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AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FACTORS INFLUENCING  
EVANGELICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENSITY  
OF INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL CHURCHES

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Daryl Alan Diddle  
May, 2006

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## APPROVAL SHEET

AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FACTORS INFLUENCING  
EVANGELICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENSITY  
OF INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL CHURCHES

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Date May 18, 2006

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To my wife, Annette,  
my children, Benjamin, Paul, and David,  
my parents, Earl and Bonnie Diddle,  
and the Wilmore Free Methodist Church family.  
You have all freely given that this project might be possible.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Alpha College
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BC	Beta College
BSU	Baptist Student Union
CCC	Christian College Consortium
CMIS	Campus Ministry Involvement Survey
CSDP	College Student Development Personnel
GC	Gamma College
LCIS	Local Church Involvement Survey
RQ	Research Question

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## PREFACE

There should be several names on the binding and cover of this work; certainly I had a part, but many others have sacrificed as much to make it possible. My wife Annette, our children, Benjamin, Paul, and David, and the church I serve, Wilmore Free Methodist, have all given selflessly that this endeavor might reach completion. I owe them a debt of gratitude for their patience and assistance.

Special thanks to Drs. Hal Pettegrew and Brian Richardson for their consistent encouragement and careful suggestions. They have helped me to do something I would not have considered myself able to do.

May this work bring glory to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and may it help strengthen the bond between the church and the academy.

Daryl Alan Diddle

Wilmore, Kentucky

May 2006

## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH CONCERN

Four people sat around the conference room table: two college professors, a pastor of a local church, and a college student – a bright young woman, a senior, only weeks from graduating with a Christian Ministry degree from a highly respected Christian college. The conversation had moved from developments in her personal life to her academic performance to reflection upon her spiritual growth and development during her years at school. This was her college exit interview, designed to help her ongoing integration of academics, spiritual disciplines, work, and faith as a new chapter of life was about to unfold before her. She talked excitedly about serving Christ and about her upcoming interviews for positions of Christian Education Director at several churches. It was then that the pastor asked the question that brought silence from the interview participants and brought tears to the student's eyes: "What local church has been your home and place of ministry these past four years?"

No answer. So the pastor asked again, "Where have you gone to church while you've been in college?"

"Well, I've gone with my friends...wherever they go; sometimes to church A, sometimes to church B, sometimes to church C. When they need nursery workers at (the local mega-church), I go there because they pay their nursery workers \$8.00 an hour."

“But,” the pastor continued, “Where have you *served*? Where have you *connected*? Where is your church *home*?”

No answer. So the pastor continued, “You are about to interview with churches that you expect will hire you to do ministry that you haven’t been willing to do for free. You have no practical experience doing ministry. You haven’t even taken the time to build a relationship with a church in the past four years. Why should a church hire you?”

It was a good question, a question for which the student had no answer. The truth is, she knew better. She knew she should be committed to a local church. She knew that she should be engaged in service through that local church – especially being a student studying Christian ministry, but she had consistently decided against those things throughout her college years.

Why had she done that? Here is the question that frustrates and confounds local church pastors and Christian college spiritual development personnel alike, and is the subject of this study. “Why do an increasing number of Christian college students not attend church? Why do an increasing number of Christian college students choose to not participate in the ministries of local churches?”

### **Introduction to the Research Problem**

Most studies and literature published over the past thirty-five years reveal a consistent decline in religious attitudes, values and behaviors among students during their college years (Kreutzer 2001, 83). Usually, the elements of decline include dropping any affiliation with a traditional church and the reduction of involvement in local congregations (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 281). In his 1977 study, Alexander

Astin discovered a 20% decline in church attendance for protestant Christians during their four years of college, particularly among those students who live on campus. These students, in most cases, are assumed to be students who attend school at a distance from their home and “home” church (Astin 1977, 56). Hartley notes a similar decline in his recent research with first-year college students (Hartley 2003, 5).

Research has also consistently shown that, upon entering college, students who live in dormitories participate in religious practices no less than those who live with their parents. But those students living in the dormitory participate substantially less than those who live at home after four years on campus (Astin 1977, 78; Gribbon 1981, 33; Gribbon 1990, 38; Hoge 1974, 126). For many students, time spent at college reduces their involvement in local churches.

### ***Increasing Spirituality***

The reported increase in student self-perceived spirituality only confuses this issue. College students consider themselves to be more spiritual than ever. They have a profound craving for the spiritual and seek spiritual solutions to the fragmentation in their lives (Poe 2004, 21). From today’s young teens through the “twenty-somethings,” the “Bridger” generation may be remembered “as the most religious group America has ever known” (Rainer 1997, 151). Their spirituality does not seem to proportionately translate into church attendance and participation however, even for those who are Christian, whose Scriptural teachings include the mandate to meet together with the greater body for worship, prayer and other spiritual disciplines (Hebrews 10:25).

### ***Increased Student Mobility***

Transportation to local congregations does not seem to be a problem for students. Students have unprecedented access to off-campus activities and look more frequently to off-campus events for their socialization opportunities. In 1979, on-campus events occupied the top four choices of college students' preferred social activities. By 1997, most students preferred to leave campus for their social time (Levine and Cureton 1998, 98-102). Even with the mobility that comes with increased access to transportation, an increasing number of students still choose not to seek social and spiritual involvement in local congregations.

### ***Historical Link between Church and Academy***

The historical relationship between the American church and the college and university is strong and pervasive (Ma 2003, 322; Poe 2004, 31). This is true particularly in the Wesleyan/Methodist theological tradition. Robert Conn explains:

Methodist ministry in higher education is as old as Methodism itself. When the Methodists formed their denomination at the Christmas Conference in 1784 they did two things that set their stamp upon their style of Christianity; they elected General Superintendents (bishops), and they founded Cokesbury College. Episcopacy and education have been with Methodists ever since. (Conn 1989, 1)

Although not exclusively Methodist, the link between the church and academy helped begin what have become the very best, most prestigious schools in the nation. Yet even schools with traditional, spiritual connections are not exempt from the disintegration of learning, faith, and local church involvement. While little research has been done prior to this study with students at private, four-year Christian liberal arts colleges in the Christian College Consortium, and particularly those in the Wesleyan theological tradition, most studies show that the secularizing results seem to reach across

private and public institutions, even those with rich spiritual histories and traditions (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 293).

This research grew out of the concern that, even with self-perceived student spirituality, student mobility, and other factors that might encourage college student involvement in local churches on the rise, an increasing number of Christian college students choose not to participate in these opportunities and ministries while in school. This study sought to discover some of the factors that may be influencing this downward trend.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the ways selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years. The results of this study may prove informative and useful to the Christian college student spiritual development discipline in determining factors that positively and negatively affect college students' spiritual growth. The results of this study may also prove informative and useful to pastors or campus ministers serving churches located near Christian colleges in their efforts to involve students in the ministries of the church, as well as in their efforts to minister to the needs of college students. The results of this study may also inform both college student spiritual development personnel and local church ministers as to how their efforts toward college student spiritual development may be, in fact, duplicated by one another. Finally, the results of this study may suggest ways in which local churches and Christian colleges are effectively working together toward the common goal of student spiritual development.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions were used to guide the research toward analyzing the selected factors influencing evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years:

1. In what ways is intensity of involvement in local churches of students who attend Christian liberal arts colleges affected by selected demographic variables?
2. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the participation of a student's friends in local churches?
3. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the student's relationship to the local pastor or campus minister?
4. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by their having a role of ministry or leadership in the local church?
5. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by college sponsored spiritual growth opportunities on campus?
6. What is the relationship between the college's intensity of commitment to provide students with spiritual growth opportunities (as perceived by the student) and student's intensity of involvement in local churches?

## **Delimitations of the Study**

The research concern was to study and analyze how selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years. Because the development of faith and spirituality is a common mission of most Christian liberal arts colleges and local churches, and because the research focuses on student involvement in local churches, this research was delimited to undergraduate students currently attending Christian liberal arts colleges where one might assume a higher concentration of students are of the Christian faith and would desire to have a relationship with a local church. Consequently, because of the nature and mission of the

schools, this research was delimited to students attending schools in the Christian College Consortium (CCC).

Because of the traditional and historical link between Methodism and higher education, the study was also delimited to colleges and universities who approach theology from a Wesleyan perspective, specifically including students enrolled at Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College (names changed to protect the privacy of the schools) during the fall semester of 2005.

### **Terminology**

The following definitions and terms aid in clarification as used in the study:

*Christian College Consortium.* The Christian College Consortium consists of thirteen colleges and universities united by a shared commitment to the liberal arts tradition and a common affirmation of faith. The focus of the Consortium's activities is upon the mutual strengthening of Christian higher education. Its primary emphasis is upon the integration of Christian faith with the living and learning experiences available at the member schools. The institutions have as their goal to graduate competent and dedicated persons who will exert a Christian influence on the structures of society in the United States and throughout the world ([www.ccconsortium.org/mission\\_statement.asp](http://www.ccconsortium.org/mission_statement.asp)).

*Christian liberal arts college.* A Christian liberal arts college is a school which, in principle, strives to allow the Christian faith to touch the entire range of life and learning to which a liberal education exposes students (Holmes 1975, 47).

*College spiritual development personnel.* College spiritual development personnel are all those persons employed by the Christian college whose primary duties



include planning, organizing, encouraging, and evaluating student spirituality on the Christian college campus.

*Faith development/spirituality.* Spirituality involves the attitudes, actions, and beliefs associated with the human search to know and experience God (Peace 2001, 658). In the context of the current study, these relate to the pursuit of Christ and Christlikeness.

*Intensity of involvement/engagement.* “The intensity of involvement is the product of the interaction of the quantity and quality of effort” (Baker 2003, 6). The quantity dimension can be measured by the amount of hours a student devotes to the local church. The quality dimension includes aspects of physical presence, public affirmation of belonging, degree of investment in the campus ministry’s programs and overall purpose, and individual contributions to the church’s goal accomplishment (Baker 2003, 6).

*Local churches.* Christian churches that are within a reasonable driving distance to the Christian college campus.

*Wesleyan/Methodist theological approach.* A Wesleyan/Methodist approach to theology is a theological approach characterized by the thoughts and writings of John Wesley, eighteenth-century scholar, theologian, preacher, and minister.

### **Procedural Overview**

Permission was obtained via letter (Appendix 1) from the appropriate authorities of Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College to contact college/university students and solicit participation in the study. Data was then collected using an e-mail invitation (Appendix 2) to all students enrolled at the previously mentioned colleges during the fall semester of 2005 – approximately 3600 students in all.

Embedded in the e-mail was a link to a website hosting an electronic survey instrument which students were asked to complete on-line.

