not known. Because this research is investigational and the model of emerging adulthood is still being verified, the most representative of parent variables and reliable measures assessing those variables were noted and retrieved from the literature reviewed for this study.

The predictor variables examined will assess certain psychosocial and spiritual parent characteristics and behaviors as perceived by the emerging adult child. Both of the domains of good parenting discussed in biblical wisdom, those of loving nurture and corrective discipline, are addressed in some way in these variables.

Perceptions of another person’s behavior have been reported to be valid. In his discussion of social interest, Adler (as cited in Gladding, 2009) taught that one’s perception, or fictions, of their past and current environment and their family qualities
more powerfully influences the development of one’s personality or lifestyle than the real events themselves did. In another case, researchers reported that in factor analyses of measurement of the child’s perception of a parent’s forgiveness, the first factor accounted for at least half of the variance and at least three times as much variance as the next factor (Maio et al., 2008). Similarly, what a child perceives of his or her parent was one of several factors highlighted in a literature review that affects emerging adults as they make the transition to adulthood (Barry et al., 2010). American sociologist William Thomas summed up that “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572). Thus, even though parents may demonstrate warmth and discipline as best they know, how those are perceived by the child are possibly stronger predictors of spiritual faith development.

**Research Questions**

Due to the limited study of how the parent might influence the spirituality of emerging adults, this research will begin with a baseline question assessing the spiritual maturity of emerging adults as a whole. The following questions will examine variables which have been implicated in children’s psychosocial development for their possible impact on the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity.

RQ1. Does extrinsic religiosity continuously practiced from adolescence into emerging adulthood impact the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity?
RQ2. What impact will the parent’s emphasis on religion in the home have on the continued identification with and/or practice of Christian beliefs from adolescence into emerging adulthood by the emerging adult child?

RQ3. Is the following entire set of parent characteristics reported by emerging adult children sufficiently informative to predict their self-reported spiritual maturity:
(a) overall emphasis by parents on religion in the home,
(b) perceived mother and/or father emotional availability,
(c) perceived mother and/or father authority style,
(d) perceived mother and/or father sincerity of spirituality, and
(e) perceived mother and/or father tendency toward forgiveness?

RQ4. Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child that is uniquely contributed by means of the overall emphasis by parents on religion in the home?

RQ5. Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child that is uniquely contributed by means of perceived mother and father emotional availability?

RQ6. Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child that is uniquely contributed by means of perceived mother and father authority style?

RQ7. Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child that is uniquely contributed by means of perceived mother and father sincerity of spirituality?

RQ8. Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child that is uniquely contributed by means of perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness?
Chapter Summary

Surveys have had results highlighting the decline among millennials, today’s emerging adults, to attend church and the increase in their profession of no or uncertain religious faith. As past studies have correlated a lack of spiritual maturity and developed religious identity among emerging adults with an increase in risky behaviors and mental health issues, church leaders and health professionals alike have become interested in this phenomenon. Although various researchers have noted that parents influence their child’s development and maturity in multiple ways, few empirical studies have assessed for the impact of parent characteristics upon the spiritual maturity of their emerging adult child. That, along with the current perplexing situation of many millennial adults less inclined to attend church, more research into possible causal factors may justifiably be undertaken. A research plan examining the possible contribution parents make to their child’s spiritual maturity will be presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this research was to discover the influence selected parental attributes might have on the spirituality maturity of their emerging adult children with the motive of providing parents and those who pastor or counsel them with wider knowledge about the child’s spiritual developmental needs. To accomplish the research goal, a non-experimental survey research method was used to assess the self-reported perceptions of the American emerging adult population, currently called the millennial generation. This chapter includes a discussion of the research design, the sample selected, instrumentation and how it was administered, research procedures and ethical considerations, followed by data processing and analysis.

Research Design

A non-experimental cross-sectional survey method research design was used via self-administered Internet questionnaires offered to emerging adults. Survey methods are appropriate when opinions of a certain population (in this case, emerging adults) are sought (Creswell, 2009). Using an online survey and cross-sectional data collection assisted in controlling many threats to validity (Kazdin, 2003). Some participants may have just experienced important personal historical events, but these were not elicited or controlled. The study proposed to discover potential parent characteristics which might influence the spiritual growth and maturation of their emerging adult child.
Selection of Participants

Sample Size for Statistical Power

To determine the sample size necessary for best overall significance, Warner (2008) recommended that for a multiple regression study with dimensions such as this one, the equation $N > 104 + k$ ($k =$ number of predictor variables) should be used. With the five predictor variables that this study has, results of a power analysis suggested that at least 110 participants should be sought in order to meet minimum standards for a statistical power of a moderate to large effect size, given that no assumptions be violated and that measurements have good reliability. Mertler and Vannatta (2010) recommended that a ratio of participants to predictor variables (i.e., $n/k$) be at least 15 to 1 to provide a reliable regression equation. Given the dimensions of this study and the results of a second power analysis, a minimum of 75 participants would be necessary. Because exclusion criteria allowed sampling of participants who did not ultimately qualify for inclusion in the study (e.g., emerging adults who were not raised in Christian homes and who have never practiced religion), a more conservative number allowing for at least 30 participants per predictor variable, or 200 up to 400 participants, were recruited.

Recruitment to Sample

Rationale. Because of literature reviewed for this research describing a wide decline in religious interest, it was anticipated that a sample of persons with declining religious and/or spiritual involvement may be fairly homogenously present in the larger American population, but may not be gathered in one group. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) strongly recommended that research must be aggressive in finding populations
and groups to study – to look outside the convenience samples found on college campuses. They promoted the use of Internet, contacting multicultural groups, and other proactive ways to enlist study participants.

**Approach.** For this study, several sampling approaches were utilized in order to gain sufficient respondents. A cluster, quota, and convenience sampling approach lasting one month drew participants from a nationwide population of English-speaking emerging adults (18- to 30-years-old). The reason for the wide-ranging sample was so that relevance and generality could be increased. The study was actually seeking 18- to 25-year-old participants, but allowed for those up to 30 years old to participate in order to be able to screen out those older than 25 who might take the survey anyway. Although the study of emerging adults having a Catholic or Protestant background was the goal, the study allowed volunteers of any faith or belief to respond in order to avoid participant expectancy effects. Recruitment was by word-of-mouth, emails, newsletters, and notices in at least two Protestant, two Catholic, and two secular college introductory psychology classes. Internet forums which sponsor conversations for those with religious and spiritual doubts were asked for permission to promote the opportunity to complete the survey. Information was given to friends to post on social media Web sites. Additionally, each of the churches with which the investigator collaborates was invited to contact the emerging adults in their congregation. The promotional flyer presented to these university and general settings may be seen in Appendix H.
Targeted Religious Background

This study is especially interested in providing helpful information to Christian parents of emerging adults who have shown declining interest in spiritual or religious topics after having been raised in a religious home and having identified as a Christian. Therefore, participants were asked to identify their religious background as part of the demographic information gained in order to better understand the impact of certain parent variables upon emerging adults’ decline in religious interest (Appendix I). Participants identified how religion was practiced in their childhood home, if they practiced Christian beliefs during high school, what their current practice of Christianity is, and what the level of their parent(s) religious conservatism is.

In order to insure that there were sufficient numbers of Catholics and Protestants represented, an extra number of participants was sought. Although those with Jewish faith represent a significant part of the religious and cultural history of the United States of America, Jewish participants were not specifically sought as literature examined thus far did not convey the level of concern over religious practice or beliefs among the Jewish community that is had among the evangelical Christian and Catholic populations (Van Ryn, 2007; Yoffie, 2013). It was expected, however, that Jewish persons would be among those responding from the general public to the survey. The demographic information is presented in Chapter Five in a table along with other findings.

Sampling Issues

Both probability cluster sampling and nonprobability convenience and quota sampling was employed, and required consideration of several concerns. In any
empirical study, there are concerns that the sample be representative of the population. Cluster sampling uses participants who already identify as part of that population (Jackson, 2009). The use of college students qualifies as cluster sampling because they represent the emerging adult population. Further, college students usually come from diverse geographic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, so it is less likely that certain groups were not be represented. Permission was sought from various university settings to sample their students (see Appendix J).

Additionally, convenience sampling (acquiring participants who fulfill selection criteria wherever they might be found) and quota sampling (ensuring that participants are like the population on certain aspects) was employed by means of a promotional flyer (the same as was distributed to university students, Appendix H). These outlets were the use of the author’s ministry newsletters; contacts with almost 20 churches known to the author (see request to access church members, Appendix K); the use of Internet forums and Web logs for those who are experiencing religious doubt, and other social media. It was hoped that through the use of quota and convenience sampling, the sample would represent the target group from both academic and non-academic settings.

Empirical research recommends controlling as many confounding variables as possible. There could be differences because of uncontrolled parent status (e.g., step-parents, older parents). However, the diverse parenting situations could bring greater external validity and applicability (Kazdin, 2003).
Selection biases due to the varied sampling procedure could have also affected findings. Varied demographic information was collected at the start of the survey; information such as ethnicity and education level was used as a control.

**Instrumentation**

A research questionnaire composed of 5 different inventories and containing 120 items total was administered to emerging adults (ages 18- to 30-years-old) in an online survey format. At the end of this online questionnaire, a computerized assessment collected demographic data (participant age, ethnicity, gender, educational status, marital status, past and current religious involvement status, marital status of parents, religious belief status of parents, and if parents are both living; see Appendix I) to insure that adequate representation of emerging adults had been gained and to inform subsequent study conclusions. The assessment was composed of inventories measuring predictor variables by means of five established instruments (see Appendices B, C, D, E, and F), all with good psychometric properties. The predictor variables were mother and father characteristics assessed in a parallel manner (as perceived by the emerging adult child) in all but one of the inventories. That one, the Religious Emphasis Scale (Hunsberger, 1999; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984; see Appendix F) assesses one unified parent variable as perceived by the emerging adult child. Research (e.g., Dekovic, 1999; Diamond et al., 2007; Keisling, 2011; Kim, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 1998, 1999; Lee et al., 2013; Steinberg, 2001; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011; Weis & Ash, 2009) and biblical wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7; Proverbs 4:1; 13:24; 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians
3:21; Hebrews 12:7-9; I Timothy 3:4-5) have implicated these predictor variables in child psychosocial maturity.

Instruments with demonstrated reliability were available to assess each variable. The dependent variable was a measure assessing spiritual maturity in the emerging adult (See Appendix G). It was possible that an instrumentation effect of having assessed the mother and the father in a parallel manner could have occurred. For this reason, first the mother, and then the father were assessed in the survey to help prevent confusion over who was being assessed. Pleck and Masciadrelli (2004) pointed out the importance that literature has shown of including fathers in assessments, as well as separately, as the father’s role and mother’s role affect children differently.

Shared source variance, that of the emerging adults rating both the predictor variables and the outcome variable, were seen as a possible confound to instrumentation. The perception of one’s parent, though, and not necessarily what the parent intended to communicate, was the construct to which the emerging adult responds in real life. It, too, was addressed in this study.

In order to help control for expectancy effects of the participants, the description of the study in the invitation was kept honest but general. Participants were not being recruited based on their religious beliefs, but only on the basis of their willingness to share them.

**Criterion Variable**

**Spiritual Assessment Inventory.** The spiritual maturity of the emerging adult participant was assessed using the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; Hall & Edwards,
1996, 2002; Hall et al., 1998; Hall, Reise, & Haviland, 2007), the criterion variable which may be seen in Appendix G. Using an integrated object relations and contemplative spirituality model, the SAI was developed to help clinicians, pastoral counselors, and researchers investigate the impact of stressors on relational maturity as seen in either or both psychological maturity and spiritual maturity (Hall, Edwards, & Hall, 2006). The complete SAI includes 54 self-report items scored on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 is “not at all true” and 5 is “very true.” Higher scores indicate more of the trait being measured. Spiritual maturity is measured based on two dimensions of one’s relationship with God. The first dimension, Awareness of God, assesses how well a person can be aware of God’s presence in his or her life. Sample items include: “I have a sense of how God is working in my life,” “I have a sense of the direction God is guiding me,” and “Listening to God is an essential part of my life.” The second, Quality of Relationship, is assessed by means of four subscales: Disappointment (D), Realistic Acceptance (RA), Instability (I), and Grandiosity (G). Every D subscale item is followed by an RA subscale item. For example, “There are times I feel irritated with God” (D) is followed by “When I feel this way, I am able to come to some sense of resolution in our relationship,” and “There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding to my prayers” (D) is followed by “When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God” (RA). The I subscale has items such as “I worry that I will be left out of God’s plans” and “When I sin, I tend to withdraw from God.” Subscale G included items such as “Manipulating God seems to be the best way to get what I want” and “I seem to be more gifted than most people in discerning God’s will.” An Impression Management
(IM) subscale was also added to assess a person’s test-taking attitude and overestimations of spiritual maturity; it may be used as a social desirability scale. Sample items are: “I am always in a worshipful mood when I go to church” and “I always seek God’s guidance for every decision I make.” In prior research, these subscales demonstrated good internal reliability (alpha scores between 0.73-0.95). Factor structure of the SAI and the homogeneity of the IM scale has been supported (Hall & Edwards, 2002).

**Predictor Variables**

Parent characteristics as perceived by the emerging adult child were assessed on the following five inventories. In order to clarify situations in which one biological parent lived in another home or had died, participants were asked to consider as parents the persons who most fulfilled the role of mother and father to them while growing up.

**Religious Emphasis Scale.** The Religious Emphasis Scale (RES; Altemeyer, 1988; Hunsberger, 1999; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984) is a 10-item scale (Appendix F) which measures the extent to which the child believes that one’s parents collectively emphasized religion in the home during one’s childhood. Responses to probes of emphasized behaviors are measured on a 6-point Likert scale with 0 indicating “no emphasis was placed on the behavior” to 5 “a very strong emphasis was placed on the behavior.” Several items were: “Going to church; attending religious services,” “Reviewing the teachings of the religion at home,” and “Praying before meals.” Two samples, one with 513 college students and another with 549 parents of the students, were used with the scale. Average inter-item correlation for the 10 items was .55, and the Cronbach’s α was .92. Data from students and parents on religious emphasis in the home
correlated .70 and .73 in the two studies. A relatively strong relationship between RES scores and the college students’ acceptance of that same religion (.48 to .53) was reported. The RES correlated in the expected direction with other measures of religion and authoritarianism.