The instrument used to collect the needed data was the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS, Appendix 3). The LCIS was created by this researcher through the adaptation of the Campus Ministry Involvement Survey (CMIS), an instrument created by Morris L. Baker for his 2003 study of college student involvement in Baptist Student Unions (Baker 2003, 161). The instrument consisted of an agreement to participate, 12 demographic questions and 27 triangulated questions designed to measure the variables to be evaluated according to the research questions.

The goal of the researcher was to achieve at least a 30% rate of return, or 1190 surveys for data compilation. Completed surveys were then analyzed for emerging patterns and themes that answer the research questions.

### **Research Assumptions**

The following assumptions underlie this study:

1. The LCIS is a reliable research instrument, suitable for the assessment of local church involvement of college students according to the research questions of this study.
2. Participation in a local church enhances Christian spiritual development.
3. Students attending a Christian liberal arts college or university would be more likely to be significantly involved in a local church than their counterparts in a secular university or college.
4. The opportunities for spiritual development by Christian liberal arts colleges or universities can in fact limit the involvement of students in local churches.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENT LITERATURE

I know from personal experience the crisis of faith which the college environment can provoke. Once a good liberal arts education, including a critical study of religion, got a firm grasp on my head, it declared war on my heart. (Shockley 1989, 67)

Don Shockley is far from the only one to have experienced what he describes above. While the college years are expectedly full of change and new ways of thinking, students of faith often find them painfully difficult. These are typically times of profound challenge and adjustment, second in intensity only perhaps to times of marriage and childbirth (Astin 1977, 2). Eighteen-year-olds who leave home to attend college find themselves in a completely new place in life. They are clearly no longer in high school. Suddenly, they are the “small men (women) on campus” again, similar to their freshmen experience four years previous. The difference is that now they are transitioning without the benefits of their home environment; most are living on their own for the first time. Over the next four years, they will have increasingly more control over themselves and their decisions. Supportive and understanding friends and family are often miles away and contact with them is limited. They no longer have the structure of familiar youth ministries and church worship settings. In fact, nearly every external structure they knew that had given their life order has been limited or has vanished altogether. Apart from any rules or guidelines the college or university might impose upon them, college students are left with only their internal compass to guide their decisions. Never before

have they been so free or so vulnerable. Truly, these are “four critical years” as the title of Alexander Astin’s seminal work states (Astin 1977). Never before have these individuals so needed the influence of the church in their lives.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the historical relationship between the church and the academy. A description of the condition of typical American college students follows, focusing specifically upon their religious habits and interests and their spiritual development as it relates to their school and local church according to precedent research. Embedded in the study is an analysis of the relevant biblical and theological precedents of Christian faith and a review of the theology of the local church. The intent of this work is to establish a foundation for the present study by identifying the gaps in the past and current research relating to student involvement in local churches.

### **The Church and the Academy**

A quick glance through the Biblical gospels shows that while Jesus was on earth, his three primary ministry purposes were preaching, teaching and healing; these are the activities into which he invested his time. Then, just before he returned to Heaven, Jesus commissioned his disciples to do as he had done. They were to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything he had commanded” (Matthew 28:19-20 All Scripture quotations are from NIV). The ministry responsibilities of preaching, teaching, and healing which Jesus himself bore were now placed upon his followers.

The church has accomplished these with varying degrees of success over the past two millennia. At times, Christ's followers have been very private about their work. Other times, the church has worked very publicly, as in its teaching ministry.

### ***Origins of Christian Higher Education***

A necessary condition for human prosperity, if not for survival itself, has been finding a way to deal with reality in terms of what is known to be true. Poe calls this the finding of an "adequate basis in knowledge for life" and likens humanity's search for it to the historical contrast between Athens and Jerusalem; Athens representing the effort of unaided human thought toward accomplishing this, and Jerusalem referring to the declaration of such reality by the communication of a personal, caring God (Poe 2004, 9). For the (particularly) western Christian mind, these two philosophies are melded together into a system of valued human intelligence and thought, superintended by and subordinated to divinely revealed truths. Humans are ultimately dependent upon God for knowledge, but have a valuable capacity to think because of their creation in the *imago dei*. The liberation from ignorance and from bondage to the custom and tradition of the past moves humanity toward more complete humanness; toward more abundant life (Overholt 1970, 7). This understanding has profoundly shaped the Western European educational systems and institutions, causing an integration of religion and university (and society) that has historically approached organic in nature (Overholt 1970, 7).

### ***American Higher Education***

This European organism crossed the Atlantic with the discovery of the United States, and the schools and society founded there followed suit in nature and purpose.

In 1619, when Sir Edwin Sandys and his associates in the Virginia Company made a grant of 10,000 acres of land for the establishment of America's first university, at Henrico, Virginia, they brought to the task a concept of education which, in its essentials, had stood the test of some fifteen centuries. There was a tradition of liberal education which had come down from the fifth century through the palace schools and the monastic and cathedral schools to the medieval universities, on to the seventeenth-century colleges at Oxford and Cambridge and the Scottish universities. It combined classical learning and the Christian religion, the aim being to cultivate the humane person. (Pattillo and Mackenzie 1966, 2)

All of the colleges and universities founded in America prior to the Revolutionary War (Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, Princeton, Pennsylvania, Washington and Lee, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth) owed their beginnings to the initiatives of Christian churches (Overholt 1970, 8). Said Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, "The primary purpose of the founding of Harvard was to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning" (George 1999, 57). These schools were, for the most part, modeled after the British intimate, residential community of scholars. Since then, the majority of America's colleges and universities have been founded under some sort of Christian patronage, although their relationship to the church and commitment to spiritual vitality has withered, particularly in the past fifty years (Burtchaell 1998, ix).

### ***The Methodist Connection***

Ever since John Wesley, the churches that bear his name in some form and approach theology from his perspective have been committed to higher education. In England, a "prominent part of Wesley's life work, subordinate to evangelization and social service, was his role as founder, promoter, and theoretician for various diverse educational projects" (Marquart 1992, 49). Wesley primarily sought to minister to the poor, a group overlooked by much of the English scholastic world. Wesley's concern for

the marginalized rose from his conviction that all people were of equal worth. With such an ethical standard, “Wesley could not passively accept the imposition of widespread disadvantages, especially in such an important area as education” (Marquart 1992, 51).

Even during Wesley’s brief stay in Georgia, he pursued the establishment of schools for the colonists. The bulk of the educational work, however, would come from the Methodists he left in America.

When the Methodists formed their denomination at the Christmas Conference in 1784, they did two things that set their stamp upon their style of Christianity; they elected General Superintendents (bishops) and they founded Cokesbury College. Episcopacy and education have been with Methodists every since.

By the end of their first century, Methodists had started schools and colleges all along the eastern seaboard. At the half-century point, they picked up the pace. Before they had finished, they had founded or associated with more than a thousand schools, colleges, and universities and created an educational enterprise that spread from the Atlantic, over the sprawling western frontier, to the shores of the Pacific.

By the late nineteenth century, General Conference asked each annual conference to establish a college within its precincts. Many conferences already had more than that. Several had systems of feeder elementary schools as well. Clearly education, and particularly higher education, had great vitality in the Methodist tradition. (Conn 1989, 1)

The desire for educated piety has been an aim of the Wesleyan educational ethic for centuries. Its products include Boston, Drew, Duke, Emory, Northwestern, Southern California, Southern Methodist, Syracuse and Vanderbilt (Marsden 1994, 276).

Methodism is responsible for founding over 1,200 schools, more than any other protestant denomination, and more than the Catholic Church (Burtchae 1998, 260).

### ***The Twentieth-Century Demise***

George Marsden, in his work *The Soul of the American University*, concludes by his title that American higher education has moved from a tradition of “Protestant establishment” to one of “established non-belief” (Marsden 1994). Many other

commentators (Schwenn, Chandler, Burtchaell, Poe) have followed suit, reaching similar conclusions about the place of Christianity (or lack thereof) in modern American institutions of higher education. “While some [commentators] are not so pessimistic, it is generally the case that higher education in America has shifted from a vantage point where the knowledge of God provides the context for all forms of human knowledge to one that is hostile to Christianity” (Dockery 1999, 10).

The current study focuses upon liberal arts colleges of the Christian College Consortium following a Wesleyan theological tradition that, according to their mission/vision/purpose statements, remain committed to the Christian faith, value system and worldview in their educational goals. The history of Christian higher education is presented however, to illustrate the drastic departures from faith that have taken place in the world of higher education in the relatively recent past after centuries of consistency. For hundreds of years, the academy has served to further the purposes of the Church, but a profound change has occurred. Enter today’s college student.

### **The College Student, Then and Now**

Just as the Western institution of higher education has historically aspired to serve the church, so did the typical Western student, particularly in the United States (Poe 2004, 25). As the Christian fabric of the American society has disintegrated however, so have many of those aspirations and priorities of its students.

### ***Historical Trends***

It would be naïve and ridiculous to suggest that all of the students enrolled in early Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Rutgers, and other colonial schools were committed



Christian believers who were themselves as dedicated to the service of Christ as were their alma maters. Although these and other schools were founded in part to provide an educated clergy to the early colonial settlers (Overholt 1970, 8), this was not their sole purpose, and certainly not all their students were clergy. Yet the overwhelming majority of students in these schools adhered to the Christian faith and maintained some notion, however vague, that their lives and education were to be used for the service and glory of God and of His church (Marsden 1994, 3). No matter what their end vocation might have been, these students seemed to have, broadly speaking, a commonality in world-view which set the tone for their studies and goals.

Students also had a common curriculum, particularly through the late 1800's, before the influence of the Enlightenment and the "German university idea" came to bear upon them, as well as the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862, providing congressional endowments to colleges for the use of agriculture and mechanics (Pattillo and Mackenzie 1966, 8). In the early days of these schools, there was an understanding that even "specific bodies of knowledge relate to each other, not just because scholars work together in community, not just because interdisciplinary work broadens knowledge, but also because all truth is God's truth, composing a single universe of knowledge" (Dockery 1999, 12). At Harvard, for example, even though the school was founded to provide the colonies with an educated ministry, "the curriculum was broadly conceived along the lines of the ancient traditions of liberal education and was intended for leaders in other fields (apart from the clergy) as well" (Brubacher and Rudy 1958, 6). This limited variance in curriculum, consisting basically of the elements of the Greek trivium (grammar, dialectic and rhetoric) and quadrivium (music, math, geometry and

astronomy), produced remarkable results: “That the colonial colleges served their society well can scarcely be denied on the basis of the leadership they helped to train” (Overholt, 1970, 8).

Changes in society and ongoing curriculum revisions have taken their toll. The research of the last century shows a steady decline in religiosity of the average college student. Although consistent, longitudinal studies of this type are not numerous, comments from various studies that have been conducted convey the point.

In the book *The Individual and His Religion*, Gordon Allport, reporting the findings of his 1946-47 Harvard University study, notes that out of 200 students surveyed who were raised in orthodox, Protestant homes, 50 became altogether irreligious while at school, 28 concluded that a completely new type of religion was needed to satisfy them, and another 36 chose to shift their belief to “more liberal forms of Christianity – to Unitarianism perhaps, or to an ethical, but entirely non-theological Christianity” (Allport 1948, 41). In the 1950s, William Overholt writes, “When opinion was somewhat more favorable to organized religious groups, this author hazarded the guess that participation (of college students) in such groups reached not more than fifteen percent - an assessment that was not seriously challenged” (Overholt 1970, 13).

The problem of dilution was not limited to Christianity. Early in 1969, a conference of Rabbis declared the American university “a disaster area” for Judaism in this country (Overholt 1970, 12).

It was also in 1969 that Feldman and Newcomb’s landmark study, *The Impact of College on Students*, found that seniors, compared with freshmen, were consistently “somewhat less orthodox or fundamentalist in religious orientations, somewhat more

skeptical about the existence and influence of the supreme being, somewhat more likely to conceive of God in impersonal terms, and somewhat less favorable to the church as an institution” (Feldman and Newcomb 1969, 23). This research work, “reviewing and synthesizing nearly 1500 studies conducted over four decade...provided the first comprehensive conceptual map of generally uncharted terrain” (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, xv).

In his comprehensive ten-year study covering the mid 1960s through the mid 1970s, Alexander Astin concludes that students “show less religiousness and altruism...most dramatic is the decline in religious behavior and the accompanying increase in hedonistic behavior” (Astin 1977, 212). Daniel Yankelovich concludes the same in his 1972 study, finding that two-thirds of all students reject “organized religion as an important value in a person’s life” (Yankelovich 1972, 30). Dean Hoge reaches a similar conclusion, stating the “long-range data from four colleges depict a decrease in church attendance from the 1920’s to 1968-69” (Hoge 1974, 63). Finally, Pascarella and Terenzini, in their 1991 work citing twenty-eight separate studies, conclude that while the extents vary: “The literature published since 1967 fairly consistently reports statistically significant declines in religious attitudes, values and behaviors during the college years” (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 280). In their follow-up work of 2005, the trends reportedly continue downward, although at a lesser rate, and with some bright spots regarding college students’ religious values in Christian College Coalition schools (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005, 301). Pascarella and Terenzini admit, however, that little research has been done and call for more research in this area (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005, 292).

The college years, in the twentieth century in particular, have not been friendly to the religious lives of students. Has the course changed for today?

### *Current Statistical Review*

In 1967, John Harden wrote, “Any attempt to describe the beliefs of college people is doomed to failure if we follow traditional patterns” (Harden 1967, 39). This observation was true in 1967, and it is even truer today. Every generation has its eccentricities, which are important to identify. Harry Lee Poe introduces the eccentricities of today’s college students:

College students today are the children of baby boomers. They were raised by arguably the most self-centered generation the country has ever seen. In that regard, these young people were not raised as much as they were allowed to raise themselves. While their parents reveled in the higher standard of living that a two income family can enjoy, these children took up the slack at home. These are the children who were a few years ago referred to as the latchkey kids. They cared for themselves after school, and the television set was their baby-sitter and nanny. This generation became the first emotional beneficiaries of the quick, no-fault divorce as the divorce rate climbed to the fifty percent range during their formative years. (Poe 2004, 58)

College students today value choice, informality and personal expression (Wetzstein 2005, [washingtontimes.html](http://washingtontimes.html)). According to a 2005 Reboot study, the top ten worries of 18-25 year olds are as follows, in descending order: getting a sexually transmitted disease, finding a job, maintaining their grades in school, maintaining good relationships with friends, getting along with parents, their relationship with God, deciding who to vote for, making sure they are contributing to their community, finding a spouse, and finding a boyfriend or girlfriend. Purchasing products that are environmentally friendly is important to 49% of those surveyed. Forty-four percent said they volunteered with a civic or community organization involved with youth, children or education (not a

church); 40% said they volunteered with an organization involved with health or social services (Potts, Bennett, and Levin 2005, [rebooters.html](#)).

Eighty-six percent of teens believe that music piracy either is morally acceptable or is not even a moral issue. Fifty-seven percent of teens live (lived) in the same home with both of their natural parents. Forty-one percent talk to family or friends about politics in a typical day. They describe themselves as “happy, responsible, self-reliant, optimistic about the future, trusting of other people, very intelligent, and physically attractive” (Barna 2005, [barna.html](#)). Their top ten desires for the future are having a college degree, having a comfortable lifestyle, having one marriage partner for life, having close personal friends, having good physical health, having a clear purpose for living, living with a high degree of integrity, having a close relationship with God, influencing other people’s lives, and making a difference in the world (Barna 2005, [barna.html](#)).

### ***Current College Student Religious Condition***

Examining current research defined by generation, George Barna claims that today’s college students, part of “Generation Y,” display the following characteristics:

1. Thirty-four percent claim to be born again.
2. Eighty-two percent claim to be Christians.
3. Sixty-four percent describe themselves as religious.
4. Fifty-six percent claim their religious faith is very important to their lives.
5. Sixty-five percent say that the devil, or Satan, is not a real being.
6. Fifty-three percent claim that Jesus committed sins while He was on earth.
7. Thirty percent say that all religions are really praying to the same God.

8. Eighty-three percent claim that moral truth depends on circumstance. Six percent claim that moral truth is absolute. (Barna 2005, [barna.html](#))

Regarding involvement in religious activities, Barna reports that:

1. Eighty-nine percent pray weekly.
2. Fifty-six percent attend worship on a given Sunday.
3. Thirty-five percent attend Sunday school on a given week.
4. Seventy percent are engaged in some church-related effort in a given week, including worship services, Sunday school, youth group or small group. (Barna 2005, [barna.html](#))

The results of the 2004 Reboot study of 1385 young adults, 18 – 25 year olds, conducted by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, are similar to those of Barna, finding that:

1. Fifty-one percent believe it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values.
2. Seven percent say that all of their friends are of the same religious belief as they are.
3. Sixty-eight percent turn to their parents for advice.
4. Fifty-six percent claim that religion is about personal salvation, and churches (synagogues/mosques) are places where people can build their personal relationship with God.
5. Thirty-four percent say that religion is about helping people and churches (synagogues/mosques) are responsible to help the disadvantaged.
6. Sixty-three percent believe women should have the right to have an abortion.
7. Fifty-three percent believe gays/lesbians should be permitted to marry.
8. Forty-six percent believe the United States is a Christian nation.
9. Fifty-seven percent claim it is important to wait for marriage before having sex. (Potts, Bennett and Levin 2005, [rebooters.html](#))

Regarding religious engagement, the Reboot results were also similar to Barna:

1. Fifty-five percent claim to pray before meals.
2. Thirty-six percent attend worship services weekly; 18% do so monthly.
3. Twenty-seven percent attend Sunday school weekly; 39% do so monthly. (Potts, Bennett, and Levin 2005, rebooters.html)

Poe reports that “this generation grew up without any significant exposure to religion . . . only 25% have significant baseline experience in church” (Poe 2004, 58).

While the Reboot study claims 36%, the disparity may be explained by Poe’s definition of “significant,” which he does not define clearly.

In a study of United Methodist-affiliated schools, Harold Hartley reports a 14% decline in church involvement by freshmen who were actively involved in church during their high-school years. He also found that by the end of their first semester, of freshmen students:

1. Seventy-seven percent had attended at least one worship service.
2. Seventy-nine percent had spent time in prayer or meditation (a decline of nearly 8%).
3. Fifty-seven percent had read or meditated on sacred writings.
4. Thirty-five percent took part in some kind of off-campus religious organization (including churches).
5. Over 82% reported discussing religion or spirituality with their peers.
6. Forty-six percent claimed to have discussed religion or spirituality with a professor.
7. Nearly 68% said they were satisfied with on-campus opportunities for religious and spiritual development offered by their college or university. (Hartley 2003, 5)

Similarly, Arthur Levine cites a United States Department of Education report indicating that between 1976 and 1991, the proportion of high-school seniors attending

weekly religious services dropped by 25%. This is the basis for his conclusion that the place of religion in the lives of young people is diminishing (Levine and Cureton 1998, 15). In addition, Robert Gribbon, in his research for the Alban Institute, suggests a consistent drop in church involvement occurs in young adults, particularly those between 18 and 24 years of age; the average age of dropout or drastic reduction in church participation being 18. In every case (Gribbon interviewed 100 persons), the point of dropping out came when their parents stopped making them attend, when the subjects moved away from their home communities, or when the subjects graduated from school (Gribbon 1982, 4).

Bruce Kreutzer, in his 1998 doctoral dissertation, concluded that while students continue to “attach meaning to their lives from their church participation and religious commitment...church participation among protestant students has continued to decrease” (Kreutzer 2001, 94). In his follow-up interviews, most of the students admitted that they were not as involved (in the local church) as they had been in the past (Kreutzer 2001, 93). Kreutzer also found:

1. Female students who participated in local churches more than six times per month outnumbered the males 22 to 12.
2. Females rate their mother’s influence on their own church participation as strong more often than males, 34 to 21.
3. There was no difference between male and female children in rating their fathers’ influence upon their own church participation.
4. Females reported strong agreement as to the importance of church commitment to them, outnumbering the males, 40 to 28.
5. African-Americans responded with the highest percentage (80) of strong agreement on the importance of church commitment.



6. No evidence was found that correlates religious belief to church participation. (Kreutzer 2001, 92)

Kreutzer's sample does not directly correlate with either Barna or the Reboot study since the students Kreutzer interviewed were members of an evangelical campus student association; consequently the researcher could assume that the majority of the sample, if not the entire sample, were evangelical Christians. The Barna and Reboot studies did not specifically target one religious group and were therefore made up of students with a variety of religious opinions and from several religious and non-religious traditions.

On a seemingly brighter note, in his 2004 study of nearly 90,000 new college freshmen representing 150 diverse American colleges and universities, Alexander Astin summarizes the current college student religious condition as:

A diverse group ethnically, socio-economically, religiously and politically. While they have high ambitions and aspirations for educational and occupational success, and college is the means by which they believe they can achieve their goals, they are also actively dealing with existential questions. They are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, seeking to be compassionate and charitable, and determining what they think and feel about the many issues confronting their society and the global economy. (Astin 2005, 22)

Astin's study reveals that approximately 79% of college students believe in God, 80% discuss religion with their friends, 76% discuss religion with their parents at least occasionally, 69% believe that their religious belief and practice provides them with strength, support and guidance, 61% claim to pray at least weekly (28% say that they pray daily), and 40% consider it essential or very important to follow religious teachings in everyday life (Astin 2005, 5). Even more applicable to this author's research is Astin's suggestion that today's college students display high levels of religious commitment and involvement: "About four in five report that they attended religious services in the past year" (Astin 2005, 4).