**Lum Emotional Availability of Parents.** Given the many correlations between parental behaviors and children’s emotional and behavioral health, the Lum Emotional Availability of Parents 15-item measure (LEAP; Lum & Phares, 2005) was developed to assess availability of the mother and father’s individual support and attention to the child, as perceived by the emerging adult child (Appendix C). Responses are assessed on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Never to 6 = Always. Sample items include: “Consoled me when I was upset,” “Spent extra time with me just because she/he wanted to,” and “Pursued talking with me about my interests.” Four studies were used to develop the items, first in use with 18- to 25-year-old persons. Clinical samples correlated with lower parent emotional availability than did non-clinical samples. Reliability and validity were reported to be good. Internal consistency of the LEAP was computed for the total scale. Cronbach’s α computed to estimate reliability of the mother scale was .98, and for the father scale, .98. Analyses of order effects suggest that there were no differences when the mother scale was rated first and then fathers, or vice versa.

**Parental Authority Questionnaire.** The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991; Fischer & Corcoran, 2007) is a 30-item instrument designed to assess each parent’s authority or disciplinary practices from the viewpoint of any aged child (Appendix B). Its three subscales measure parental permissive, authoritarian, and
authoritative styles. Responses are assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = Strongly disagree” to “5 = Strongly agree”. Sample subscale items include: “While I was growing up my mother felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do” (permissive); “Even if her children didn’t agree with her, my mother felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what she thought was right” (authoritarian); and “My mother has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable” (authoritative). This inventory was first studied in four phases with primarily college students, but also with high school students. Internal consistency of the subscales was good with alphas ranging from .74 to .87. Two-week test-retest reliabilities ranged from .77 to .92 (Buri, 1991). Fairly good construct validity was demonstrated in the PAQ. Parental authoritarianism was strongly inversely correlated with authoritiveness, as well as with participant’s reported self-esteem. Authoritiveness was positively correlated with self-esteem; permissiveness was not correlated with self-esteem.

Parental Spirituality Scale. This 7-item scale (McDonald et al., 2005) measuring parental spirituality (4 items) and hypocrisy (3 items) in each parent was developed to assist in a study examining attachment styles and spirituality of parents, and that of the spiritual maturity of their adult child (Appendix E). Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with “1 = Strongly disagree,” and “5 = Strongly agree.” Sample items include: “My mother/father had a deep relationship with God” and “My mother’s/father’s behavior was consistent with her/his religious beliefs.” The measure
has a Cronbach $\alpha$ of .92 for spirituality and .80 for hypocrisy among mothers. Among fathers the alphas were .96 for spirituality and .85 for hypocrisy.

**Family Forgiveness Questionnaire: Child Perceptions of Father Forgiveness and Child Perceptions of Mother Forgiveness subscales.** Answered from the perspective of the child, this 4-item measure (Maio et al., 2008) assessed for the parent’s tendency to forgive the emerging adult child (Appendix D). On a 7-point scale which ranged from -3, strongly disagree, to +3, strongly agree, children will respond to the following items that will assess their perception of forgiveness from both their father and mother: “He easily forgives me,” “He holds a grudge against me,” “She sees me as positively as she did before,” and “She sees me more negatively than she did before.” In constructing this test, the dimensionality of one family member rating another member’s tendency to forgive was evaluated by means of factor analysis. Factor loadings for all items was greater than |.50|, with most greater than |.60|. Scale reliability was greater than .73 for all dyads. Test-retest correlations over a one year period were strong and significant ($r_s > .54$, $p_s < .001$). The stability of the child perceptions of father forgiveness was somewhat lower than the rest ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). For the sake of brevity, this scale is called the Parent Forgives Child scale when the study results are reported.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

Standard multiple regression, the entering of data simultaneously into a model, is recommended to analyze data in the case that not enough is yet known from research which might prioritize a stepwise, or hierarchical, entering of data (Mertler & Vannatta,
2010; Warner, 2008). Multiple regression contains two sets of assumptions (Mertler & Vannetta, 2010). First, assumptions about the raw scale variables say that the predictor variables must be fixed, measured without error, and having a linear relationship between the predictor variables and the outcome variable.

Second, there are assumptions about residuals, or portions of scores left unaccounted for after the analysis. The most important of these assumptions deal with linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality.

Next, it was assumed that the overall parental climate in the home is what emerging adults feel or have felt while growing up. Therefore, the scores for the four inventories which measure mothers and fathers separately was averaged. An average of each child’s reported scores for their father and mother was obtained and treated equally as with those of children from single-parent homes since this was the overall climate for that person.

Based on the aforementioned empirical studies of parent characteristics implicated behind the child biopsychosocial maturation, it was assumed that the set of parent variables chosen here adequately and parsimoniously represented important parent variables which may be associated with the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity. The use of multiple regression statistical analysis addressed the need to discern and uncover both the overall contribution of the perceived parent variables, as well as to allow for the effect of each separate variable on emerging adults’ spiritual maturity to be described.
Internal validity could possibly have been affected by statistical regression not becoming evident owing to the one-time survey. To counteract this possibility, a wide sample was recruited to help assure obtaining a more balanced set of results.

Finally, it may have been difficult for some participants to assess some past perceived parental characteristics and behaviors. To facilitate their responses, participants were encouraged to remember themselves, their parents, and their home as they were when they were 16 years of age and to respond from that point of view.

Research Procedures

Preliminary Processes

Permission to use and reproduce selected instruments was sought and gained from those who held copyrights. After the research proposal was approved by dissertation committee members and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), permission was sought from multiple universities each representing different religious foci (i.e., evangelical Christian, Catholic, secular) to invite any of their students to participate for course credit (see Appendices I and J). Additionally, church and religious leaders known to the investigator were approached for permission to inform church members and their friends of the opportunity to participate. The promotional flyer (see Appendix H) was distributed in various other locations, such as a newsletter to friends and coworkers, internet websites with ongoing discussions about religious doubt and atheism, and social media. This flyer did not specifically recruit emerging adults of 18- to 25-years-old, but recruited more generally from young adults 18- to 30-years-old. Once the participant entered the
survey, demographics gave the chance to mark one’s age from 18- to 30-years-old. The reason for this wider range than was necessary was to take into account the possibility that some participants would lie about their age, thus increasing the possibility of invalid findings. Data analysis only included 18- to 25-year-old participants. These instruments were then loaded into an online survey tool and offered for four weeks so that data could be collected.

Subsequent Processes

The link to the online survey was posted in various other locations, such as a newsletter to friends and co-workers, on Web logs dealing with the topic of religion among emerging adults, and in social media. The start and end date for access to the link was given. Data was collected and analyzed. A summary of results are to be mailed to participants who requested them as soon as the researcher gains final approval of the analysis and findings.

Ethical Considerations

Overview. In line with ethics guidelines, the rights of participants were protected, the researcher assumed responsibility for research safety, multicultural and diverse populations were taken into account, and data collected has been securely kept (AACC, 2004, ES2-400; ACA, 2014, Section G; Reinhardt, 2013). Although participation was encouraged through incentives and offering academic course credit, it was not coerced; no one was penalized for refusal to participate (Cone & Foster, 2006). All research procedures and questionnaires were IRB-approved. Feedback from the IRB was used to alter procedures appropriately. After the survey became active, some
participants experienced difficulty in answering demographic questions about parents – the IRB was contacted and permission gained to make slight changes so that in subsequent surveys, participants would not become distressed (see Appendix I, Revised Questions 11 and 12). This information, however, was not considered in analysis due to incongruent questions.

**Informed consent.** The recruitment to the study was carried out so as to avoid personal contact between the researcher and participant, keeping experimenter expectancies from affecting participants. Recruitment took place by means of general invitation through various media. Although knowledge about the general nature of the study was kept vague in order to minimize influence on the participant’s responses, descriptions in media were accurate. Those who wished to participate were given a link to access the survey. Upon entering the web site for the survey, they were first given an online informed consent (see Appendix A) to read with a box to check that they had understood the risks and directions for participation before continuing with the study. Each participant was automatically given a code number to assist in anonymity. The consent form discussed the online survey format to be used to interview participants. No parent consent was necessary because minors were screened out of the study.

**Confidentiality.** The recruitment process (as described above) was exclusively through indirect means so as to maintain the participant’s anonymity. If a participant wished to be included in the offer for compensation or to learn of the final results of the data analysis, he or she was to complete a blank line with an address to receive this information. All participants were debriefed at the end of the survey with a description of
the research purpose (see Appendix L). In answer to the concerns expressed in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA; Reinhardt, 2013), any electronic data collected was stored either in the researcher’s or data analyst’s computers with folder-level data encryption so that confidentiality would not be compromised. Finally, confidentiality received protection due to the study’s online format and use of a survey tool with anonymity guaranteed by means of codes. The letter from Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board which approved this research may be seen in Appendix M.

**Possible benefits and risks.** Possible benefits (such as provoking healthy self-examination) or harm that could result (such as causing distress over one’s poor relationship with parents) was mentioned in the informed consent (see Appendix A). The freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty was outlined. The researcher’s email and university ethics committee information was given so that further contact might be made if necessary to discuss any negative consequences following the survey.

**Specific instructions.** Participants were told that the researcher was examining characteristics and religious beliefs of these young adults and their parents, that there were no “right or wrong” answers to the survey questions, and that they should respond as honestly as possible. Participants were also reminded of how important it was to respond to all items. To assist their memory of perceived parent attributes from the past, participants were encouraged to remember their perceptions of themselves, their parents, and their situation at age 16. They were to consider as their parents the man and woman
in the home who were most responsible for their upbringing. Participants were instructed that some measures would ask that each parent be assessed individually; one measure considered parents as a unit (see Appendix F).

**Incentives.** As an incentive to participate, study participants were told that every twentieth person to finish the survey would be mailed a gift card. Also, students in college classes would be given course credit for participation if their university or teacher were agreeable.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Three basic research questions were asked in this study in order to explore the impact parent variables as perceived by the child might have on the adult child’s maintenance of identification with Christian beliefs and development of spiritual maturity. The first asked if continuing identification and practice of beliefs from high school forward could predict spiritual maturity in the emerging adult. The second compared the religious emphasis parents gave in the home with the continuance of extrinsic religiosity by the emerging adult. The third research focus dealt with parent attributes (perceived by the emerging adult child) and their ability to predict spiritual maturity (as described by two dimensions and assessed by four subscales of the SAI [Hall & Edwards, 2002]).

**Question One**

How does extrinsic religiosity continuously practiced from adolescence into emerging adulthood relate to one’s scores on a spiritual maturity inventory?
**Null Hypothesis One:** There will be no significant difference in the scores of spiritual maturity attained by those who continued extrinsic religiosity from adolescence into emerging adulthood and those emerging adults who discontinued extrinsic religiosity after high school.

**Alternative Hypothesis One:** Those continuing extrinsic religiosity from adolescence into emerging adulthood will receive significantly different scores on a spiritual maturity inventory than those who discontinued their extrinsic religiosity after high school.

**Question Two**

Does the religious emphasis parents set in the home predict continuance of identification with or practice of Christian beliefs by the emerging adult child?

**Null Hypothesis Two:** The parents’ religious emphasis in the home does not predict the continuance of identification with or practice of Christian beliefs by the emerging adult child.

**Alternative Hypothesis Two:** The parents’ religious emphasis in the home does predict the continuance of identification with or practice of Christian beliefs by the emerging adult child.

**Question Three**

Is the following entire set of parent characteristics reported by emerging adult children sufficiently informative to predict their self-reported spiritual maturity:

(a) overall emphasis by parents on religion in the home,

(b) perceived mother and father emotional availability,
(c) perceived mother and father authority style,
(d) perceived mother and father sincerity of spirituality, and
(e) perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness?

Null Hypothesis Three: The entire set of parent characteristics reported by emerging adult children is not sufficiently informative to predict their self-reported spiritual maturity.

Alternative Hypothesis Three: The entire set of parent characteristics reported by emerging adult children is sufficiently informative to predict their self-reported spiritual maturity.

Question Four

Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child uniquely contributed by means of parents’ overall emphasis on religion in the home?

Null Hypothesis Four: There is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of parents’ overall emphasis on religion in the home.

Alternative Hypothesis Four: There is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of the overall emphasis by parents on religion in the home.

Question Five

Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father emotional availability?

Null Hypothesis Five: There is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father emotional availability.
**Alternative Hypothesis Five:** There is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father emotional availability.

**Question Six**

Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father authority style?

**Null Hypothesis Six:** There is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father authority style.

**Alternative Hypothesis Six:** There is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father authority style.

**Question Seven**

Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child uniquely contributed by means of perceived mother and father sincerity of spirituality?

**Null Hypothesis Seven:** There is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father sincerity of spirituality.

**Alternative Hypothesis Seven:** There is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father sincerity of spirituality.

**Question Eight**

Is there variance in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness?
Null Hypothesis Eight: There is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness.

Alternative Hypothesis Eight: There is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness.

Data Processing and Analysis

Justification for Analysis Method

All research questions were addressed by means of descriptive statistics and a test of the null hypothesis. Research questions one and two, being comparisons of group means, were also addressed using independent samples \( t \) tests. Warner (2008) affirmed the use of this \( t \) test when comparing mean scores between two groups on a quantitative outcome variable. Following the initial analyses, research questions three through eight were analyzed by means of standard multiple regression and its default correlations. Hood and Belzen (2013) noted that the correlational research method is adequate for the study of religious constructs such as authoritarianism and dogmatism. Standard multiple regression, the entering of data simultaneously into a model, is recommended to analyze data in the case that not enough is yet known from research which might prioritize a stepwise, or hierarchical, entering of data (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010).

Although the correlational method as a non-experimental design is limited in inference, as well as being open to interpretation (Kazdin, 2003; Warner, 2008), it does
permit the study of populations other than academic ones. The variety of data obtained for this study assisted in designing suggestions to parents about how they might better encourage spiritual maturity, and thus continued religious practice, in their children.