Although Astin's study is described as a study of college students, Astin's data reflects the religious practices of *incoming* college freshmen. Since the survey was administered as an addendum to the traditional four page freshmen survey upon entering college, the students' answers to questions regarding, for example, their attendance at religious services in the past year, report the religious activities of high school seniors, not college freshmen (Astin 2005, 4). Consequently, while the data regarding student thoughts and opinions does reflect their current status as college students, the data related to past religious practice reflects involvement, presumably, as high school seniors. While this data is valuable and critical in establishing a baseline for the planned longitudinal research, the more revealing data regarding the religious behavior of college students will come following the planned 2007 re-test of these students. Astin's ongoing longitudinal study of college freshmen since 1966 does show, however, that between 1966 and 2001, a slow but consistent decline occurred in attendance of religious services, from nearly 92% in 1966 to 83% in 2001 (Astin et al. 2002, 43-44).

Considering the results of Astin's own past research as well as that of others, this author suggests a downturn will continue to occur in what Astin describes as *religious engagement* – specifically referring to students' attendance at religious services, as their college years pass. Causal observation and the current research suggests that this is happening currently: a renewed spiritual interest in college-age persons, but a continuously declining engagement in the social and religious structures that give substance and order to spirituality. This recurring theme of a downward trend in church attendance in the lives of college students is the focus of the current study.

## **Spirituality, Religion, and the Church**

Perhaps the most disturbing part of Kreutzer's findings is the suggestion that religious belief does not seem to affect student church participation, either positively or negatively (Kreutzer 2001, 92). This is concurrent with other research, such as that of the Princeton Religious Research Center (now the Center for the Study of Religion), which found in its 1988 study that while the importance of religious belief of college students remained relatively high (55%), only 34% of students participated in church (Princeton Religious Research Center 1989, 10). Thus, a disconnection between spirituality and religion is emerging.

### ***Rising Spirituality***

Thom Rainer claims spirituality is on the rise in the "Bridger" generation (those persons born between 1977 and 1994) (Rainer 1997, 2). It is a religion, however, that refuses to define God in precise terms and practices (Rainer 1997, 150): "What you believe is less important than that you believe something" (Rainer 1997, 152). George Barna agrees, maintaining that students are "highly spiritual . . . more spiritual than boomers ever were" (Barna 1995, 74).

Poe expands these ideas, describing the faith of postmoderns:

The postmodern world has recognized and acknowledged spiritual reality. The modern world was always antagonistic toward the idea of the spiritual and drawn more toward the material. It had a preference for the here and now. It paid attention to what could be heard, seen, smelled, touched, and tasted. Spirituality could be tolerated as long as it could be isolated from the rest of life. Postmodernists, on the other hand, have a profound craving for the spiritual, and they pursue it in many ways. (Poe 2004, 21)

In their study among Catholics, Dean Hoge, William Dinges, Mary Johnson, and Juan Gonzales call spirituality a “major concern” (Hoge et al. 2001, 149). Regarding spirituality among Catholic students, Hoge reaches the following conclusions:

Spirituality in the 1990’s is strong. While our data support other studies showing that young adults are less religious in institutional attachments than other age cohorts in the Church, there is no evidence they are any less spiritual. Eighty percent of non-Latinos and 77 percent of Latinos consider themselves spiritual persons. (Hoge et al. 2001, 153)

Similarly, in his 2005 study, Alexander Astin concluded:

Four in five (college students) indicate “having an interest in spirituality” . . . and nearly two-thirds say that “my spirituality is a source of joy. Many are also actively engaged in a spiritual quest, with nearly half reporting that they consider it “essential” or “very important” to seek opportunities to help them grow spiritually. Additionally, more than three in five freshmen report having had a spiritual experience while “witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature. (Astin 2005, 4)

Other recent research, from a variety of perspectives, has concluded the same: young people today, broadly speaking, are very, very spiritually interested people (Cherry, Deberg and Porterfield 2001; Light 2001; Gribbon 1981, 1990; Light 2001; Potts, Bennett and Levin 2005). What is this spirituality of today though, and how does it define itself in experience?

### ***Christian Spirituality?***

Perhaps the best way to define postmodern spirituality is to demonstrate what it is not. Postmodern spirituality is not Christian spirituality; it largely rejects the exclusive elements of the Christian faith. According to Barna, only 6 in 10 “spiritual” Postmoderns take an orthodox view of God, claiming He is the “all powerful, all-knowing perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today” (Barna 1995, 76). Twenty percent of this generation says that they do not know how to define God. Twenty

percent more suggest that God is “everyone and everywhere,” or “the realization of personal human potential,” or “a state of higher consciousness,” taking the New Age concept of God for their own (Barna 1995, 76). According to Alexander Astin, 83% of today’s college students agree that “non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers. Furthermore, 63% of college students disagree with the statement that “people who don’t believe in God will be punished” (Astin 2005, 4). In this most spiritual group, where nearly 86% call themselves “Christian,” 45% believe that Jesus was a “sinner” while on earth (Rainer 1997, 153). Clearly, the claimed spirituality of today’s college students does not hold to basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

Neither does this spirituality seem to translate into traditionally understood morals and individual ethical practices. In his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allen Bloom observes that students “lack identity – a stable, unifying core that ensures predictable moral behavior” (Bloom 1987, 215). Similarly, Harry Poe writes the following concerning the moral values of today’s “spiritual students;” or perhaps more correctly stated, the abdication of moral values of today’s “spiritual” students:

The rejection of absolute values is the aspect of postmodern thought that has attracted the attention of most conservative Christian commentators. More disturbing for the conservatives perhaps is that evangelical Christians have embraced the same relativism as have their secular neighbors. Born-again college students are just as likely to jump into bed for sex without marriage as their pagan dorm mates, although some recent studies suggest that the young have grown weary of indifferent sex. (Poe 2004, 89)

Moral values that are tied to a spirituality that is not Christian may not be moral at all.

### *Spirituality and Religious Engagement*

Neither does postmodern spirituality necessarily translate into faithful religious practice. In his study of adolescent religious behavior, *Religion in the Lives of American Adolescents: A Literature Review*, Mark Regnerus reports that although 76% of adolescents claim to believe in a personal God, only 31% attend weekly religious services (Regnerus 2003, 7). The concept of spirituality has become an intensely internal thing, expressed in highly personal, informal ways.

Young people are clearly . . . more disconnected from traditional denominations. Young people are also clearly less religious, at least when it comes to traditional measures of religious practices (e.g., attending worship services.)

In this study, we learned that younger people favor more informal ways to practice their faith as opposed to attending services, classes or other formal activities. They find their way to religious expression by spending time with their friends in informal group settings. There is a genuine attachment to religious life...taking place as young people are integrated into diverse networks with people of many religious persuasions and backgrounds. Overall, about a third (36%) of young people say they attend religious services weekly and 27% say they attend Sunday school, although certainly this number is overstated. (Potts, Bennett, and Levin 2005, rebooters.html)

The 2003 study of the National Study of Youth and Religion found that, while 96% of Southern Baptist teens surveyed believe in God and 80% have made a personal commitment to live their lives for God, (Ross 2005, 32), only 51% of these teens attend church (and Sunday school) every week (Ross 2005, 104).

In his study of Catholic young adults, Dean Hoge discovered that a majority of non-church going Catholics considered themselves spiritual persons, indicating that “churchgoing and spirituality are commonly separated in their minds” (Hoge et al. 2001, 153). His research shows that young adult Catholics participate very little in Scripture study groups, Scripture discussion classes, prayer groups, faith-sharing groups or social justice groups. Only 31% of young adult Catholics attend mass weekly – an amazing

similarity to most current protestant church attendance statistics (Hoge et al. 2001, 155-60). Barna summarizes this disconnection across the traditions:

There may have been a time in American history when people held a two-part desire: to be close to God and to be active and productive participants in a local church. If that combination did exist, it has surely been frittered away with the passage of time. (Barna 1995, 80)

But the question remains, “Is this idea of participating in a local church really all that important?” Why should this non-involvement of young adults in the church warrant concern?

### **The Importance of the Local Church**

In addition to the historical trends of college-age adults slipping out of the ranks of local churches, the intensified, post-modern separation of spirituality and religion has taken its toll on local church involvement of college students. Clearly, attendance and participation at local churches falls into the less-desirable category of religion – the routine and pragmatic demonstrations of spirituality, and not into the trendier identity of spirituality – the individual belief of some Supreme Being (Constantine et al. 2002, 605). But the theological requirements and developmental advantages of being an integrated part of a church body have not changed. On the contrary, local church involvement may be more important during these years than at other times of life, particularly helping with adjustment to college life (Low 1995, 411), helping to integrate their beliefs into all areas of their lives (Bryant 2003, 737), helping with students’ mechanisms for coping (Constantine et al. 2002, 610), and strengthening network ties (Smith 2003, 265).

### ***The Theological Case for Church Involvement***

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, as in most religious traditions, an assumption exists that the adherents will meet together in local assemblies from time to time. The essential concept related to worship in both the Old and New Testaments is that of corporate service, in the Hebrew, <sup>a</sup>bôdâ, and in the Greek, λατρεία, each signifying the labor of slaves or hired servants (Douglas 1962, 1340). The tradition and requirement of gathering together for worship has been integral to Jewish and Christian faith practice from the exodus forward.

#### **Old Testament Roots**

While there are instances of individual worship in the Old Testament (Genesis 24:26; Exodus 33:9), the emphasis is upon the act of congregational worship. The underlying plan of the book of Exodus illustrates the relationship of covenant, law, and cult, or worship. Purkiser explains:

Redemption came first in the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The law followed, setting forth the kind of conduct and character befitting those redeemed and brought into a covenant relationship with God. Then worship was instituted, not only to remind them of redemption, but to aid in securing and maintaining a character worthy of God's saving act. (Purkiser 1977, 98)

The Passover feast is the earliest example of God's requirement of community worship.

God said to Moses:

Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for the generations to come. (The feast) must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. (Exodus 12:43-47)

God leaves no one out of the mandate. The importance of assembling for this holy exercise was incumbent upon all.



The intricate instructions given in chapters 25 through 31 of Exodus for the building of the community tabernacle and the services to be held therein point as well to the seriousness and detail with which God esteems corporate worship. Again, all of the Israelites were called to participate:

The Lord said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the patterns I will show you. (Exodus 25: 1-2, 8-9)

Although the Jews clearly assembled for reasons of worship (1 Chronicles 29:10-20), the corporate worship cultus was solidified later in the construction of the temple, which David wished to construct, but left the responsibility to Solomon according to the word of the Lord. Even as the prophet Nathan told King David, “The Lord declares to you . . . I will raise up your offspring to succeed you . . . he is the one who will build a house for my name” (2 Samuel 7:11-13), so did this come about in Solomon’s fourth reigning year. The Solomonic temple stood for nearly 350 years as the center of the sacrificial system and corporate worship center of Israel.