**Conducting Standard Multiple Regression**

Analyzing data with advanced correlational techniques required that certain steps be followed (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). Following the administration of the survey, obtained data from the identified sample (18- to 25-year-old participants who had all practiced Christian beliefs in high school) was screened for violations of assumptions, missing data, multivariate outliers, linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity. Warner (2008) specifically recommended that histograms be used to examine the shape of the distribution of the scores and note outliers, possibly removing extreme outliers. Scatterplots were obtained for quantitative variables and showed linearity between them. Bivariate outliers were noted. Tables of comparisons were examined to note any residuals.

Following preliminary screening, a standard multiple regression with simultaneously entered predictor variables (the parent characteristics) was used for data analysis so that contribution by each predictive variable to the dependent variable (spiritual maturity of the emerging adult) could be assessed while controlling for other predictors. This entry method was especially useful because there was little previous research of a quantitative nature to help rank the entering of variables. Analyses were then performed on each scale as dictated by the hypotheses in order to understand the relationship between each individual parent variable (as perceived by the child) and the
SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) subscales. To limit the chance of a Type I error while analyzing the independent samples \( t \) test, a Bonferroni correction was performed; the stricter \( p < .0125 \) significance level was used. The analyses performed between each individual predictor scale and the SAI was set at \( p < .05 \).

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the design, procedures, and analysis plan that would fulfill the purpose of this investigation. The study was designed to add to the knowledge about perceived parenting styles and skills which might influence the spiritual maturity of emerging adult children. Participants were emerging adults chosen from both university and non-university settings. The research questions were answered using findings from the analysis of scores from demographics, five inventories of parent characteristics, and one inventory of spiritual assessment.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study proposed to investigate the impact of certain parent factors (as perceived by their emerging adult child) on the spiritual maturity self-reported by that child. This research aims to add to current knowledge about possible risk factors behind a young adult child’s decision to discontinue their faith practices. Potential parent attributes, or predictor variables, were identified from scholarly and biblical sources. A survey comprised of five inventories assessing those selected parent attributes, demographic items inquiring about the respondent and respondent’s parents as well as assessing past and current religious practices, and one inventory assessing spiritual maturity was administered via an online survey program to emerging adults throughout the United States of America.

Three questions were posed in order to give direction toward fulfillment of the study purpose. First, how does the emerging adult’s continuance of childhood religious beliefs after high school relate to his or her spiritual maturity? The second and original question asked how parents’ religious beliefs impact their child’s spiritual maturity. Difficulties encountered during analysis due to the wording of this second question necessitated its slight reformation. It was changed to explore the impact that the religious emphasis parents had as a standard for their home might have on their child’s choice to
continue extrinsic religiosity after high school. Third, how might parent variables affect the spiritual maturity of their emerging adult child?

After initial data screening and assurance of having met assumptions for the statistics were accomplished, descriptive statistics, independent samples t tests, and multiple regression were used to address the research questions. Means of the spiritual maturity inventory scores of those who identified as a Christian in high school and still do were compared with those who identified as a Christian in high school but no longer do. Means of an inventory measuring the overall religiosity promoted in the home by parents were compared with means of the scores of those who did or did not continue practice of their beliefs into emerging adulthood. Means of the scores of inventories of parent variables perceived by those emerging adults were analyzed together with the means of an inventory of spiritual maturity self-reported by the emerging adults. The ability of parent variables to predict the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity is noted.

Sample Data

The demographic characteristics of the sample population are shown in Table 4.1. At the time of analysis, a total of 988 persons between the self-reported ages of 18- to 30-years-old had responded; 617 completed the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Of those, 266 met criteria for inclusion in the study focus (18- to 25-years-old, and having identified with and/or practiced Christian beliefs during high school). The sample of interest was widely represented by years of age as 18 (10.9%), 19 (12%), 20 (16.2%), 21 (16.5%), 22 (8.3%), 23 (12%), 24 (13.2%), and 25 (10.9%).
Of the marital status, 240 persons (90.2%) were single/never married, 24 (9%) were married only once, 1 (.4%) was divorced, and 1 person not reporting (.4%) for a total of 266 (100%). Ethnicities included White (240, 90.2%), Hispanic-Latino (7, 2.6%), African-American (5, 1.9%), other (13, 4.9%) and 1 missing response (1, .4%), for a total of 266, or 100%. Respondents’ levels of education were reported to be high. Only 76 (28%) had just attained high school; the majority had attained college or university, 165 (62%); graduate, 21 (7.9%), and post-graduate 4 (1.5%), for a total of 266 (100%). More females responded (174, or 65.4%), and 91 males (34.2%), with 1 (.4%) person not responding.

There were 266 persons who reported that they had identified with and/or practiced Christian beliefs in high school. Of those, 146 (54.9%) still do identify with and/or practice Christian beliefs. Others reported that they no longer identified with and/or practiced Christian beliefs, 119 (44.7%), and one person did not respond (.4%). Of the 266 respondents, 146 (54.9%) agreed that they had been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, 111 (41.7%) persons disagreed with that statement, and 9 (3.4) persons were unsure.
Table 4.1

Sample of US Emerging Adults Who Espoused Christian Beliefs in High School
N = 266

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>99.6 %</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.4 %</td>
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100 %
Preliminary Analyses

Assumptions and Screening

Before data was analyzed, it was checked for violations of assumptions, missing data, multivariate outliers, linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity. No assumptions were violated. Missing data was noted and accounted for in the analysis. No tolerance criteria were violated. A reasonably wide range of scores was evident on the outcome variable, the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002).

The age group of interest to this assessment was that of 18- to 25-years-old. In the promotional literature and survey itself, the age range was listed as 18- to 30-years-old so as to help prevent the inclusion of persons aged 26 and older who might hear of the survey, take it, and thus threaten construct validity. Indeed, comments made post-survey
by respondents on internet sites where the study was promoted indicated this lying about one’s age occurred. Likewise, the number of respondents who were “30 years old” was several times higher than any of the other ages.

A noteworthy finding, likely due to the intentional cluster sampling which identified and recruited from both extremes of the population, was that in the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002), the Likert scale point 1 was extremely modal. This answer was “Not at all true,” which coupled together with comments on web sites and emails to the researcher, indicated that many atheists and agnostics found nothing relevant on the SAI scale to answer. Around 20-25 participants wrote the researcher expressing their frustration with not having a “Not Applicable” response to check. They were forced to select point 1, a fact which made the otherwise normal distribution bimodal due to the agnostics and atheists in the sample.

Two SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) subscales, Grandiosity and Impression Management, contained no interpretable information for this study. Therefore, those two subscales were not included in the regression analysis.

One final note is that although four of the five predictor variable inventories assessed the mother and the father separately, the mother/father answer on each item on those four were averaged together. This was done so as to arrive at the overall effect that the emerging adult child remembered from growing up years.
Analysis

Group statistics were obtained to compare the means of responses to the items assessing perceived parent variables on the outcome variable, or SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Respondents who currently practice Christian beliefs reported that they experienced more Realistic Acceptance ($N = 141, M = 4.02, SD = .876$) and an Awareness of God ($N = 139, M = 3.61, SD = .854$) – these were moderately to substantially true for them. The same continuing practicants reported that instability of relationship ($N = 140, M = 2.03, SD = .716$) and disappointment with God ($N = 143, M = 2.43, SD = .915$) were not as common for them. Those who did not identify with or practice Christian beliefs during high school reported that Realistic Acceptance and Awareness of God was not at all or only slightly true for them.

Research Question One

An independent samples $t$ test was conducted to determine whether mean scores on two dimensions of the spiritual maturity inventory (the Awareness of God dimension/scale, and three scales in the Quality of Relationship dimension) differed significantly for one group of participants who identified with and practiced Christian beliefs from adolescence into emerging adulthood compared with a group of participants who did not continue that practice. For those who continued practicing or identifying with their Christian beliefs, mean scores on four scales ranged from 2.03 (Instability) to 2.43 (Disappointment) to 3.61 (Awareness of God) to 4.02 (Realistic Acceptance). Nonvariance of mean scores resulted from those persons who did not continue identifying
or practicing Christian beliefs: 1.05 (Awareness of God and Realistic Acceptance) to 1.15 (Instabiliy) to 1.37 (Disappointment).

**Awareness of God dimension and subscale.** Of the 266 participants who met study criteria, 255 completed data for the Awareness of God dimension of spiritual development. Of these, N = 139 had continued practicing their beliefs, N = 116 had not. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = 144.885, p = .001$; this indicated no significant violation of the equal variance assumption. The mean scores on the Awareness of God dimension differed significantly, $t(253) = 31.837, p = .001$ two-tailed. The mean score on Awareness of God ($M = 3.61, SD = .85$) for the continued practice group was greater than the discontinued practice group ($M = 1.05, SD = .15$). The effect size, as indexed by $n^2$, was .80; this is a large effect. The 95% CI for the difference between sample means $M^1 - M^2$, had a lower bound of 2.40 and an upper bound of 2.71. This analysis suggests that continuing an identification with and practice of Christian beliefs may significantly predict that one will have a moderate or substantial sense of God’s presence, as well as his working in them and responding to them. Those who do not continue practicing or identifying with Christian beliefs will likely report a point 1 (not at all true) on the spiritual maturity inventory subscale – Awareness of God.

**Quality of Relationship dimension.**

**Instability.** Of the 266 participants meeting study criteria, 255 completed data for the Instability subscale under the Quality of Relationship (QOR) dimension. Of these, N = 140 had continued practicing their beliefs, N = 115 had not. The assumption of
homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = 40.546, p = .001$; this indicated no significant violation of the equal variance assumption. The mean Instability subscales differed significantly, $t(253) = 11.16, p = .001$ two-tailed. Mean score on Instability ($M = 2.03, SD = .72$) for the continued practice group was greater than the not continued practice group ($M = 1.15, SD = .50$). The effect size, as indexed by $n^2$, was .33; this is a large effect. The 95% CI for the difference between sample means $M^1 - M^2$, had a lower bound of .726 and an upper bound of 1.04. This analysis suggests that experiencing instability in one’s practice of Christian beliefs would be slightly true. Those who discontinue practicing or identifying with Christian beliefs will likely report instability in a relationship with God to be not at all true.

**Disappointment.** Of the 266 participants who met study criteria, 259 completed data for the Disappointment subscale of the QOR dimension. Of these, 143 had continued practicing their beliefs, 116 had not. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = 2.61, p = .001$; this indicated no significant violation of the equal variance assumption. The mean Disappointment subscales differed significantly, $t(257) = 8.99, p = .001$ two-tailed. Mean score on Disappointment ($M = 2.43, SD = .915$) for the continued practice group was greater than the discontinued practice group ($M = 1.37, SD = .99$). The effect size, as indexed by $n^2$, was .24; this is a meaningful effect size. The 95% CI for the difference between sample means $M^1 - M^2$, had a lower bound of .83 and an upper bound of 1.30. This analysis suggests that continuing an identification with and practice of Christian beliefs may significantly predict that Disappointment with God would be slightly or moderately true. To not
continue practicing or identifying with Christian beliefs significantly predicts that Disappointment with God will not be experienced.

**Realistic acceptance.** Of the 266 participants meeting study criteria, 257 completed data for the Realistic Acceptance subscale under the QOR dimension of spiritual development. Of these, N = 141 had continued practicing their beliefs, N = 116 had not. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = 152.31, p = .001$; this indicated no significant violation of the equal variance assumption. The mean scores on the Realistic Acceptance subscale differed significantly, $t(255) = 35.94, p = .001$, two-tailed. The mean score ($M = 4.02, SD = .876$) for the continued practice group was greater than the discontinued practice group ($M = 1.05, SD = .177$). The effect size, as indexed by $n^2$, was .84; this is a large effect. The 95% CI for the difference between sample means $M_1 - M_2$, had a lower bound of 2.81 and an upper bound of 3.14. This analysis suggests that continuing an identification with and practice of Christian beliefs may significantly predict that having a realistic acceptance as a quality in their relationship with God is moderately true or substantially true. To not continue practicing or identifying with Christian beliefs significantly predicts that Realistic Acceptance is not true of one’s relationship with God.

The null hypothesis for research question one stated that there would be no significant difference in the scores of spiritual maturity attained by those who continued extrinsic religiosity from adolescence into emerging adulthood and those emerging adults who discontinued extrinsic religiosity after high school. Analysis for this question had findings suggesting that there was a significant difference in both dimensions (all four
subscales) in spiritual maturity for those who continued their religious practices from adolescence into adulthood. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis for question one is accepted. In other words, a person who keeps going to church activities and reading his or her Bible after high school will likely develop more awareness of God and comfortable relationship with him during emerging adulthood than a person who did not maintain such outward identity and habits. External practice likely translates to intrinsic development.

**Research Question Two**

As part of the assessment of the effect of the parents’ overall religious beliefs on their emerging adult children, one demographic question was asked to respondents concerning the level of their parents’ religious conservatism as a unit. Four defined options (Arnett & Jenson, 2002) were given. This question, however, was found to be insufficient for this study’s purpose as it did not account for differing religious emphases on the part of the father and mother. Rather, parents were measured as if they had one level between them. A number of participants contacted the researcher expressing their inability to accurately rate each parent. The researcher notified the university Institutional Review Board, and, following their approval, the item was reformulated to allow for the emerging adult to assess the mother and father separately in subsequent ongoing data collection. Data from the new item was not used in this data collection, however, due to its incongruence with the first. The reformulated research question then compared the parents’ religious emphasis in the home (RES) with the continuance of faith by the emerging adult child after high school.
An independent samples $t$ test was conducted to assess whether the level of religiosity shown by parents in the childhood home (as measured by the RES) differed significantly for a group of 146 participants who maintained their Christian beliefs and practices compared with a group of 117 participants who did not keep their beliefs and practices into emerging adulthood. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = 7.1, p = .008$; this indicated no significant violation of the equal variance assumption. The mean level of religious emphasis characterized by parents differed significantly, $t(261) = 5.27, p = .001$, two-tailed. Mean religious emphasis for the group continuing Christian practices ($M = 4.2, SD = 1.0$) was almost a full point higher (indicating a strong to very strong emphasis) than for the group who discontinued their practices and identification with Christian beliefs ($M = 3.5, SD = 1.2$), a moderate to strong emphasis. The effect size, as indexed by $n^2$, was .09; this is a medium effect size. The 95% CI for the difference between sample means, $M_1 - M_2$, had a lower bound of .44 and an upper bound of .97.