The Psalms also provide a glimpse of the pervasiveness of Old Testament corporate worship. The Psalmist refers to his desire to be in the presence of God, in the confines of the temple, dwelling there, seeking Him in his house (Psalm 27:4). The Psalmist also recalls the joyful time of worship and wishes again for the opportunity to “go with the multitudes, leading the procession to the house of God with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng” (Psalm 42:4).

Similarly, later accounts of groups gathering at the temple, or at various locations after the destruction of Solomon’s temple indicate the continuing expectation of corporate worship (2 Chronicles 29-30). That the public worship in the temple was a

spiritual reality is clear from the fact that when the sanctuary was destroyed, the exiles created a synagogue service in Babylon. Even after the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the proliferation of the synagogues throughout Palestine, though not intended to be a replacement for the Temple (indeed, they co-existed for some time), continued. As they did, they increasingly become the locus for community, religious, and social life for the disbursed Jewish people (Ferguson 1993, 540). The gathering together to offer praise to God and to offer themselves for service was a pervasive practice in the life of Israel.

### **New Testament Realities**

Regular mention is made of the devout Jews gathering in the synagogue. Even Jesus participated in this regular gathering on the Sabbath day for worship, prayer, and teaching (Luke 4:16-28). The disciples likewise participated in the life of the synagogue as a central hub for their life of faith (Cairns 1981, 83).

Even following the revelation of Christ as Messiah and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the apostles remained faithful to the religious practices of the Temple. They seemed to consistently gather at the Jerusalem temple for prayer (Acts 3:1) and fellowship (Acts 5:12) except during times of persecution, such as that which followed the stoning of Stephen (Douglas 1962, 229). Although there is consistent record of the dispersed apostles going to local synagogues to preach and teach concerning the Messiah – indeed the regular practice of the Apostle Paul was to first enter the synagogue in the towns to which he traveled (Acts 13:5, 14, 42; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10) – it seems the believers quickly left (or were removed from) the synagogues and began meeting together separately.

The rise of the use of the term ἐκκλησία to denote an assembly of called out persons came to identify the gathering of those who participated in the Way, those who followed Christ (Purkiser 1977, 567). The image is one of a people in a city, upon hearing the trumpet call of a herald, gather together at an appointed time and place to conduct business (Schmidt 1950, 21). The increasingly common use of this term indicates an increasing regularity of Christians gathering together, a practice that came to be expected as the church grew.

That local Christian groups met regularly is evidenced in the Pauline literature. Paul's correspondence to the group(s) at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi, Colossae and Thessalonica consistently refer to ethical practices they are to practice when together, rules for corporate worship, and principles for getting along in community with one another. Clearly, there exists in these writings an implicit call for Christians to meet together. This call is made explicit by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, where he implores followers of Christ to "not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as the day approaches" (Hebrews 10:25). Just as the early disciples met together for teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer, so is the present church called to gather together in an attitude of service, with the purpose of worship, and for the glory of God and benefit of all.

### ***The Social Science Case for Church Involvement***

The validity of the study of religious instruction and spiritual development from a social science perspective has been argued as being anywhere from essential to heretical through the past several decades (Dykstra and Parks 1986, 6). Yet one's

approach to this argument is critical as to one's approach to and one's concept of the purpose of the church, and the church's relationship with the student and the higher educational institution. James Michael Lee puts it this way:

Is religious instruction a branch of theological science or a branch of social science? The answer to this question is of paramount practical importance because on it depend the entire axis and thrust of every aspect of the work of religious instruction. (Lee 1971, 184)

Lee suggests that religious instruction should be understood and studied through the social science paradigm since in religious instruction, "religion is done within the general context and ground of the instructional process" (Lee 1971, 184). Even the worship of the church is primarily interested in instructional religion, although admittedly not exclusively so. Additionally, the worship element of the local church is not the only element which bears on individuals, college students included. Social science does then have a voice in the study of spiritual development in the context of the church.

### **The Stage of the College Student**

The college student is at a critical point in faith development. According to the work of James Fowler, the faith development of the college student stands primarily in the synthetic-conventional stage (stage 3) (Fowler 1987, 63-69). In this stage, a "commitment to God and the correlated self-image can exert a powerful ordering on a youth's identity and values outlook" (Fowler 1981, 154). Yet as these stage 3 persons leave home for college, the resulting disequilibrium will cause one of two things to happen. Either they will continue in their tacit system of simply knowing – not knowing how they know, but that they just know (Polanyi 1966), or they will begin to transition into Fowler's stage four, the individuated-reflective stage. This transition moves them

toward more explicit dimensions of separating meaning from symbol, allowing them to question long-held but perhaps little understood and substantiated beliefs, the practice and encouragement of which is common in higher education settings (Fowler 1981, 163). Because Fowler understands faith as “irreducibly relational,” having always to do with one’s relations to other humans and to one’s physical environment, does not the local church have a role in the lives of students in this stage, particularly those college students who leave home to attend school (Fowler and Keen 1978, 18)? The continuing presence of a local church in their lives can be critical in seeing them safely through this transitional time.

Although William Perry, in his study of college undergraduates throughout the 1950’s and 60’s, rejects the concept and rigidity of stages in the Piagetian/Fowlerian sense, his concept of developmental positions of college students implies that perhaps the church community may play an even greater role in student faith development (Perry 1970, 54). Perry accepts Piaget’s claim that learners develop through assimilating information into existing cognitive structures, and that the developmental process is both logically and hierarchically related. Perry suggests, however, that moral development depends heavily upon the standpoint of the learner and variables that influence him or her, such as gender, race, culture and socioeconomic class (Perry, UCB 2006, [GSI.berkeley.html](http://GSI.berkeley.html)). This allows students to, not so much move through rigid stages, but to occupy several positions simultaneously, according to different subjects and experiences.

Perry’s three major positions, duality, multiplicity, and commitment suggest that students may see different subjects from different points of view, due to their

background and circumstances. Perry suggests that students seem to move from duality, a position where the student understands the world, morality and knowledge to have clear right and wrong or good and bad answers, to multiplicity, which is essentially circumstantial relativism, and then on to commitment, where the student, after weighing the options, chooses to commit to the favored alternative and order his or her life around those commitments. Perry's conclusion then, that all knowledge and truth is relative to the circumstance of the student, would reject the Christian suggestion that absolute truth does exist for the finding. Further, although Perry's study is confined to one institution, if Perry's findings can be generalized as a learning scheme to all college students, then the student's involvement in a local Christian church would prove that much more critical for healthy faith development.

### **Profile of the Current Study**

This review of the literature has shaped the present study in several ways. First, the biblical and theological importance of spiritual development and a vibrant identification with the church, the larger body of believers, has been proposed as a critical part of orthodox Christian faith. While religious behavior does not always connote true, Christian spirituality, neither does spirituality stand on its own apart from dedicated religious behavior.

The implications of the previously analyzed literature base outlines the historic relationship between the Christian church and the American college and university, and the weakening at personal and institutional levels through the years. The literature further suggests that there are gaps in the existing research regarding the nature of the relationship of the current generation of college students to local churches. While casual

observation, conventional wisdom, and current research supports the decline of involvement in the life of local churches for persons in this age group, little study has been done specifically to identify the student's rationale for this behavior, particularly of students attending evangelical Christian colleges who claim to value their own Christian spiritual development.

The intent of this study was to explore and understand the ways selected factors affect the intensity of students' involvement in local churches during their college years. The following chapters describe this relationship through assessment of students' self-perceived reasons for their interaction and involvement to local churches while in school.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This chapter describes the methods to be used to explore and understand the ways selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years.

#### **Research Question Synopsis**

The following questions were used to guide the gathering and analysis of data in this study:

1. In what ways is intensity of involvement in local churches of students who attend Christian liberal arts colleges affected by selected demographic variables?
2. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the participation of a student's friends in local churches?
3. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the student's relationship to the local pastor or campus minister?
4. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by their having a role of ministry or leadership in the local church?
5. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by college sponsored spiritual growth opportunities on campus?
6. What is the relationship between the college's intensity of commitment to provide students with spiritual growth opportunities (as perceived by the student) and student's intensity of involvement in local churches?



## **Design Overview**

Permission was obtained to contact college/university students and solicit participation in the study through written correspondence (Appendix 1) from the appropriate authorities of Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College. An e-mail invitation (Appendix 2) was sent to all students enrolled at the previously mentioned colleges during the fall semester of 2005 requesting their participation in the study – 3635 students in all. Embedded in the e-mail was a link to a website hosting an electronic survey instrument which students were asked to complete on-line.

The instrument used to collect the needed data was the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS, Appendix 3). The LCIS was created by this researcher through the adaptation of the Campus Ministry Involvement Survey (CMIS), an instrument originally created by Morris L. Baker for his 2003 study of college student involvement in Baptist Student Unions (Baker 2003, 161). The instrument consists of 12 demographic questions and 27 triangulated questions designed to measure 9 involvement variables to be evaluated according to the research questions. The instrument was reviewed by an expert panel and field tested by a convenience sample of eight current college students from Asbury College.

The goal of the researcher was to achieve at least a 30% rate of return, or approximately 1090 surveys for data compilation. Using a variety of statistical methods, the completed surveys were analyzed for emerging patterns and themes that answer the research questions.

## **Population**

The population of this study consists of all undergraduate students attending a college affiliated with Christian College Consortium (CCC), approximately 25,150 students. Since its inception in 1971, there have been thirteen member institutions of the CCC, which exists to provide a consortium atmosphere to the leadership of selected institutions of higher education with quality academic programs, a commitment to an evangelical, Protestant heritage and a wide geographical distribution. The CCC provides opportunity for college officers to meet together on a regular basis with a relatively small group of peers from similar institutions to discuss the issues facing the evangelical Christian church, American higher education in general, and Christian higher education in particular, and then to determine how individually or corporately to focus on these issues ([www.ccconsortium.org](http://www.ccconsortium.org) 2005).

## **Samples and Delimitations**

A convenience sample for this study was chosen because of existing contacts the researcher has at participating schools. The sample consists of all undergraduate students at three of the CCC member schools whose identities are veiled in order to be able to present a comprehensive report without damaging the reputation of any of the schools. For purposes of the current study, they will be known as Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College. The sample total is 3635 students.