Research question two assessed the impact that the religious emphasis parents set in the home has on continuance of identification with or practice of Christian beliefs by the emerging adult child. The null hypothesis stated that the parents’ religious emphasis in the home would not impact the continuance of identification with or practice of Christian beliefs by the emerging adult child. Findings from the analysis suggested the opposite – a medium effect size was found in the significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis two is accepted. This study suggests that the parents’ level of emphasis on religious behaviors in the home may significantly
increase or decrease the rate of persons continuing their identification and practice of Christian beliefs.

**Research Questions Three through Eight**

Research questions three, which inquired about the ability of the entire set of parent predictor variables to predict the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) scores on four subscales, is handled in tandem with questions four, five, six, seven, and eight which considered those same predictors one at a time to understand their individual contribution to the model. The following paragraphs will discuss the predictor variables in question as they relate to the four outcome subscales (Awareness of God, Instability, Disappointment, and Realistic Acceptance).

Standard multiple regression and its default analyses were conducted to determine the accuracy of the independent variables (Religious Emphasis, Parent Spirituality, Emotional Availability of the Parent, Parent Authority Style, and Parent Forgives Child) predicting self-reported spiritual maturity (as measured on the SAI [Hall & Edwards, 2002] subscales Awareness of God, Instability, Disappointment, and Realistic Acceptance;) in the emerging adult. Related analyses with significant findings are also reported for each subscale.

**Awareness of God.** Regression results indicate that the overall model of the entire set of parent predictor variables significantly predicts the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) dimension scale Awareness of God, $R^2 = .145$, $R_{adj}^2 = .113$, $F(8, 219) = 4.632$, $p < .001$. This model accounted for 14.5% of variance on the SAI dimension and subscale, Awareness of God. A summary of regression coefficients (Table 4.2) indicates that two
predictors, Religious Emphasis and Authoritarian parent style, accounted for most of the variance of the overall model. Examining the zero order correlation table (Table 4.3), the relationship between Authoritarian parent style and Awareness of God did not quite reach significance. All other predictor variables did show significant zero order correlations, however. Three parent variables were significantly correlated at the \( p < .001 \) level with Awareness of God: Religious Emphasis, Emotional Availability, and Spirituality-1 (sincerity). Parent Forgives Child was significantly related with Awareness at the \( p < .01 \) level. Spirituality-2 (hypocrisy) and Permissive style were negatively correlated with Awareness at the \( p < .05 \) level. Authoritative style was significantly and positively related to Awareness at the \( p < .05 \) level. Partial correlations (Table 4.4) allowed for the unique relationship between the predictor and outcome variable to be assessed while controlling for other predictors. Religious Emphasis (\( pr = .17 \)) was somewhat predictive but not as strong as the zero order correlation (\( r = .29 \)), suggesting some redundancy with other predictors in the zero order correlation. Authoritarian style was again interesting in its contrasting scores (see above) – its partial correlation was as strongly predictive of Awareness of God (\( pr = .18 \)) as Religious Emphasis.

**Instability.** Regression results indicate that the overall model significantly predicts QOR subscale Instability, \( R^2 = .089, R^2_{adj} = .056, F(8, 219) = 2.670, p < .05, \) accounting for 8.9% of variance in emerging adult spiritual maturity. A summary of regression coefficients is presented in Table 4.2 and indicates that four of the predictors or their subscales significantly contributed at the \( p < .05 \) level to the model: Religious Emphasis, Spirituality-2 (insincerity), and Authoritarian and Authoritative parent styles.
Authoritarian was the only variable significant at the $p < .01$ level on the zero order correlation with Instability (Table 4.3). Religious Emphasis and Spirituality-2 (insincerity) positively correlated, and Parent Forgives Child negatively correlated with Instability at the $p < .05$ level of significance. Partial correlations analysis suggested that Religious Emphasis, Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Spirituality-2 (insincerity) with very similar partial $r$s accounted for greater unique variance than the other predictors, although none were large shares.

**Disappointment.** The parent variables significantly predicted QOR subscale Disappointment, $R^2 = .092$, $R^2_{adj} = .060$, $F(8, 223) = 2.839$, $p < .05$, accounting for 9.2% of variance in emerging adult spiritual maturity. A summary of regression coefficients is presented in Table 4.2 and indicates that three of the predictors or their subscales significantly contributed to the model: religious emphasis in the home, parental inconsistency of spirituality, and an authoritative parent style. Zero order correlations (Table 4.3) indicated that Religious Emphasis was most significantly correlated with Disappointment ($p < .01$). Permissive and Authoritarian styles as well as Spirituality-2 (insincerity) were significant at the $p < .05$ level. On the partial correlation table (Table 4.4) the parent variables Religious Emphasis and Spirituality-2 (insincerity) each gave more unique variance to Disappointment while controlling for all other variables ($pr = .165$, $pr = .175$, respectively). Authoritative was assessed as contributing, but less ($pr = .137$).

**Realistic Acceptance.** The parent variables significantly predicted SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) subscale Realistic Acceptance, $R^2 = .164$, $R^2_{adj} = .134$, $F(8, 221) = 5.423$,.
$p < .001$, accounting for 16.4% of variance in emerging adult spiritual maturity. A summary of regression coefficients is presented in Table 4.2 and indicates that two variables, Religious Emphasis and Authoritarian parent style, significantly contributed to the model. Zero order correlations (Table 4.3) noted that just as with correlations with Awareness of God, all predictors but Authoritarian showed significant findings with Realistic Acceptance. Four were at the $p < .001$ level: Religious Emphasis, Emotional Availability, Authoritative, and Spirituality-1 (sincerity). Two were significant at the $p < .01$: Permissive, and Parent Forgives Child. One, Spirituality-2 (insincerity) showed significance at the $p < .05$ level. Partial correlations suggested that Religious Emphasis, Authoritarian, and Authoritative contained the most unique information of all the predictors.

Patterns of influence on the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity emerged by means of the regression analyses. The parent variables altogether accounted for half (49%) of the variance in this model. The emphasis given religion in the childhood home was a significant factor behind all four subscales of the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) used for this study (the Awareness of God dimension/subscale and Quality of Relationship dimension with its three subscales: Realistic Acceptance, Instability, and Disappointment). An authoritarian style of parenting contributed significantly to all three SAI-QOR subscales. Hypocritical practice of a parent’s spirituality predicted Instability and Disappointment in the emerging adult. Likewise, an authoritative parent style contributed to Instability and Disappointment in the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity. Assimilating all the regression analyses, it appears that significant relationships do exist
between parent variables and the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity. Given the smaller size of the partial rs, the many significant scores of the zero order correlations must be cautiously interpreted. That reliable results can be gotten time and again, however, as statistical significance implies, does give credence to these findings.

(Comments on Null Hypotheses follow graphs.)

Table 4.2

| Unstandardized Coefficients for Regression Models Predicting SAI Subscales |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variable                        | Awareness (β)   | Instability (β)| Disappointment (β) | Realistic Acceptance (β) |
| Religious Emphasis             | .365 **         | .160 *          | .270 *           | .419 **          |
| Emotional Availability          | .151            | .049            | .024            | .122            |
| PAQ - Permissive                | .001            | -.001           | -.009           | -.002           |
| PAQ - Authoritarian             | .044 **         | .018 *          | .020            | .051 **          |
| PAQ - Authoritative             | .028            | .022 *          | .031 *          | .039            |
| Parent Spirituality 1           | -.126           | -.121           | -.182           | -.129           |
| Parent Spirituality 2           | .123            | .262 *          | .460 **         | .071            |
| Parent Forgives Child           | .108            | -.082           | -.006           | .142            |

Note: N = 228 for AOG, 228 for INS, 232 for DIS, 230 for RA.

* p < .05  ** p < .01
Assessing null hypotheses. In light of the preceding results which suggest in various ways the predictive ability of the five parent variables, the null hypotheses may be examined. The null hypothesis three stated that there is no variance contributed by the

Table 4.3

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<th>Instability</th>
<th>Disappointment</th>
<th>Realistic Acceptance</th>
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<td>PAQ-Permissive</td>
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<td>-0.15 **</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAQ-Authoritarian</td>
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<td>0.15 **</td>
<td>0.11 *</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<td>Parent Spirituality-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Forgives Child</td>
<td>0.17 **</td>
<td>-0.13 *</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.19 **</td>
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Note: N = 228 for AOG, 228 for INS, 232 for DIS, 230 for RA.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 4.4

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<td>-.104</td>
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<td>.090</td>
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Note: N = 228 for AOG, 228 for INS, 232 for DIS, 230 for RA.
entire set of predictor variables on the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) subscales. The regression analysis had findings highlighting the significant impact that the predictor variables as a set had on each of the subscale scores. The parent variables accounted for 49% of the variance in emerging adult spiritual maturity: Awareness of God (14.5%), Instability (8.9%), Disappointment (9.2%), and Realistic Acceptance (16.4%). Therefore, the null hypothesis three can be rejected, and the alternative accepted that an entire set of certain parent predictor variables can predict scores on a spiritual maturity inventory. In other words, the overall persona exemplified in the qualities or traits a parent has or chooses to take on may greatly impact the depth of spiritual maturity that their child develops in emerging adulthood.

The null hypothesis four stated that there is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of parents’ overall emphasis on religion in the home. By means of several analyses, there are indications that Religious Emphasis is reliably predictive of all subscales in the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Therefore, the null can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis accepted – there is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of the overall emphasis by parents on religion in the home. If parents make a determined effort to increase religious observances in the home, their emerging adult children’s spiritual maturity will very likely follow that direction of influence. The converse will be true as well – less religious emphasis given by parents will probably mean that their children will be less interested after high school in continuing any religious practices.
The null hypothesis five stated that there is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father emotional availability. Analysis of various predictor variables have given findings suggesting that the emotional availability of the parents lends to the overall significant impact of the parent on the emerging adult’s spiritual maturity, albeit more weakly. Therefore, the null can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis five accepted. How emotionally responsive parents are to their child is likely to impact the child’s awareness of God and acceptance of his work in his or her life, with more responsivity leading to more maturity.

The null hypothesis six stated that there is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father authority style. After analyzing the data, there were significant findings suggesting that the null is not true and should be rejected. There actually appears to be variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father authority style. The alternative hypothesis six, that authority style does impact spiritual maturity, may be accepted. More specifically, permissive parenting has a weak negative correlation with overall maturity. Of the three discipline styles, authoritarian parenting has the greatest influence on leading an emerging adult child toward deeper spiritual relationship with God, one that reacts to relational conflicts as well as displays an awareness and acceptance of his leadership. An authoritative parenting style appears to weakly influence spiritual maturity.

The null hypothesis seven said that there is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father sincerity of
spirituality. Due to significant findings indicating that there is variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father sincerity of spirituality, the null hypothesis may be rejected. The alternative hypothesis may be accepted – the parents’ sincerity of practice of their spirituality is of importance to the spiritual maturity to their child. Parents who tend to center their lives around their relationship to God more commonly have a slightly negative impact on their children’s deeper spiritual maturity. Additionally, when children perceive their parents as practicing spirituality in a hypocritical way, the emerging adult child may reflect those parental actions in their higher level of fearfulness of and disappointment in God.

The null hypothesis eight stated that there is no variance in spiritual maturity uniquely contributed by means of overall perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness. Examination of the regression scores gives findings suggesting that the parent’s forgiveness of the child does significantly predict spiritual maturity; therefore, the null can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. There is variance contributed by the parents’ tendency to forgive that affects the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult child. Thus, as parents are more inclined to forgive children’s offenses, emerging adult children are more likely to report an awareness of God and realistic acceptance of him, but decrease in their fearfulness of rejection or anger from God.

In Chapter Five, the research problem, methodology, and findings with their interaction with hypotheses are synthesized. Conclusions relating to the purpose are drawn.
In summary, this chapter presented data from several analyses undertaken to better understand parent factors behind the development and maintenance of a Christian identity and/or practice from late adolescence into emerging adulthood. Procedures used to answer the research questions were described. All parent predictor variables (as perceived by the child) were significantly impactful on some level of the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity. The two most important predictors were the religious emphasis parents gave in the home and an authoritarian style used in discipline. Both (especially emphasis on religious behaviors in the home) were positively correlated with sensing God’s reality throughout one’s life and being able to keep pursuing a relationship with him in spite of religious doubts and fears. Two other significant parent predictors were the authoritative use of discipline, and hypocrisy seen in the parents’ spirituality. Higher levels of these two variables were possibly weak predictors of less awareness of God or less realistic acceptance of him. Authoritativeness and hypocritical spirituality tended to be more significant predictors of greater instability (weak predictor) and disappointment (moderate predictor). Other parent variables had interesting and significant zero order and partial correlations – however, these were reported with more caution due to some differences in the levels of findings in the analyses. Overall, parent factors do have considerable weight in the development of their emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposed an investigation into how certain parent factors as perceived by the child might influence the spiritual maturity of emerging adult children. The impact that spiritual immaturity might have on all of society was mentioned, a review of literature pertinent to those topics was completed, methods to be used in testing and analysis of the possible effect parent variables have were listed, and how results will be presented in the final report was outlined. This chapter will first summarize key points of the study design and methodology, and then discuss findings of all three research questions. At that point, the findings will be synthesized with previous literature and current hypotheses. Finally, pertinent conclusions will be highlighted and followed by recommendations for future research.

Study Purpose and Content

The problem highlighted in this study was that of parents’ fears over apparent declining interest in church activities and spirituality demonstrated by many of their emerging adult children. Researchers have proposed that a lack of spiritual maturity may explain the religious decline that not only parents, but also churches and society have noted. Various studies have highlighted the benefits seen to the child who is transitioning to adulthood, the family, and to society when that child identifies with a religion and
gains spiritual meaning and life purpose by use of its values and practice. Other studies implicated certain parent factors behind biopsychosocial maturity development. Core variables in these factors were identified and five measures with good reliability and validity were located which, in an online format survey, assessed the predictive value of these five parent variables on spiritual maturity. A sample of 200-400 emerging adults 18- to 25-years-old was recruited to answer survey questions about the status of their religious practice, how they perceive their parents, and other questions assessing their spiritual maturity. Study of these variables was guided by three basic research questions and demographic questions inquiring as to status of participants’ (age, gender, education, marital, Christian beliefs) and of their parents (marital, living or deceased, and religious beliefs).

**Research Questions**

In order to add to current knowledge about ways parents might influence their emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity, research questions were asked. Does the adolescent’s continuance of extrinsic religiosity into emerging adulthood predict spiritual maturity? Is the parents’ preferred emphasis on religion in the home predictive of the child’s continuing to practice that religion after adolescence? Is variance predicted by any or all of these predictor variables: (a) overall emphasis by parents on religion in the home, (b) overall perceived mother and father emotional availability, (c) overall perceived mother and father authority style, (d) overall perceived mother and father
sincerity of spirituality, and (e) overall perceived mother and father tendency toward forgiveness?

An advanced correlational method, that of standard multiple regression, along with independent samples t tests, were used to analyze the findings from this assessment. Due to research data strongly suggesting the integral part that psychosocial maturity plays in spiritual maturity, and the relevance that parents have in developing their child’s psychosocial maturity, it was expected that first, continuing religiosity past adolescence could predict scores on the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Second, it was expected that continuance of one’s faith into adulthood would be affected by parents’ presentation of religion in the home. Finally, it was predicted that scores on the SAI would vary according to how emerging adult children have perceived certain parental attributes and behaviors. Each of these questions had significant results, thus rejecting the null hypothesis that there would be no effect of parent variables as perceived by the emerging adult child on their developing spiritual maturity.

Discussion of Findings

This study had findings indicating that parents and the home environment they set do play an important role in the spiritual maturity of the emerging adult, a finding that mirrors the parental influence important to other dimensions of their children’s lives.

Preliminary Screening Results

The results on the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) showed a bimodal representation, with one mode following the mean scores of a normal distribution, and a second mode
found centered vertically close to the $y$-axis. This showed a disproportionately high frequency of persons answering “Not at all true” to items. Coupled with the emails the researcher received while the study was active with comments relating participant frustration at not having a “Not applicable” item to select, but being forced to select 1, it appears that this additional mode in the distribution was due to the number of atheists and agnostics taking the survey. Although the SAI is primarily for religiously committed persons, the questionnaire was still useful for this study as the sample chosen for analysis had all self-reported identification with Christian practices during high school. This high count of persons selecting “Not at all true” would include some persons for whom the item really was not true for that one item, but for others, it would reflect the current lack of religious commitment in the person. Such change is very pertinent information for this study. This finding reflects the SAI’s purpose of assisting pastors, pastoral counselors, and psychotherapists in assessing spiritual development, primarily in religiously committed persons.

**Continuance of Extrinsic Religiosity**

The first two research questions were designed to deal with the continuance of extrinsic religiosity, practices, and identification with Christian beliefs which were first learned in the parents’ home, and how this ultimately adds to or inhibits spiritual maturity. Through analysis of research question one, this study found strong indications that when an emerging adult decides to carry early beliefs from adolescence forward, then they are much more likely to report qualities of spiritual maturity. God will seem more real to them, even a person with whom they can express disappointment and with
whom they can struggle over issues. At times they might feel quite comfortable in trusting that he is always with them; other times they worry that God is punishing them. But overall, the more an emerging adult maintains earlier practices and identifies with Christian beliefs, there is a sense of God’s presence and an ability to talk through any fears of rejection or questions about his direction that they might have with him. When someone does not carry their Christian identity into emerging adulthood, it is much more probable that they will have no or very little sense of God in their life. They are either not considering him as important anymore and do not seek relationship with him, or they no longer believe that there is a God, thus negating any sense of him working for good or bad in their lives. They will not worry if he is going to reject them, or go to him for comfort when distressed.

**Parental Emphasis on Religion in Home**

Through analysis of research question two, it is suggested that parents may positively affect the decision itself to carry religious practices on toward maturity by setting a strong emphasis on religious practices in the home. These practices do not insure that the parent or child is spiritual or spiritually mature, but help lead toward the continuance of faith which more often than not contributes to an awareness of God in one’s life. When an emerging adult did not have a high emphasis by parents on religiosity demonstrated by such as prayers, celebration of religious holidays, or talk of Bible stories, it is much less likely that they would continue any religious practices that were taught in the home.
Parent Variables Perceived by the Child

Research questions three through eight inquired about the ability of both an entire set of parent predictor variables as perceived by the emerging adult child and of each individual variable to predict the spiritual maturity of that child (see Table 4.2). The five parent variables were the Religious Emphasis Scale (Altemeyer, 1988; Hunsberger, 1999), Lum’s Emotional Availability of Parents (Lum & Phares, 2005), the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007) with its subscales permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative, the Parent Spirituality Scale (McDonald et al., 2005) with its subscales sincerity and hypocrisy, and the Parent Forgives Child subscale (Maio et al., 2008). Findings strongly supported the alternative hypothesis stating that an entire set of parent variables would be able to predict scores on the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002). The set as a whole contributed 49% of the unique variance in this model of predictors and outcome variables.

All of the predictor variables at some level had significant influence on one or more SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) subscales. It is probable, however, that for some the significant results did not necessarily indicate important variance. Zero order correlations (see Table 4.3) were more demonstrative of significant correlations but the unique variance suggested by partial correlations (see Table 4.4) was much more conservative. Of all the scales and subscales, there were four which either did not correlate with any significance, or else very weakly: emotional availability impacting instability or disappointment with God; permissive authority style impacting instability; sincere parent spirituality impacting instability and disappointment; and parent forgivingness impacting
disappointment. Thus, while the alternative hypotheses were accepted in each case, the actual impact that one predictor variable might have on one outcome subscale might not be as large in actual practice.

Analysis findings highlighted two qualities of spiritual maturity as most impacted by the parent variables overall – first, realistic acceptance of God even when puzzled or hurt by God’s actions or when one does not understand what God is doing; and then, awareness of God’s presence and interactions in one’s life. Two parent attributes seemed to be the most indicative of the child’s ability to accept God as he is – the more conservative religious standards that parents set in the childhood home, and the more authoritarian the style of discipline.

The same two parent attributes, the home’s religious emphasis and an authoritarian discipline style were the ones impacting the most qualities in spiritual maturity. Parents who promote religious practices in the home may be significantly impacting and increasing the level of every spiritual maturity category, and their authoritarianism would have a similar impact on all but the area of the child’s disappointment with God (no effect noted). This pattern of influence was basically repeated throughout the other analyses as well. Religiosity in the home accounted for the largest impact on overall spiritual maturity, but authoritarianism accounted for the most unique variance on two maturity qualities – realistic acceptance and awareness of God.

Another noteworthy contributor to this model of spiritual maturity was the parents’ authoritativeness as seen in its effect on instability and disappointment with God. Increased efforts by the parent to include children in decision-making, to be firm and
clear but flexible and rational seemed to result in increased instability and fear of betrayal in a relationship with God. The emerging adult participants reported worrying more about God’s giving up on or ignoring them and were more likely to fear God’s punishment or rejection when their parents were less controlling and less punitive in style. Authoritativeness with its acceptance of discussions over family policy and parental openness and objectivity did not seem to help increase an awareness of God or realistic acceptance. Permissiveness (a lack of clear guidelines, a hands-off attitude toward children’s behavior) did not predict any facet of spiritual maturity.

A parent’s hypocritical expression of spirituality was another parent quality which seemed to account for some of the emerging adult’s instability and disappointment with God. If parents did not practice what they preached, then there would likely be more fearfulness in the adult child’s relationship with God, as well as disappointment over the way he deals with that person.

Synthesis with Literature

Continuity of Extrinsic Religiosity – Questions One and Two

The finding that the emphasis that parents place on religious practices in the home correlates positively with and predicts the later spiritual maturity of their children is consistent with biblical doctrine. The Bible taught parents to promote religious practices in the home as a way to insure that the children would also continue to grow in love and service to God and behave in healthy ways (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7; Proverbs 4:1). Psychological theory likewise posits that development of emerging adult spirituality is on
a continuum from early childhood to adulthood with the parents as one of the main influencers (Erickson, 1992; Hall et al., 1998; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984; Pargament, 1997).

Given both biblical and psychological theory, researchers have attempted to understand why, if theory is correct, do some people not follow what they are taught? This study was in part spurred on by other researchers who noted the relative lack of work on how emerging adults take on religious and spiritual beliefs and practices (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Barry et al., 2010; Bisset, 1992, 1997; Edgell & Meier, 2005; Leonard et al., 2013; Myers, 1996). Discrepant findings had suggested that religious parents did not affect their children’s beliefs as much as it would seem apparent (e.g., Arnett & Jensen, 2002, using a sample of 140 persons ages 21-28 from academic and non-academic sources) as well pointing to the overwhelming impact that parents play in the socialization process as models (e.g., Leonard et al., 2013, using a sample of 481 Christian college alumni ages 20-30).

For the purposes of this study, research questions one and two were exploratory in nature with findings first giving support to the developmental view of extrinsic religiosity, the identification with a religion through practice, and then supporting the predictive power that practice has with spiritual maturity. Not taking any other factor into consideration, such as attachment style, their perception of their parent’s goodwill, or denomination – there still was a significant difference in spiritual maturity between those who continued their faith practices after high school and those who did not. In spite of whether children liked the religious emphasis parents placed in the home or not, a
difference in continuing one’s religiosity was seen between those with a high level of parents’ focus on religious practices and others with a lower level of home religiosity. In other words, it would seem that the more the parents’ promote religious practices in the home, the more the emerging adult child continues on with those practices, which then leads to their greater spiritual maturity. This finding would answer Barry and colleagues (2010) who noted the dearth of studies examining high and low levels of religiosity and that impact on emerging adults’ own beliefs. It also adds information to the developmental theory of the advancing stages in the growth of the person (Erikson, 1968; Greenspan, 1997; Kohlberg, 2008; Marcia, 1966; Piaget, 1984), a need that other researchers have wanted addressed (Erickson, 1992, Meier et al., 1991; Paloutzian & Park, 2013). It expanded and updated Myers’ (1996) study on transmission of religious behaviors to young adults.

This progressive course supports a developmental theory of spirituality, but as mentioned above, seems contrary to the individualism and self-fulfillment quest supposedly undertaken by today’s millennials (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Kinnaman, 2011). Arnett and Jensen did remark, however, on how many emerging adults later returned to earlier religious practices as they grew older. Bisset (1992, 1997) in his study of those who left their earlier Christian commitments, had findings strongly suggesting that many young adults who do not immediately continue the religious practices of their parents tend to begin practicing again at some point. Usually this happens when they marry and have children, experience a crisis they cannot meet, feel a deep existential void, or are
impacted deeply by a special person in their life. Thus, perhaps religiosity is
developmental for these persons as well, just on a more circuitous route.

**Parents’ Influence on Emerging Adult Spirituality – Question Three**

Research question three examined five attributes of parents which have been measured for psychosocial impact in the emerging adult child, but none have been measured for influence on spiritual maturity. A theoretical framework describing how certain parent traits might influence the development of spiritual maturity has not had sufficient data to be organized. This study interacted with existing literature to identify possible parent variables which could help lead toward spiritual maturity in emerging adults.

**Parents’ religious emphasis (RES).** Paralleling Myers’ (1996) older study implicating the primacy of parent religiosity on the maintenance of religious practices in young adults, the greatest impact found in this study by any one variable on the emerging adult’s religiosity and spiritual maturity was that of the parents’ preferred level of religious emphasis in the home. Just as the parents’ religious practices predicted extrinsic religiosity in the child, not surprisingly they predicted one’s awareness of God and realistic acceptance of the way he works. The Bible gave illustrations of parents practicing God’s commandments and stated how that practice will lead to increased knowledge of him (I Chronicles 28; Proverbs 1:7-9). The examples of Jacob (Genesis 33), Joseph (Genesis 39), Moses (Exodus 1-3), Samuel (I Samuel 12), and Esther (Esther 4) all illustrated the transmission of their parents’ biblical practices to them in such a way that they later all demonstrated a maturity of their faith.
Strong religious emphasis also predicted one’s instability with God, and
disappointment with God, both seemingly inconsistent with logic. Instability in spiritual
maturity is characterized by an unstable emotional connection with God, fear of God’s
rejection or vindication, and withdrawing from God when one disobeys his rules.
Disappointment with God speaks of an attitude held toward God, occurring when one
feels God has betrayed or frustrated him or her for not answering prayers, and thus is
irritated at him. Religious emphasis assessed the practice of behaviors in the home.
Perhaps when parents are very zealous about compliance with rules (high religious
emphasis), some children might worry that they could lose their parents’ favor when
disobedient; they may feel the same would hold true with God. This idea may help
explain what seems illogical with these findings. Myers’ study (1996) differed from
several similar studies of that time which had findings downplaying the direct influence
of the parents. In his work, parental religiosity (albeit low to moderate) seemed to have
the greatest correlation of all variables with the young adult’s increased religiosity. It is
not known, however, if that religiosity correlated with their greater spiritual maturity as it
did here in all four SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) subscales.

Possibly, the attachment and developmental theories used to help frame this study
(Diamond et al., 2007; Diamond et al., 2003; Kohlberg, 2008; Noffke & Hall, 2007)
could help in understanding why instability and disappointment tend to increase with the
parents’ stress on religious behaviors. Looking at the items behind each subscale, there
could appear a seeming natural progression of spiritual development represented within
the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Awareness of God’s presence, attention, and leading
would come before noticing one’s unstable connection with God. Just as a child is aware of their parent, but also fears their leaving, emotional connections can vary over the course of the relationship. When the parent (God) does not respond the way the child would like, disappointment may follow. Once the child grows and matures more, he or she would recognize that God has not left them. They would see that he does have their good in mind and will respond to them, they develop a realistic acceptance of his dealing and still seek him for friendship. The child learns to get past a “punishment and obedience” mentality, with growth culminating in an ability to accept inconsistencies without threatening the relationship (Kohlberg, 2008). Thus, religious emphasis in the home (which seemingly played the greatest role in explaining spiritual maturity) appears to initiate a long spiritual development which could include several stages of growth along the way.