### ***Alpha College***

Alpha College (AC) was founded in 1890 in the Christian liberal arts tradition. Alpha is not affiliated with a church denomination, and has the following student

denominational affiliations: United Methodist – 25%, Baptist – 11%, Independent/Community – 11%, Christian – 8%. The school is home to nearly 1100 students representing 47 states and 11 foreign nations. Alpha College is located in the mid-South, and nearly 30% of students are from the college's home state, with an additional 20% of the student body coming from adjoining states. This geographical distribution indicates that exactly half of the undergraduate student body represents the mid-South region of the country. The ethnicity of the student body is 95% Caucasian; the age of the average student is 20.6 years. The fall semester of 2005 brought 1139 traditional undergraduate students to campus. Ninety percent of students live on-campus. The male to female ratio is 41%/ to 59%. The SAT and ACT averages for new students of the fall, 2004 semester were 1146 and 24 respectively.

### ***Beta College***

Beta College (BC) was founded in 1891 in a west coast state, and is affiliated with a church denomination. Undergraduate students number 1762 and represent 22 countries and 27 states; 82% of the students from the United States are from the college's home region, giving the Northwest a clear geographic majority. Eighty-seven percent of Beta College students are Caucasian; 75% of the student body live on campus. The average student's age is 21.4, and the male to female ratio is 39% to 61%. The traditional undergraduate students in the fall semester of 2005 numbered 1579. The top five denominational affiliations are Nondenominational (17.5%), Baptist (10%); Friends (7.5%), Nazarene (4.8%), and Foursquare (4.6%). The average SAT score for incoming freshmen is 1100.

### ***Gamma College***

Gamma College (GC) is a denominational institution founded in 1892 and located in the midwest. In the fall semester of 2005, Gamma had a student body of 917 undergraduate students; 66% are natives of its home state, representing 40 states and 16 countries. Sixty-one percent of students live on-campus. The average student is 23 years old with an average ACT score of 22. Eighty-five percent of the student body is Caucasian, and the male to female ratio on campus is 54% to 46%.

These specific schools were chosen so that variety might be achieved in the following areas: size of student body, denominational affiliation versus non-affiliation, denominational representation of students, geographical area of the United States represented by students, geographical location of the institution, and “college” versus “university” nomenclature. An additional CCC school was originally intended to be included in the study, but permission could not be obtained for surveying the students. Three schools, however, were deemed sufficient.

### **Limitations of Generalization**

The data from this sample does not necessarily generalize to other CCC-affiliated institutions, to other institutions of higher education, Christian or secular, or to graduate students at these or other institutions of higher education. Neither does the data from this sample necessarily generalize to students who do not carry a full-time status.

### **Instrumentation**

The research instrument used for this study was the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS). The LCIS was developed by this researcher and is based on the Campus

Ministry Involvement Survey created by Morris Baker to measure the intensity of involvement of college students with campus Baptist Student Unions (Baker 2003, 161). The instrument is designed to collect data related to the participants' involvement in local churches while they attend college. Demographic information collected, using Likert-response scales, included age, classification in school, gender, school attending, employment status, housing situation, and marital status.

The instrument then consists of 5 Likert-response questions which are designed to measure the participant's intensity of involvement in a local church and allow the computation of an intensity of involvement score. The remaining part of the instrument consists of a series of 27 triangulated Likert-response questions which measure 9 variables that may or may not affect the intensity of involvement of students in local churches. The factors measured according to the research questions, and the triangulation of the survey questions are listed below:

1. Participation of friends – research question 2, LCIS questions 16, 27, 38
2. Relationship with pastor – research question 3, LCIS questions 18, 31, 24
3. Leadership role – research question 4, LCIS questions 14, 17, 32
4. College sponsored opportunities – research question 5, LCIS questions 23, 30, 35
5. Perceived sense of church commitment to spiritual growth – research question 6, LCIS questions 13, 15, 26
6. Perceived sense of college commitment to spiritual growth – research question 6, LCIS questions 22, 33, 38
7. Importance of worship – research question 4, LCIS questions 19, 28, 39
8. Importance of intergenerational involvement – research question 2, LCIS questions 21, 29, 34
9. Opportunity for ministry – research question 4, LCIS questions 20, 25, 36

The LCIS was designed to be delivered electronically using *Select Survey* instrumentation software and to be completed by participants in less than 15 minutes. Participants gained access to the survey using a point and click system. The survey was hosted by the Wilmore Free Methodist Church website and server.

Following approval by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Ethics Committee, the LCIS was reviewed by a seven member expert panel, including professors of Christian education, mathematics, business, and research professionals from Asbury College, Asbury Theological Seminary, Eastern Kentucky University, and Transylvania University (Appendix 4). These persons were chosen due to their strong involvement in local churches, their connection with the collegiate environment, and their expertise in their various fields as it relates to the evaluation of such an instrument. After their review and approval, the LCIS was field-tested on a convenience group of eight college students from Asbury College. The students were given opportunity to record comments about the instrument (Appendix 5) or to discuss the instrument with the researcher. The LCIS was then adapted according to their comments and difficulties. All adaptations were related to delivery functions and clarity of instruction. The content was not adapted.

### **Procedures**

Prior to the collection of data, permission to conduct the research study was secured from the registrars of the participating schools. These persons were contacted first by telephone to secure the viability of the study. Following the introductory telephone call, a letter (Appendix 1) was sent confirming permissions, requesting an undergraduate student directory and campus e-mail protocol, and thanking them for their

willingness to participate. As a courtesy to the participating institutions, an expanded abstract of the completed study was promised to be provided. All participating institutions received the opportunity to obtain a copy of the complete dissertation for their libraries or self-study.

After permission was secured, a copy of the invitation letter (Appendix 2) with a link to the online study was sent to the contact persons at the schools. In two instances, the person who assumed responsibility was the Vice President of Student Life. At the third school, the contact person was the Dean of the Chapel. Due to privacy issues, all three schools preferred to send the invitation to the students from within the school, rather than distribute students' e-mail addresses. This simplified the distribution of the invitation immensely for the researcher. Imbedded in the invitation was a link to a dedicated portion of the web site of the Wilmore Free Methodist Church containing the five page LCIS. *Select Survey* software was used to create this survey. Following the closing date (specified in the correspondence to each school), the surveys were reviewed to determine their validity and the data was imported into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using a variety of statistical methods.

Following the end date of the study, a second letter (Appendix 1) was sent to the college/university contact person thanking them again for their participation in the study, and again offering a copy of the final, completed study.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the ways selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years. The study is based upon the data collected by the Local Church Involvement Survey. The findings and analysis of the findings are presented here in several sections.

The first section, Compilation Protocols, briefly reviews the process by which the data was gathered and analyzed. The second section, Research Data, presents the demographic characteristics of the research sample along with the analysis of the demographic data specifically related to each research question. Finally, a third section, Evaluation of Research Design, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the present research methodology and suggests changes that may enhance the replication of the study.

#### **Compilation Protocols**

Data for this study was collected through the use of the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS), an electronic survey instrument. All undergraduate students attending Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College during the fall semester of 2005, 3635 students in all, were sent an e-mail explanation of the study and an invitation to participate by taking the LCIS on-line (Appendix 2). The survey itself begins with an



introduction/instruction page, continues with the survey questions, and ends with a disclaimer stating submission of the survey confirms the participant's informed consent to participate in the study. The specific form of the informed consent protocols and survey presentation of those protocols was approved by the Institutional Review Board of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary on September 30, 2005.

The survey data was compiled and tabulated by the *Select Survey* software package and by entry in *Microsoft Excel* spreadsheets. The data was arranged according to the following demographic variables: subject number (assigned by survey software), age, gender, school attending, employment status, housing situation, and marital status. The questions determining the LCIS score followed, including: hours per week respondent serves in a local church, perceived level of involvement, perceived effort invested in service in local church, perceived priority of involvement by student, and student's consistency in inviting friends to church. Finally, the following LCIS triangulated involvement factors were presented: participation of friends, relationship with pastor, leadership role, college-sponsored opportunities, perceived sense of church commitment to spiritual growth, perceived sense of college commitment to spiritual growth, importance of worship, importance of intergenerational involvement, and opportunity for ministry. A review of the surveys determined the need to exclude several from the final data analysis. Of the 1114 surveys collected, 67 surveys were excluded from the study due to incompleteness. Another 16 surveys were excluded because the subjects were under the age of 18. An additional 5 responses were excluded because the subjects were graduate students. One additional survey was removed due to either confusion on the part of the participant or a computer malfunction in the survey software.

resulting in multiple answers reported for each question. The total number of valid surveys included in this analysis is 1025, or 28.4% of the population studied, just below the researcher's goal of 1091, or 30%.

### *Determining Intensity of Involvement*

Because the LCIS is based on the validated Campus Ministry Involvement Survey (CMIS) created by Morris Baker, this researcher adopted Baker's methodology for scoring the instrument and determining a numerical factor for intensity of involvement.

The scoring mechanism is based on a standard used by Winston and Massaro in scoring the EII. Regarding the quantitative question, these researchers measured the participants' responses with a conversion scale using eight-hour intervals. Thus, an answer of 0 hours would receive a 0; 1 to 8 hours would receive a value of 1; 9 to 16 hours would equal 2, and so on at 8-hour intervals. Concerning...qualitative questions, Winston and Massaro used the following categories and corresponding point values: each "very often" answer was awarded 3 points; each "often" given 2 points; each "occasionally" received 1 point, and each "never" was given 0 points. Winston and Massaro then added the values of the 5 qualitative responses. The sum of the 5 qualitative responses was then multiplied by the quantitative value to determine the overall involvement intensity score. An individual could, therefore, receive a high score of 60, indicative of a high involvement intensity, or a low score of 0, representative of no involvement intensity. (Baker 2003, 54)

This researcher adopted Baker's successful adaptation of the Winston and Massaro scoring technique which assigns a numerical score for a student's intensity of involvement in the local church. This score can then be statistically compared to the other variables of involvement. For the present study, this researcher used Baker's adapted quantitative question (LCIS question 8) using a 5-point Likert-response scale and the assignment of the following values: a value of 0 for an answer of "0 hours"; a value of 1 for an answer of "1 hour or less"; a value of 2 for an answer of "1-2 hours"; a value

of 3 for an answer of “2-3 hours”; a value of 4 for an answer of “3-4 hours”; and a value of 5 for an answer of “over 4 hours” (Baker 2003, 55).

This researcher also measured the responses of the four qualitative questions from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” on a 5-point Likert-response scale, and assigned the following point values, according to Baker’s CMIS assignments: 1 point for each “Strongly Disagree”; 2 points for each “Disagree”; 3 points for each “Neutral”; 4 points for each “Agree”; and 5 points for each “Strongly Agree.” The mean of these scores will be used as the numerical qualitative score.