Parents’ authoritarian discipline (PAQ-Authoritarian). This study was exploratory and was open to taking data and learning from it. It still proved difficult to understand why, given the theoretical literature on the relative superiority of an authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1966, 2012; Buri et al., 1988; Kazdin, 2005), an authoritarian style (reputed to be more forcefully coercive) accounted for greater spiritual maturity than parents’ authoritativeness. Respondents affirmed that overall, their parents believed in firm control, unquestioning respect for parents’ decisions, the use of force to gain compliance if necessary, and clear expectations. Authoritarian parenting significantly correlated with Awareness of God, Instability, and Realistic Acceptance. Looking at the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) items measured, having a parent who was
authoritarian would also predispose that person to be frequently aware of God’s prompting, and feel God’s presence and help in need. They would at times worry about losing a connection with him or be punished if they misbehaved, or perhaps feel like hiding when they did do wrong. They would also very likely believe that God would still be with them in spite of their behavior, would accept that he is in charge, and not lose their trust in him even if he did not answer prayers the way they wished.

Baumrind (1966) allowed that parents being authoritarian did not necessarily squelch autonomy. From her research, she noted indications of subgroups of highly controlling parents who did not discourage the independence of the child through their extreme firmness. Her hesitation with authoritarianism largely centered on the coercion - punitive, harsh, repressive measures - taken to obtain compliance seen in the prototypical authoritarian parent. Perhaps part of the reason that authoritarian parent styles predicted more spiritual maturity in this sample is that some of these parents may have used less punitive coercion. It is possible that this sample, all identified as Christians in high school, on the whole had Christian parents who would have been taught to teach obedience and respect for parent status, but to not provoke their children to anger (Ephesians 6:1-4). Therefore, they would have combined hierarchical, controlling discipline (authoritarian) with that of the authoritative blend of strict firmness and reasoned flexibility. If so, then more often than not this sample could have given responses tempered by this blend, resulting in greater spiritual maturity which is not reputed to be likely with a repressive authoritarian style.
Parent’s authoritative style (PAQ-Authoritative). An authoritative style of parenting, one represented by clear directives and allowance for reasonable discussion and disagreement of the parents’ high expectations, was a significant contributor to this model of spiritual maturity. Interestingly though, significant results were noted by means of the regression analysis and partial correlations for only the subscales instability and disappointment with God. The more a participant felt firmly directed but also could express disagreement when they believed their parents were unreasonable, the more regularly that participant would later report both fearfulness of God’s rejection or punishment as well as irritation, anger and frustration with God. In Myer’s (1996) study on transmission of religion to children, he utilized a simple question assessing parental strictness. His findings indicated that moderate levels of parent control were most conducive to emerging adult child’s maintenance of their parents’ religiosity. Whether this religious commitment could be assumed to equate spiritual maturity (as per the SAI [Hall & Edwards, 2002]) was not tested. Baumrind (1966) noted the seemingly illogical results sometimes gained in her and others’ studies. Authoritative parenting was seen as very helpful to help raise highly motivated, creative children, but sometimes brilliant persons of eminence reported having had parents with styles which were vastly different from authoritative.

In the zero order correlations, authoritative parenting did show significance at the $p < .05$ level in interactions with the awareness of God; with realistic acceptance, it was significant at the $p < .001$. These were much more in line with expected findings. Perhaps shared variance accounted for this inconsistency.
Parent spirituality – insincerity. The fourth parent variable to significantly predict scores on the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) was that of the parent spirituality – insincerity subscale. As with authoritative parenting, it significantly predicted only a positive relationship with instability and disappointment with God in the regression analysis and had weak partial correlations with the same subscales. In zero correlations analysis, insincerity had a significant negative relationship with all spiritual maturity subscales (at the $p < .05$ level). The more often that a child perceived their parent to be duplicitous, hypocritical, and not practicing what they preached, the greater the likelihood that they would have an unstable experience with God - a punishing deity, ready to give up on them or exclude them from his plans. They would report more anger and disappointment in God as a person, and view him as likely to betray them. It is possible that they would report not having any sense of God in their lives, therefore negating any acceptance of him. This supports similar findings from McDonald et al. (2005) suggesting that avoidance of intimacy with God would occur when parents were less spiritually inclined or were hypocritical about their religious practices.

Other parent variables. Various parent attributes showed significance only in the zero order correlation analysis (Table 4.3). Their influence, interpreted here more cautiously as some of these may be measuring information in another parent trait, still bear weight in an overall reliable influence in shaping emerging adult spiritual maturity. Findings from these correlations suggest that when parents are available, supportive, forgiving, fair and firm in discipline, and genuinely devoted to God, the emerging adult child may be more likely to sense God’s nearness, direction, and attention to them. When
parents are overbearing for no explainable reason, unforgiving of offenses, insincere in spiritual matters, or lax in setting boundaries, then spiritual maturity is likely to be delayed. These findings support this study’s assumption that the same parent qualities already correlated with psychosocial development in millennials emerging adults (e.g., Bowlby, 1988; Donnelly et al., 2013; Feldman, 2008; Greenspan, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 1999; Murphy et al., 2010; Pargament, 1997; Renk et al., 2006; Sroufe, 2005) will also correlate with spiritual development. This study found no or inconsequential relationships in any analyses between parent emotional availability correlated with instability and disappointment; parent permissive authority styles correlated with instability, parent sincere spirituality correlated with instability and disappointment, or parent forgivingness correlated with disappointment.

**Limitations to Study**

Several limitations which could have impacted study findings should be considered. First, although the regression statistic helped partial out variance, shared source variance – when data for the independent and dependent variables are obtained from the same source – may have led to unwanted variance. Zero order correlations were the only findings with significant results for several of the subscales. Literature would point to the relevancy of those variables in overall spiritual maturity, but the regression analysis and partial correlations did not note such a quantity of unique variance for them. Second, some constructs may have been quantitatively hard to measure as the researcher relied on the perspective of those involved. This was controlled by using instruments
known for their strong psychometric properties. Third, there was a possibility that emerging adults could not remember early childhood experiences with their parents as well as they currently can. To control for this, they were encouraged to remember themselves as the age indicated by the questionnaire (Lum & Phares, 2005). Fourth, this study was cross-sectional, limiting its generalizability. A longitudinal study of variables such as parent attributes which vary according to culture and context might better inform the stability of conclusions (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006) as well as avoid cohort effects of the Millennial Generation (Kazdin, 2003). Fifth, although biblical doctrine could not be as fully addressed in this study as would have been liked, it is an important part of understanding the spiritual maturation process.

In addition to these concerns, the project validity may have also been influenced by unanticipated study conditions and demand characteristics. Several of the volunteers who promoted the study did not follow protocol as strictly as directed, disclosing more information to potential participants than was asked. After the link to the study was published on various Web sites and social media, participants on two sites (representing religious doubt) made skeptical comments about the survey topic. A few participants took screen shots of study questions and debriefing statements and published them on the site they were using, sensitizing others who might take the survey to the variables actually being assessed.

Study formatting may have affected results. Several typographical errors occurring during the survey upload into the program instigated comments on social media and emails to the researcher as they distracted respondents. Corrections were made to
those. Two demographic questions assessing parents’ status (living/dead, married/divorced) and religiosity proved to be confusing and predisposed participants to become disgruntled. These demographic items were subsequently not used in the current analysis.

Some participants reacted emotionally to the survey, an experimental condition possibly limiting the validity of findings. Various ones wrote emails to the researcher detailing their thoughts about their irritations, as well as ways to improve the study. Several items on the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002) distressed some persons (who identified as atheists) because they thought it assumed the existence of a deity. Others resented that there was no Not Applicable option on the SAI as an alternative to the Not At All True option. Several of these persons related that world suffering and a pull toward integrity and scientific truth had led them from belief in God. Salvation was too narrowly defined for several persons. Some persons wished that they could have participated in a qualitative study. From another viewpoint, several participants wrote that they enjoyed the study, learning in the process of the importance of the parent’s impact on the child’s relationship with God.

Various persons mentioned on two Internet sites that they had taken the survey in spite of being over 30 years old. The study recruitment design may have controlled for this by allowing participation of persons up to the age of 30, and then excluding all those over age 25 from the sample analysis. These concerns about study validity may inform safeguards (such as thorough pilot testing) necessary for future research.
Finally, the research method of using only the average of the mother and father’s scores from the inventories limited the information gleaned from the results. As data analysis began, a preliminary investigation was done exploring the impact each parent separately had on the emerging adult child’s spiritual maturity. Results indicated that scores assessing the mother’s attributes had much greater ability to predict the child’s spiritual development than had the scores about the father. This study was exploratory; further work may widen the focus to a multifaceted examination of parent characteristics.

**Implications of Study Findings**

This study sought to expand knowledge and expertise in the area of developing spiritual maturity in emerging adults so that those who deal with them through family or professional relationships might be better equipped. The findings supported an ongoing development of spirituality such as suggested by Kierkegaard (Eller, 2001; Evans, 1985; Hong & Hong, 2000; Storm, 2011) in regards to the growth of religiosity and spirituality in the child. Children do not suddenly convert, become religious, and then begin to grow. These findings imply that the process begins in childhood in the parents’ home, responds to external stimuli such as the parents’ attributes, and influences children’s decisions about God. These findings may also give credence to parents’ and churches’ continued insistence on religious involvement by the child throughout high school, although findings indicate that this should be done in a reasonable way by parents who meaningfully practice their own faith. Parents may worry that their child perfunctorily
practices religion, but may now feel some relief that these practices do seem to correlate with spiritual growth later.

A second implication for parents is that they do not need to be sinless examples of spiritual devotion. That may seem counterintuitive, but only zero order correlations noted significant findings for parent spirituality to relate to increased awareness and acceptance of God. Religious behaviors which parents set in the home seemed to be more reliable predictors overall.

Another implication of this research is that the model of spiritual maturity is far from complete. The regression analysis explained 49% of the variance for this model of spiritual maturity. There seem to be inconsistencies between some of the findings. Other home factors, such as parents’ education level, parents’ mental health status, marital status, parent/child bond, and presence of siblings in the home, could be tested. Other social/religious factors such as church denomination, youth group status, peers’ beliefs, and relationship with the church leaders could be examined and hopefully help complete an understanding of how to help emerging adults retain healthy faith practices learned early in life.

One implication for research would be to develop an inventory of spiritual maturity that took the agnostic and atheist into consideration. Many believe they have a level of spirituality, but told the researcher that at times they found questions irrelevant due to the presupposition of a belief in God. For this study, recruiting atheists was a necessity because many of them had grown up in church and religious homes, but became disillusioned. A survey which at least gave the option of “Not applicable” would
have given them an alternative response, and still given important information about their level of spiritual maturity.

**Strengths and Potential Benefit of Study**

One’s spiritual well-being and maturity has been examined in many studies with significant results positively correlating it with psychosocial and physical benefits. Although this exploratory study sought to assess variables for any influence noted in a certain set of parent variables, it was able to pinpoint some potentially powerful factors in the maturation of emerging adults who identified as Christians in high school. Additionally, the study brought some variables to the discussion on why some young adults leave the church once they are able to do so. To the researcher’s knowledge, several parent variables appear to never have been tested, and none had yet been correlated with spiritual maturity as the dependent variable. Others variables had been examined (e.g., parent religiosity) but were in much earlier studies using a different generation of youth. Information gained will help lead to more research.

Emerging adulthood as a construct and stage of development has only begun to be explored for its distinctives (Arnett, 2000). This study added to the knowledge about how emerging adults think and perceive the world around them, and how they take on traits following the training of childhood.

A strength of this study is its standard multiple regression statistical analysis which allowed for multiple variables to be measured in one test. Regression allowed for the description of parent variables followed by examination among them for predictable
relationships. A true experiment with a manipulated independent variable would not be ethical when working with human relationships. Withholding love, giving harsh punishment, and then measuring the effects on a select group of children would be inhumane. Multiple regression could come as close as possible to predicting the effects of parent attributes without actually manipulating their children.

Parents, Christian leaders, and mental health professionals may benefit from the increased knowledge gained from these analyses. Since this research assumed that emerging adults may be found in a wide variety of populations, the results of this study should be generalizable to emerging adults in diverse populations. Additionally, the findings are of some import in parent training programs and pastor and therapist educational curricula.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study will add support to data already collected concerning the development of spiritual maturity in emerging adults. There are various ways that future studies might build on this one so as to contribute helpfully to parents, Christian leaders, and professional therapists. Technical improvements to this study are varied. First, online surveys such as this one must continue to develop strategies preventing a participant from sharing information outside of the “laboratory,” thus biasing others’ responses. Seeking ways to detect other sources of unique variance not found in this one would be of great help and could be done through perusing qualitative studies for variables, using a step-wise regression analysis of this study’s variables, and developing demographics assessing
parent status and religious beliefs more closely. Assessing the mother and father
variables separately as well as conjointly would greatly enrich knowledge – the
preliminary examination of their separate impact hinted at different roles each parent
might play in the child’s spiritual development. Discovering these different roles and
how those compare with Biblical wisdom might also lend guidance to the counseling
profession.

Other topics need further examination and clarification. Is the level of sincere
spirituality of the parent implying that they practice religion to the neglect of their
children’s emotional and spiritual needs? What factor is in authoritarian parenting style
that seemed to increase awareness of God and realistic acceptance of his apparently
illogical ways? What is it about authoritativeness that seems to augment instability and
disappointment with God? How does a religious emphasis in the home and parent
sincerity of spirituality interact? Are the inventories on parent forgiveness and
spirituality sufficiently measuring the constructs of interest, or are they too brief to be
informative? As this generation of emerging adults ages, what variables will be more
effective in helping those who leave religious practices to return later? These research
questions build on this study and pertain to relevant issues which could be generalized to
many audiences.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarized the content and purpose of the research undertaken to
better understand what parent variables as perceived by a child might predict the spiritual
maturity of emerging adult children. Research questions were discussed topically, findings were examined by their relative significance and related to literature pertinent to each topic. Limitations to the study were highlighted along with cautions to be considered. Implications of the study findings were discussed, followed by strengths and potential benefits the research might have. Finally, recommendations for future research that logically follow this study were made.

**Study Summary**

Today, many in society, especially parents and church leaders, are decrying the waning church attendance by emerging adults. This study clarified issues and proposed a plan to investigate the problem and measure findings from the survey undertaken. A plan for how to analyze findings and control threats to validity was given. A description of the results from the survey and its analysis was developed. Findings were then discussed, synthesized with literature, and recommendations for future research made. It is hoped that parents, church leaders, and mental health professionals will be able to utilize data and implications from this study for their own improved knowledge and practice in relationships, and for the encouragement and spiritual betterment of emerging adult children.
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Appendix A: Informed Consent

“Development of Religious Beliefs in Young Adults” Study
Beth Matthews, MA, LPCA, BCCC
Liberty University

If you are an American young adult from 18-30 and wouldn’t mind giving your feedback, you are invited to be in a doctoral research study. Please read this form and ask any questions that you might have before completing the online survey.

This study is being conducted by Beth Matthews. She is a doctoral candidate at the Center for Counseling and Family Studies, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia.

Background Information
This study will examine characteristics and religious beliefs of young adults. For this study, 200-400 participants from 18-30 years old are being sought.

Procedures
Please respond to the questionnaire by selecting the answer that is most correct for you. There are no “right or wrong” answers. The questions will relate to your religious beliefs, memories of your home, and your parents’ religious beliefs and parenting style. If you do/did not live with both biological parents, please respond to the questions thinking of those two persons who were most involved in raising you. The survey may require between 15-25 minutes to complete. Please try to answer every question.

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

Benefits and Risks of Being in the Study
While no study is without risks, the risks associated with this research are no more than in everyday life. The assessment was designed to be as non-invasive as possible and carries no more than minimal risk. To participate in the survey, please go to the Web site listed below, and enter this password. You will then be directed to begin the study. As you respond to the survey, you might become aware of some emotional issues that could cause discomfort. On the other hand, it is possible that you might grow relationally and emotionally from considering where you stand in regards to your own beliefs. Beth is available to discuss any discomfort you might experience.
Confidentiality
No personally identifiable information will be collected (unless you would like to be considered for possible compensation - see below). Research records, both electronic and hard copies, will be locked or encrypted and stored securely and only this researcher and her school superiors will have access to the records. At the end of three years, all data will be destroyed. If the results of this study are ever published in a professional journal, no information that makes a participant’s identification possible will be included.

Compensation
Every 20th participant (up to 20 participants) completing the study will receive a gift card to Amazon if they are willing to leave an email, twitter handle, or postal address with the survey. Addresses will be destroyed immediately after gift cards are mailed.

Contacts and Questions
If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Beth Matthews. Beth’s advisor for this dissertation is Dr. John Thomas.
You have the right to ask questions, explain your answers, or otherwise communicate with Beth at any time. You can also request a copy of the overall results. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than Beth, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, at 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email irb@liberty.edu.

Statement of Consent
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked any questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this study that has the potential to benefit an important group of individuals.

Beth Matthews, MA, LPCA, BCCC
Appendix B: Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991)

Instructions

For each of the following statements, mark the number of the 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) that best describes how that statement applies to you and your mother. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your mother during your years of growing up at home. There are no right or wrong answers, so don’t spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

[Following assessment of mother’s authority style, fathers are assessed.]

1 = Strongly disagree  
2 = Disagree  
3 = Neither agree nor disagree  
4 = Agree  
5 = Strongly agree

1. While I was growing up, my mother felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.
2. Even if her children didn’t agree with her, my mother felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what she thought was right.
3. Whenever my mother told me to do something as I was growing up, she expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions.
4. As I was growing up, once family policy had been established, my mother discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.
5. My mother has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable.
6. My mother has always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want.
7. As I was growing up, my mother did not allow me to question any decision she had made.
8. As I was growing up, my mother directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.
9. My mother has always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.
10. As I was growing up, my mother did not feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.
11. As I was growing up, I knew what my mother expected of me in my family, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with my mother when I felt that they were unreasonable.
12. My mother felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.
13. As I was growing up, my mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.
14. Most of the time as I was growing up, my mother did what the children wanted when making family decisions.
15. As the children in my family were growing up, my mother consistently gave us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.
16. As I was growing up, my mother would get very upset if I tried to disagree with her.
17. My mother feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children’s activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up.
18. As I was growing up, my mother let me know what behavior she expected of me, and if I didn’t meet those expectations, she punished me.
19. As I was growing up, my mother allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from her.
20. As I was growing up, my mother took the children’s opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but she would not decide for something simply because the children wanted it.
21. My mother did not view herself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior as I was growing up.
22. My mother has clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but she was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.
23. My mother gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and she expected me to follow her direction, but she was always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.
24. As I was growing up, my mother allowed me to form my own point of view on family matters and she generally allowed me to decide for myself what I was going to do.
25. My mother has always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don’t do what they are supposed to as they are growing up.
26. As I was growing up, my mother often told me exactly what she wanted me to do and how she expected me to do it.
27. As I was growing up, my mother gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but she was also understanding when I disagreed with her.
28. As I was growing up, my mother did not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.
29. As I was growing up, I knew what my mother expected of me in the family and she insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for her authority.
30. As I was growing up, if my mother made a decision in the family that hurt me, she was willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if she had made a mistake.

Used with Permission
Appendix C: Lum Emotional Availability of Parents Measure (Lum & Phares, 2005)

Instructions

In this questionnaire, you will read statements about your parents. You will be asked to rate your Mother’s and Father’s behavior. For all questions, answer the statement as to how each parent acts toward you. If you are not living with your biological parents now, please rate the behavior of whomever you consider to be your mother or father (e.g., adoptive parent, stepparent, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate your Mother’s and Father’s behavior.

1. Supports me
2. Consoles me when I am upset
   (Example: Makes me feel better when I am upset)
3. Shows she/he cares about me
4. Shows a genuine interest in me
   (Example: Pays attention and is curious about me)
5. Remembers things that are important to me
6. Is available to talk at any time
7. Asks questions in a caring manner
8. Spends extra time with me just because she/he wants to
9. Is willing to talk about my troubles
10. Pursues talking with me about my interests
    (Example: Tries to talk to me about what I like)
11. Values my input
    (Example: Cares about my ideas)
12. Is emotionally available to me
13. Makes me feel wanted
14. Praises me
    (Example: Tells me good things about myself)
15. Is understanding

Used with Permission
Appendix D: Parent Forgives Child Subscale of the Family Forgiveness

Questionnaire (Maio, Thomas, Fincham, & Carnelly, 2008)

The following statements describe ways in which YOUR MOTHER/FATHER reacts as a result of being annoyed, hurt or offended by you. We would like you to think about the things that you have done that offended or upset her/him — things that she/he could not easily understand or excuse.

Please read each statement carefully and decide whether it is true or false. We would like you to indicate how you think she/he felt and acted after her/his first feelings of hurt. Thus, your answers should reflect how easy or hard she/he found it to forgive. Please indicate whether she/he typically responds in the way that is described in the statement.

When I annoy, hurt or offend my mother/father…

1. She/he easily forgives me.

-3 strongly disagree
-2 moderately disagree
-1 mildly disagree
0 neither agree nor disagree
1 mildly agree
2 moderately agree
3 strongly agree

When I annoy, hurt or offend my mother…

2. She/he holds a grudge against me.

-3 strongly disagree
-2 moderately disagree
-1 mildly disagree
0 neither agree nor disagree
1 mildly agree
2 moderately agree
3 strongly agree

When I annoy, hurt or offend my mother…

3. She/he sees me as positively as she/he did before.

-3 strongly disagree
-2 moderately disagree
-1 mildly disagree
0 neither agree nor disagree
1 mildly agree
2 moderately agree
3 strongly agree
When I annoy, hurt or offend my mother/father…

4. She/he sees me more negatively than she/he did before.

-3  -2  -1  0  1  2  3
strongly moderately mildly neither agree mildly moderately strongly
disagree disagree disagree nor disagree agree agree agree

Used with Permission
Appendix E: Parental Spirituality Scale (McDonald, Beck, Allison & Norsworthy, 2005)

PSS—Mother Form

This questionnaire lists various religious attitudes and behaviors of parents. As you remember your MOTHER in your first 16 years, please use the following rating scale to rate each of the items.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Moderately disagree
3. Neutral
4. Moderately agree
5. Strongly agree

Section 1

1. My mother had a deep relationship with God
2. My mother was a very spiritual person.
3. My mother consistently attempted to grow closer to God.
4. My mother centered her life around her religious convictions.

Section 2

(Complete only if your mother considered herself to be a religious person.)

5. My mother’s behavior was consistent with her religious beliefs.
6. I feel that my mother was hypocritical in her religious life.
7. Religiously speaking, my mother did not practice what she preached to me.

PSS—Father Form

This questionnaire lists various religious attitudes and behaviors of parents. As you remember your FATHER in your first 16 years, please use the following rating scale to rate each of the items.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Moderately disagree
3. Neutral
4. Moderately agree
5. Strongly agree
Section 1

1. My father had a deep relationship with God.
2. My father was a very spiritual person.
3. My father consistently attempted to grow closer to God.
4. My father centered his life around his religious convictions.

Section 2

(Complete only if your father considered himself to be a religious person.)

5. My father’s behavior was consistent with his religious beliefs.
6. I feel that my father was hypocritical in his religious life.
7. Religiously speaking, my father did not practice what he preached to me.
Appendix F: Religious Emphasis Scale (Altemeyer, 1988; Hunsberger, 1999)

Participants respond to the following items, on a 0-5 basis, to indicate the level of their parents’ adherence to the following religious practices while they were growing up.

Scale: From 0 = no emphasis was placed on the behavior, to 5, a very strong emphasis was placed on the behavior

Examples of these practices included church-going, attendance at church meetings, home instruction of religious principles, family prayer, reading of religious material, modeling behavior after the religious precepts, and celebrating religious holidays.
Appendix G: Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 2002)

Copyright Todd W. Hall, Ph.D. & Keith J. Edwards, Ph.D.

Instructions

1. Please respond to each statement below by writing the number that best represents your experience in the box to the right of the statement.
2. It is best to answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.
3. Give the answer that comes to mind first. Don’t spend too much time thinking about an item.
4. Give the best possible response to each statement even if it does not provide all the information you would like.
5. Try your best to respond to all statements. Your answers will be completely confidential.
6. Some of the statements consist of two parts as shown here:

[2.1] There are times when I feel disappointed with God.
[2.2] When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue.

Your response to 2.2 tells how true statement 2.2 is for you when you have the experience of feeling disappointed with God described in statement 2.1.

1. I have a sense of how God is working in my life  A
2. There are times when I feel disappointed with God  D
2.1 When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue  RA
3 God’s presence feels very real to me  A
4 I am afraid that God will give up on me  I
5 I seem to have a unique ability to influence God through my prayers  G
6 Listening to God is an essential part of my life  A
7 I am always in a worshipful mood when I go to church  IM
8.1 There are times when I feel frustrated with God  D
8.2 When I feel this way, I still desire to put effort into our relationship  RA
9 I am aware of God prompting me to do things  A
10 My emotional connection with God is unstable  I
11 My experiences of God’s responses to me impact me greatly  A
12.1 There are times when I feel irritated at God  D
12.2 When I feel this way, I am able to come to some sense of resolution in our relationship  RA
God recognizes that I am more spiritual than most people  
I am always seek God’s guidance for every decision I make  
I am aware of God’s presence in my interactions with other people  
There are times when I feel that God is punishing me  
I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways  
There are times when I feel angry at God  
When this happens, I still have the sense that God will always be with me  
I am aware of God attending to me in times of need  
God understands that my needs are more important than most people’s  
I am aware of God telling me to do something  
I worry that I will be left out of God’s plans  
My experiences of God’s presence impacts me greatly  
I am always as kind at home as I am at church  
I have a sense of the direction in which God is guiding me  
My relationship with God is an extraordinary one that most people would not understand  
There are times when I feel betrayed by God  
When I feel this way, I put effort into restoring our relationship  
I am aware of God communicating to me in a variety of ways  
Manipulating God seems to be the best way to get what I want  
I am aware of God’s presence in times of need  
From day to day, I sense God being with me  
I pray for all my friends and relatives every day  
There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding to my prayers  
When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God  
I have a sense of God communicating guidance to me  
When I sin, I tend to withdraw from God  
I experience an awareness of God speaking to me personally  
I find my prayers to God are more effective than other people’s  
I am always in the mood to pray  
I feel I have to please God or he might reject me  
I have a strong impression of God’s presence  
There are times when I feel that God is angry at me  
I am aware of God being very near to me  
When I sin, I am afraid of what God will do to me  
When I consult God about decisions in my life, I am aware in my prayers of his direction and help  
I seem to be more gifted than most people in discerning God’s will  
When I feel God is not protecting me, I tend to feel worthless  
There are times when I feel like God has let me down  
When this happens, my trust in God is not completely broken

Scales:
A = Awareness
RA = Realistic Acceptance
D = Disappointment
G = Grandiosity
I = Instability
IM = Impression Management

Scoring Instructions: The score for each scale is the average of answered items. If the respondent omits more than half the items for a given scale, the scale cannot be scored. Scoring of the RA scale items (designated by xx.2 item numbers) depends on the respondent’s answer to the corresponding disappointment item (designated by xx.1 item numbers). If the respondent answers “not at all true” (1) on the xx.1 item, then the corresponding xx.2 item is NOT included in the RA scale average score. For example, if he/she rates item 2.1 as a “1”, then item 2.2 is not included in calculating the RA scale score average.
Appendix H: Promotional Flyer for Sample Recruitment

Study of the Development of Religious Views in Young Adults

If you are an American between 18-30 years old with 20-25 minutes for an online survey (identity protection provided) you are invited to participate in a research study on the development of religious views among young adults. Every twentieth participant (up to 20 participants) will receive a $10 gift card if they are willing to leave a mailing address. Anyone who asks may receive information about the study findings. Just leave an email or mailing address when prompted at the end of the study.