The intensity score for the LCIS was computed according to the model of Morris’ CMIS: the sum of the 4 qualitative questions multiplied by the value of the quantitative response. Example: A student scoring a “3” on the quantitative question and an “18” on the qualitative questions received an LCIS intensity score of 54. The maximum score possible would be 5 (quantitative) multiplied by 20 (qualitative), or 100. The minimum score for the LCIS is 0.

The triangulated questions on the LCIS were scored according to Morris’ model and deal with the involvement factors according to the research questions 2 through 6. Subjects answered each question according to 6-point Likert-response scale, using the following answers and corresponding point values: “Strongly Disagree” – 1 point; “Disagree” – 2 points; “Neutral” – 3 points; “Agree” – 4 points; and “Strongly Agree” – 5 points. The values of the triangulated responses for each involvement factor were added together, and the mean was determined and analyzed to ascertain what effect each involvement factor had on the survey respondents (Morris 2003, 55).

## **Demographic and Sample Data**

This section will describe the sample according to the findings of the LCIS. The data is presented through frequency counts and percentages of the population. Pie charts are also used to provide a visual representation of some data. For some variables, the mean, median and mode is also calculated and presented as appropriate. The first sub-section deals with the demographic description of the sample.

### ***Demographic Description of the Sample***

The demographic description of the sample, including the variables of age, classification in school, gender, school attending, employment status, housing situation and marital status is presented here in the form of frequency counts and percentages of the population. Pie charts assist in the visual presentation.

#### **Age**

As might be expected of a survey of undergraduate college students, the vast majority who participated were between the ages of 18 and 21 years old, 898, or nearly 80% of the 1025 respondents. Of the surveys returned, 21% were 18 years old, 25% were 19, 21% were 20, 21% were 21, 6% were 22, 2% were 23, and 4% of the respondents were older than 23 years old (Figure 1). This was expected, considering the research was limited to traditional undergraduate students at the participating colleges.

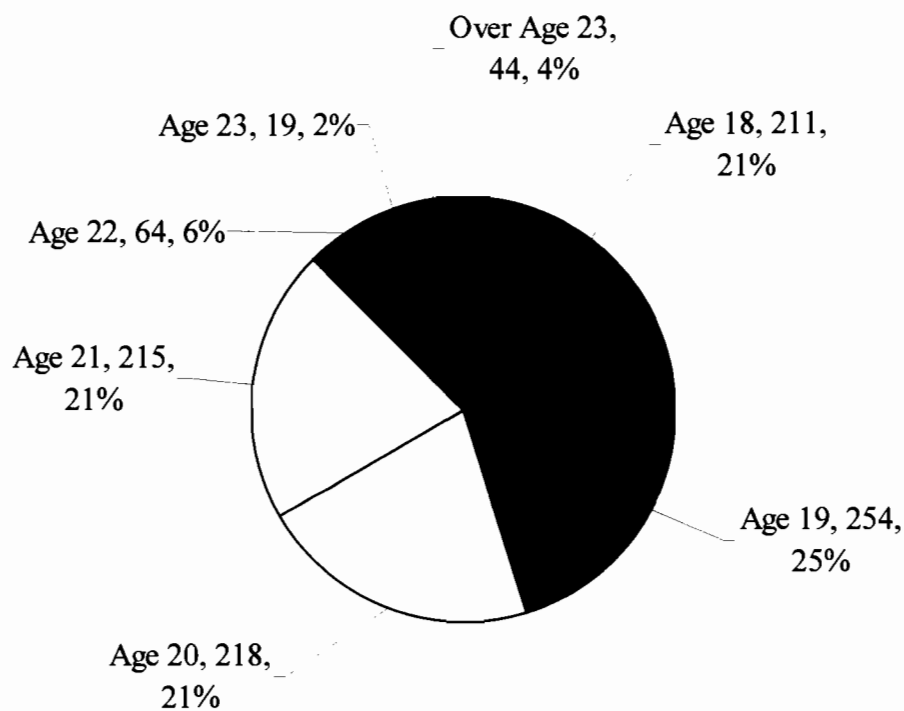


Figure 1: Age Distribution

### **Classification in School**

The research found the classifications somewhat atypical, considering the standard rate of attrition among most institutions of higher learning. The results show a surprisingly even response of 28% freshmen, 25% sophomores, 22% juniors, and 25% seniors (Figure 2). The lack of a “class-heavy” response rate would seem to help validate the results of the study.

### **Gender Distribution**

The study found a surprisingly unequal distribution of male to female undergraduate students in the sample – females registering over twice as many times as males, 712 to 313. Although the schools in the study have a larger percentage of women than men on campus (55% to 45%), the response rate clearly favored women (Figure 3).

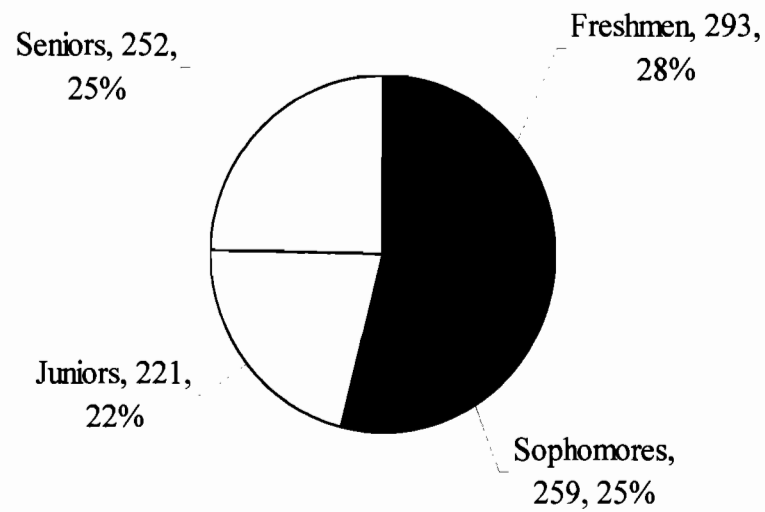


Figure 2: Classification in School

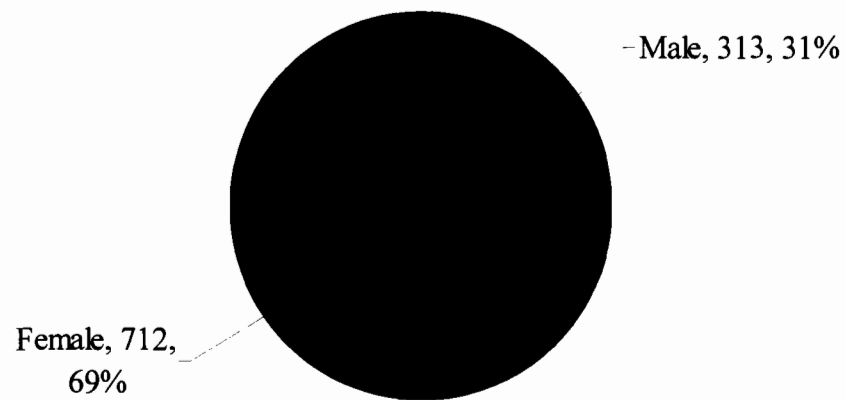


Figure 3: Gender Distribution

### School Attending

In this study, although the same invitation was given to each school and the survey instrument was open for the same duration of time, there was a distinct difference

in return rate among the schools. More students at Beta College, 30.3%, responded to the survey invitation than either Alpha (24.8%) or Gamma (28.6%) students. This difference may reflect some additional copy added to the invitation by the contact person at the institutions before they were distributed to the student body. Regarding the make-up of the study, 46% of the students in the sample attend Beta College, while 28% attend Alpha College. An additional 26% call Gamma College their alma mater (Figure 4).

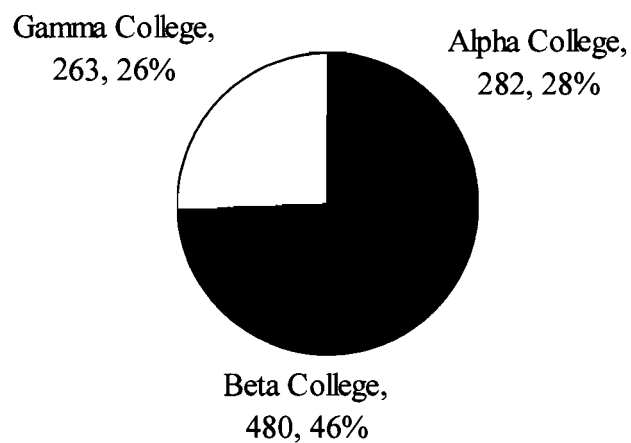


Figure 4: School Attending

### **Employment Status**

The study shows that, of the 1025 students responding to the survey, the largest percentage of them were unemployed. An additional 32% work at a job less than 10 hours per week. Twenty-eight percent of respondents work between 10 and 20 hours each week, and the remaining 6% work more than 20 hours per week (Figure 5). Casual observation suggests to the researcher a total employment rate of less than 66%, so this figure was somewhat surprising and would certainly have an impact upon the final involvement intensity rate of the sample.

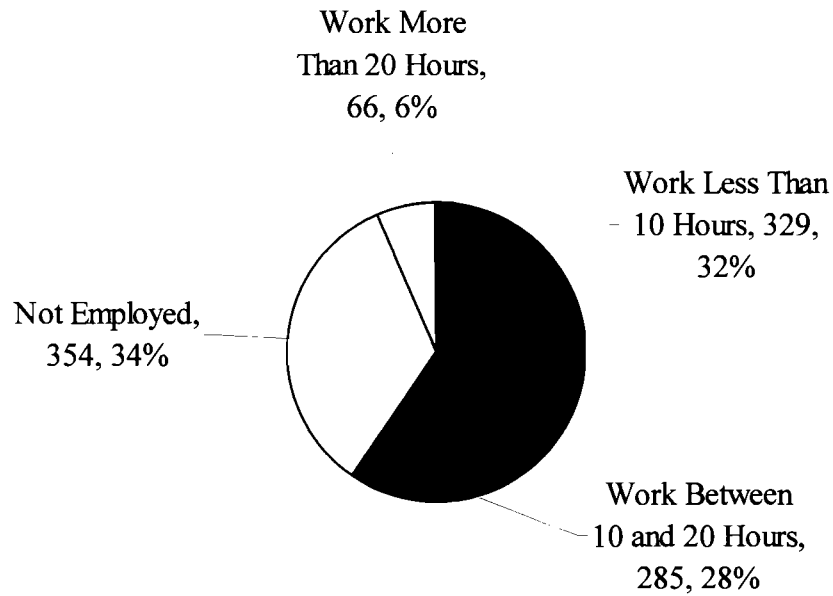


Figure 5: Employment Status

### Housing Situation

Because of the traditional nature of the three schools, the results of this question are not surprising. A vast majority, 80%, of the participants live on-campus in college housing, while 207 students, or 20% of the respondents, have off-campus living arrangements.