To participate in the survey, please go to the Web site listed below. You will then be directed to begin the study.

Thanks for your help!

Beth Matthews

PhD candidate, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
Appendix I: Demographic Items

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

Age: 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Gender:
Male
Female

Highest level of education attained:
High school
College/University
Graduate
Post-graduate

Current educational status:
Attending school
Not attending school

Ethnicity:
African/American
Hispanic/Latino
White
Other

Marital status:
Single/never married
Married once only
Married more than once
Divorced

I was raised in a Christian home.
Yes
No

I identified with and/or practiced Christian beliefs in high school.
Yes
No

I currently identify with/or practice Christian beliefs.
Yes
No

I have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
Yes
No

Unsure

Please answer the following questions about your parents:

Status of parents:
Living
Deceased

Parent marital status:
Single - never married
Married once only
Married more than once

Divorced

Parental religious beliefs:

What are/were your parent(s) religious or spiritual beliefs, if any? (See below for clarification of categories. Categories and definitions were adapted from Arnett & Jenson, 2002.)

Agnostic/atheist

Deist

Liberal Christian

Conservative Christian

*Agnostic/atheist:* Parent explicitly rejects any belief in religion or declares that he or she is unsure about own beliefs, and/or says it is not possible to know anything about God.

*Deist:* Parent declares a general belief in God or “spirituality,” but only in a general sense, not in the context of any religious tradition. Parent may refer to self as “Christian,” but beliefs do not reflect traditional Christian dogma and may even explicitly reject parts of the Christian dogma (e.g., that Jesus was the son of God). Parent may also reject organized religion generally and may include idiosyncratic personal elements drawn from various sources, such as Eastern religions, witchcraft, and popular culture.

*Liberal Christian:* Parent describes self as Christian (or as adherent of particular denomination, e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic). However, parent may express skepticism about the institution of the church and/or about some aspects of Christian
dogma, such as the idea that Christianity is the only true faith. Parent may express favorable or at least tolerant view of other (non-Christian) faiths.

Conservative Christian: Parent expresses belief in traditional Christian dogma, for example, that Jesus is the son of God and the only way to salvation. Parent may mention being saved or refer to afterlife of heaven and hell. Parent may mention that Christianity is the only true faith.

Revised Questions 11 and 12

11. Please answer the following questions about your parents:

a. Status of mother:
   1) Living
   2) Deceased

b. Status of father
   1) Living
   2) Deceased

c. Marital status of mother:
   1) Single - never married
   2) Married once only
   3) Married more than once
   4) Divorced

d. Marital status of father
   1) Single – never married
   2) Married once only
3) Married more than once
4) Divorced

12. Parental religious beliefs:

a. What are/were your mother’s religious or spiritual beliefs, if any? (See below for clarification of categories. Categories and definitions were adapted from Arnett & Jenson, 2002.)

1) Agnostic/atheist
2) Deist
3) Liberal Christian
4) Conservative Christian

Agnostic/atheist: Mother explicitly rejects any belief in religion or declares that she is unsure about own beliefs, and/or says it is not possible to know anything about God.

Deist: Mother declares a general belief in God or “spirituality,” but only in a general sense, not in the context of any religious tradition. Mother may refer to self as “Christian,” but beliefs do not reflect traditional Christian dogma and may even explicitly reject parts of the Christian dogma (e.g., that Jesus was the son of God). Mother may also reject organized religion generally and may include idiosyncratic personal elements drawn from various sources, such as Eastern religions, witchcraft, and popular culture.

Liberal Christian: Mother describes self as Christian (or as adherent of particular denomination, e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic). However, mother may express skepticism about the institution of the church and/or about some aspects of Christian
dogma, such as the idea that Christianity is the only true faith. Mother may express favorable or at least tolerant view of other (non-Christian) faiths.

Conservative Christian: Mother expresses belief in traditional Christian dogma, for example, that Jesus is the son of God and the only way to salvation. Mother may mention being saved or refer to afterlife of heaven and hell. Mother may mention that Christianity is the only true faith.

b. What are/were your father’s religious or spiritual beliefs, if any? (See below for clarification of categories. Categories and definitions were adapted from Arnett & Jenson, 2002.)

1) Agnostic/atheist
2) Deist
3) Liberal Christian
4) Conservative Christian

Agnostic/atheist: Father explicitly rejects any belief in religion or declares that he is unsure about own beliefs, and/or says it is not possible to know anything about God.

Deist: Father declares a general belief in God or “spirituality,” but only in a general sense, not in the context of any religious tradition. Father may refer to self as “Christian,” but beliefs do not reflect traditional Christian dogma and may even explicitly reject parts of the Christian dogma (e.g., that Jesus was the son of God). Father may also reject organized religion generally and may include idiosyncratic personal elements drawn from various sources, such as Eastern religions, witchcraft, and popular culture.

Liberal Christian: Father describes self as Christian (or as adherent of particular
denomination, e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic). However, father may express skepticism about the institution of the church and/or about some aspects of Christian dogma, such as the idea that Christianity is the only true faith. Father may express favorable or at least tolerant view of other (non-Christian) faiths.

Conservative Christian: Father expresses belief in traditional Christian dogma, for example, that Jesus is the son of God and the only way to salvation. Father may mention being saved or refer to afterlife of heaven and hell. Father may mention that Christianity is the only true faith.
Appendix J: Request for Access to College/University Students

Hi,

I am Beth Matthews, a PhD candidate in Professional Counseling at Liberty University in Virginia performing dissertation research work. I wonder if I may ask a favor. For my research, I will need diverse young adult participants 18-25 years old from several sources for an online survey study on the development of religious views in young adults that I am conducting this winter. Would it be possible for me to offer the chance to be a participant in research to any of your students (they do not have to be psychology students)? If so, with whom would I speak, and how would I make the arrangements? What scheduling constraints would there be?

If you give me permission to access young adult students there, I will send you a promotional flyer to distribute to students. You will not be asked to give any other information to the student other than the promotional flyer.

Thank you very much,
Beth Matthews, MA, LPCA, BCCC
Liberty University
Lynchburg, VA
Appendix K: Request for Access to Church Members

For my dissertation research this winter, I will need a large, diverse number of young adult participants (18-25 years old) from several sources for an online survey study on the development of religious views in young adults. Could you help me by passing along information about the research opportunity and the link to the online survey to people in your congregation? If someone does not qualify to be in the study, they could still recommend it to someone else.

All of my research will be approved by the Liberty University ethics board (IRB) before allowing me to commence the study, and would include an informed consent. My contact information is below so that you may ask questions or indicate your willingness to circulate information about the study. I would send that information to you once you indicate your interest. You would not give any other information to the young adult other than the promotional flyer.

With much appreciation,
Beth Matthews
PhD candidate at the Center for Counseling and Family Studies
Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
Appendix L: Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in this survey. The results of the survey will be used to help researchers and parents better understand how a parent’s own personal traits and characteristics might impact the spirituality and religious interests of their young adult child. To avoid influencing your natural responses to the questions, the study’s details were left general at the start. Hopefully, you have benefitted in some way from your participation.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

If you would like to be part of the chance for compensation (every 20th participant who completes the survey will receive a $10 gift card to Amazon, for a total of 20 gift cards), or be notified about the findings of the survey, you must leave an email, twitter handle, or postal address.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Beth Matthews. You may ask her any questions or share concerns you have following this survey. She may be contacted at llmatthews2@liberty.edu. Beth’s advisor, Dr. John C. Thomas, may be contacted at 434-592-4047 or jcthomas2@liberty.edu.
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher or her chair, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email irb@liberty.edu.

If you change your mind and prefer to not have your answers be part of this research, you may unenroll without any consequences.

Click here to unenroll from this study.
Appendix M: Approval of Research from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (See next page.)
Informed Consent

“Development of Religious Beliefs in Young Adults” Study
Beth Matthews, MA, LPCA, BCCC
Liberty University

If you are an American young adult from 18-30 and wouldn’t mind giving your feedback, you are invited to be in a doctoral research study. Please read this form and ask any questions that you might have before completing the online survey.

This study is being conducted by Beth Matthews, MA, LPCA, BCCC, who is a doctoral candidate at the Center for Counseling and Family Studies, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia.

Background Information
This study will examine characteristics and religious beliefs of young adults. For this study, 200-400 participants from 18-30 years old are being sought.

Procedures
Please respond to the questionnaire by selecting the answer that is most correct for you. There are no “right or wrong” answers. The questions will relate to your religious beliefs, memories of your home, your parents’ religious beliefs and parenting style. If you do/did not live with both biological parents, please respond to the questions thinking of those two persons who were most involved in raising you. The survey may require between 15-25 minutes to complete. Please try to answer every question.

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

Benefits and Risks of Being in the Study
While no study is without risks, the risks associated with this research are no more than in everyday life. The assessment was designed to be as non-invasive as possible and carries no more than minimal risk. As you respond to the survey, you might become aware of some emotional issues that could cause discomfort. On the other hand, it is possible that you might grow relationally and emotionally from considering where you stand in regards to your own beliefs. Beth is available to discuss any discomfort you might experience.

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Confidentiality
No personally identifiable information will be collected (unless you would like to be considered for possible compensation - see below). Research records, both electronic and hard copies, will be locked or encrypted and stored securely and only this researcher and her school superiors will have access to the records. At the end of three years, all data will be destroyed. If the results of this study are ever published in a professional journal, no information that makes a participant's identification possible will be included.

Compensation
Every twentieth participant completing the study will receive a gift card if they are willing to leave a postal address with the survey. Addresses will be destroyed immediately after gift cards are mailed.

Contacts and Questions
If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Beth Matthews at lllmatthews2@liberty.edu. Beth’s advisor for this dissertation is Dr. John Thomas, and he may be contacted at 434-592-4047 or jcthomas2@liberty.edu. You have the right to ask questions, explain your answers, or otherwise communicate with Beth at any time. You can also request a copy of the overall results. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than Beth, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, at 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email irb@liberty.edu.

Statement of Consent
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked any questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this study that has the potential to benefit an important group of individuals.

Beth Matthews, MA, LPCA, BCCC
Appendix N: Permissions to Use/Reproduce Inventories

Parental Authority Questionnaire

September 11, 2013
From: John R. Buri

Beth:

Thank you for your interest in the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Please feel free to use the PAQ for any not-for-profit purposes. For further information about the PAQ (for example, scoring details, norms, reliability measures, validity), please see the following journal articles:


I wish you the best with your research project.

John R. Buri, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Psychology
University of St. Thomas

Lum Emotional Availability of the Parent Scale

October 6, 2013
From: Vicky Phares

Beth:

Sorry for the delay. If you are still interested in using the measure—go for it. The questions and directions are all in the original article, so you shouldn’t need anything else to use the measure. Good luck!

Vicky
Professor
June 22, 2015
From: Vicky Phares

Hello Beth:

Congratulations on your huge accomplishment! That's awesome!

Because the items of the measure are not copyrighted, you do not need to request permission—the measure is in the public domain so no permission is needed. Good luck and congratulations again!

Vicky
Professor
Department of Psychology
University of South Florida

Parent Forgive Child Subscale of the Family Forgiveness Questionnaire

September 5, 2013
From: Greg Maio

Dear Ms. Matthews,

An example of the measure you requested is attached to this email. The subject and target identities changed in different versions (e.g., mother to daughter, son, or father) but all else is the same.

The measure is described in the article, so citations of the article are appropriate; there is no other piece to cite.

Good luck with your research.

Best,
Greg
Professor
School of Psychology
Cardiff University

June 21, 2015
To: Greg Maio
Hi again, Dr. Maio,

I wrote you 1 1/2 years ago asking information about and permission to use the perceptions of forgiveness measure in my dissertation research. Are you the one who might grant permission for me to include a copy of the measure you sent me in my online dissertation? I would reprint the copy and place it in an appendix.

Thank you!
Beth Matthews
Liberty University

June 22, 2015
From: Greg Maio

Dear Beth,

Yes, that's fine. Did your project turn out well?

Best,
Greg
Professor
School of Psychology
Cardiff University

**Parental Spirituality Scale**

August 18, 2013
From: Angie McDonald

Hello Beth,

My apologies for taking so long to respond. I have attached the items for the Parental Spirituality Scale. I do believe that it has been used in other studies, but I do not have any specific citations. My co-author, Richard Beck, and I wrote the scale.

Best wishes with your dissertation!

Dr. Angie McDonald
Associate Professor of Psychology
Palm Beach Atlantic University

June 22, 2015
From: Angie McDonald
Beth,

Congratulations on finishing your dissertation! Yes, you may include a copy of
the PSS in the appendix of your online dissertation.

Blessings,
Angie
Dr. Angie McDonald
Associate Professor of Psychology
Palm Beach Atlantic University

Religious Emphasis Scale

Wednesday, May 20, 2015
From: Bob Altemeyer

You have my permission to use the Religious Emphasis scale in your research,
provided you know what it is and you know how to score it.

Bob Altemeyer
Professor of Psychology (Retired)
University of Manitoba

Note from dissertation author: Permission to use the RES was limited to that of research
only. To view the Religious Emphasis Scale in its entirety, please access one of the two
following sources.


Education.

Spiritual Assessment Inventory

September 11, 2013
From: Todd Hall

Hi Beth,

That is fine to use the SAI in your research. The dropbox link below has the
measure and two published articles on its development.
(Address withheld by dissertation author.)
Best wishes with your research.

Take care,
Todd
Professor of Psychology
Biola University

June 30, 2015
Dear Dr. Hall,

Hi, you gave me permission 1 1/2 years ago to use the SAI in research for my PhD dissertation. Would it be also acceptable to include the SAI in its entirety in an appendix of my dissertation that will be published on Liberty University's institutional online "Digital Commons" site? This is a not-for-profit site.

Thank you!
Beth Matthews
PhD Professional Counseling
Liberty University

June 30, 2015
From: Todd Hall

Hi Beth,

Yes, that is fine. Congrats on finishing your dissertation!

Take care,
Todd
Professor of Psychology
Biola University