### Marital Status

Of the 1025 students who responded to the survey, 954, or 93% were single and never married. An additional 6%, 64 students, were married, and another 1% of the sample, 7 students in all, were single again due to divorce or death of their spouse (Figure 7).



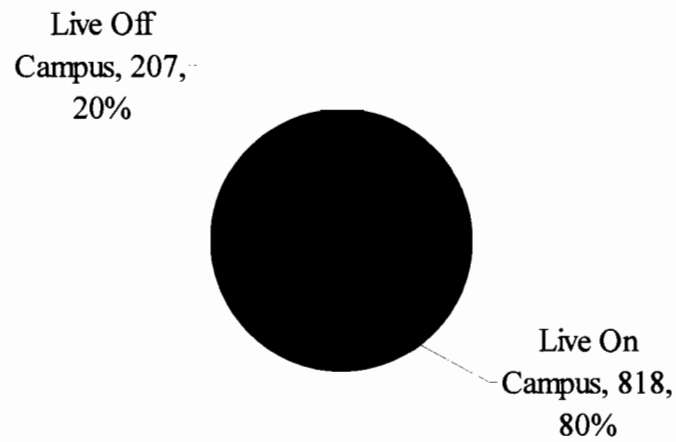


Figure 6: Housing Situation

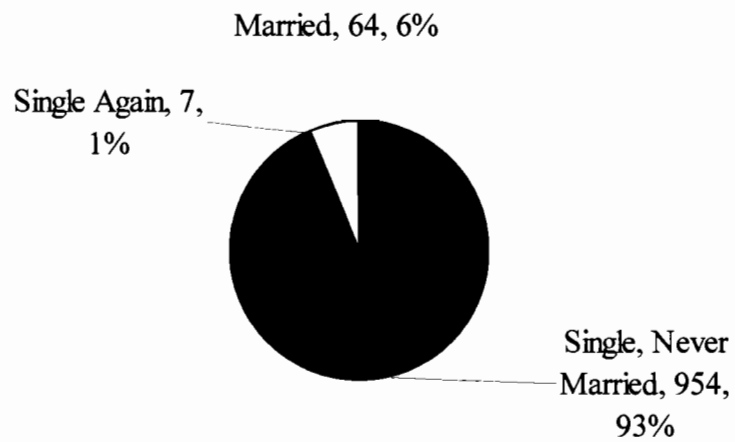


Figure 7: Marital Status

It could be concluded, then, that the average student participating in this study is female and between 18 and 21 years of age, is employed to some minimal extent, is single, and lives on-campus.

### *Intensity of Involvement of the Sample*

The intensity of involvement of the sample ( $n = 1025$ ), calculated by multiplying the sum of the answers of 4 qualitative questions of the LCIS (questions 9 through 12) by the numerical value assigned to the LCIS quantitative question (LCIS question 8), is illustrated in Table 1 below. The mean intensity of involvement score for all participants in the study was 30.7. The standard deviation was 25.77 and the median was 24. The mode, or the most common LCIS score, was 0, as Table 1 below indicates. Below Table 1, Figure 8 represents a histogram of the LCIS scores. Because a student could theoretically score anywhere from 0 to 100, the histogram represents the scores in increments of ten for the sake of space.

Table 1. Intensity of involvement of the sample

$n$	1025
Mean	30.70
Median	24.00
Mode	0
Std. Deviation	25.77

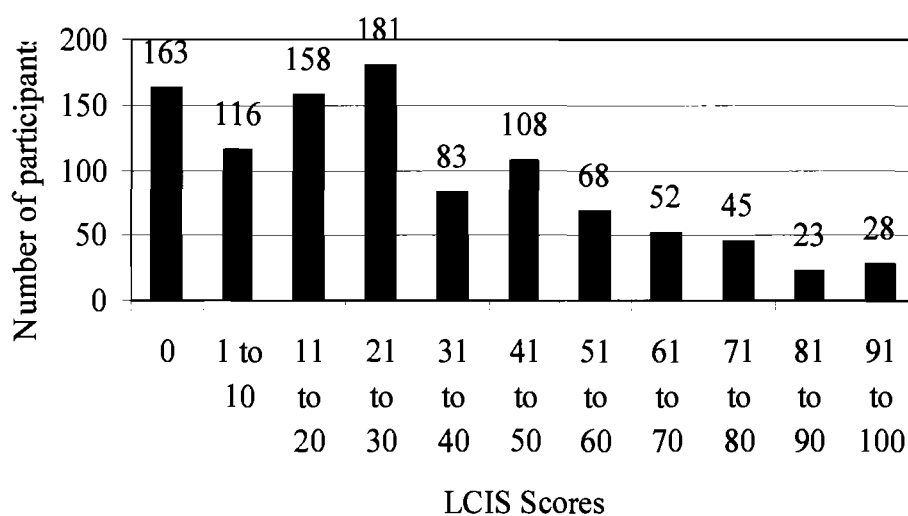


Figure 8. Histogram of LCIS Scores

Because the mean score of 30.7 seemed surprisingly low to the researcher, and since the mode of the data was 0 (and to satisfy the researcher's curiosity), a further calculation was made. After removing the 163 responses from the sample that scored 0 on the LCIS (nearly 16% of the participants, which in itself is noteworthy), a new calculation was made in order to answer the question, "What is the mean intensity of involvement for those participants who claimed any involvement at all in a local church?" The following table (Table 2) illustrates the results.

Table 2. Intensity of involvement of those who scored at least 1 on the time involved variable

<i>n</i>	862
Mean	36.51
Median	30.00
Mode	24.00
Std. Deviation	24.03

As might be expected, the standard deviation was lower and the mean, median, and mode were all somewhat higher. While this secondary calculation may be interesting, the study proceeds using the calculations in Table 1 above.

Since 16% of the sample indicated they spend no time participating weekly in the activities of a local church, 84% of the study participants spend at least one hour per week participating in a local church ministry of some kind. The specific type of involvement was not determined by the study and could include worship, education, small group, fellowship group or other church-related activity. Precedent literature regarding national averages of college-age student involvement for students in both Christian and secular colleges are substantially lower than this. According to a 2005 Barna study of college students, only 56% of the students surveyed claim to attend worship on a given Sunday and 35% attend Sunday school on a given week, while 70% say they are “engaged in some church-related effort in a given week, including worship services, Sunday school, youth group or small group” (Barna 2005, barna.html). A 2004 Reboot study also indicates that, of the 18 – 25 year olds surveyed, only 36% attend worship services weekly (Potts, Bennett, and Levin 2005, rebooters.html). A similar study conducted by Regnerus in 2003 indicates that only 31% of young adults in this age group attend weekly religious services. Only 31% of young adult Catholics attend mass weekly, according to a 2001 Hoge study (Hoge et al. 2001, 155-60). The findings of this study suggest the number of students who participate in weekly activities in a local church and who attend CCC-related schools is at least 14%, and may be as much as 53% higher than the national average of students attending non CCC Christian and secular colleges and universities (Regnerus 2003, 7).

### **Intensity of Involvement Scores and the Demographic Factors**

Toward answering the first research question, the researcher analyzed the data to determine in what ways the dependent variable of involvement intensity is affected by the independent demographic variables surveyed, including age, classification in school, gender, school currently attending, employment status, current housing situation, and current marital status. The data will be analyzed in order to determine the influence of each demographic variable on involvement intensity. Significant differences in intensity of involvement are expressed as  $p < .05$ , or that the probability is less than 5% that the differences in intensity of involvement were caused by chance. The standard of  $p < .05$  will be the base for noting all significant differences in intensity of involvement for each variable studied. The researcher conducted an analysis of the descriptive statistics and frequencies present in participants' LCIS responses to the demographic questions. The overall LCIS involvement intensity scores are compared here with each variable in separate tables and figures.

#### ***Age***

The first demographic variable measured on the LCIS and analyzed is the independent variable of age. The researcher examined the mean intensity of involvement scores by the age of the student to determine if there is statistical significance in intensity of involvement for age at the .05 level. Table 3 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the age variable.

Table 3. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores by age

Age	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
18	33.66	211	26.43
19	30.20	254	24.40
20	28.34	218	25.19
21	30.96	215	25.69
22	25.67	64	24.61
23	25.58	19	22.48
older than 23	39.16	44	33.23

The mean intensity of involvement scores were highest at both ends of the age spectrum, those over age 23 scoring the highest, the second highest belonging to the youngest in the study. With the exception of the over age 23 segment, all of the standard deviations within the age brackets were similar. The deviation was higher, however, in the over 23 crowd, representing a more diverse group. Figure 9 graphically depicts the intensity of involvement scores according to the independent variable of age.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then conducted to determine if statistical differences in intensity of involvement exist for the age variable. As observed in Table 4, the age variable does weakly contribute to differences in intensity of involvement since  $p < .05$ ; therefore the researcher rejected the null hypothesis regarding age as a non-factor for the group studied.

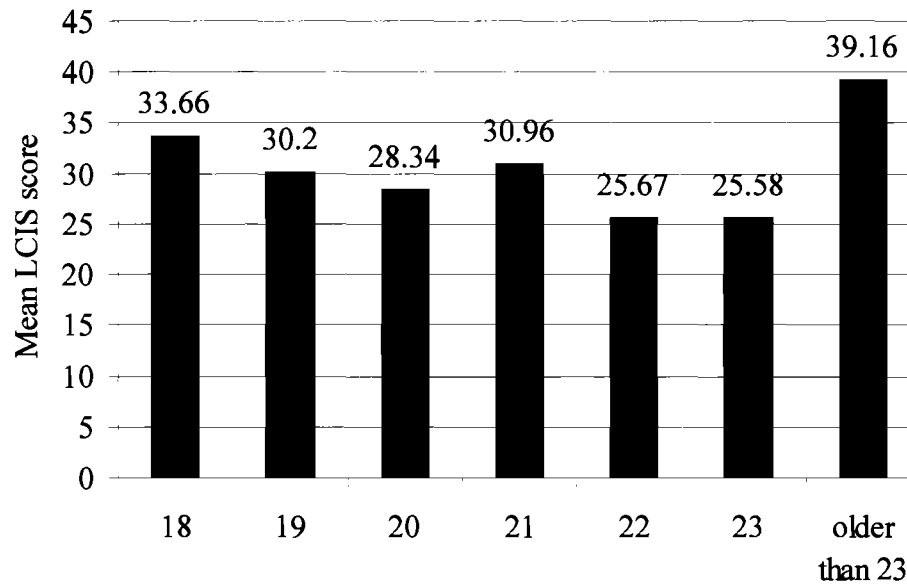


Figure 9: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to the age variable

Table 4. One-way ANOVA for the age variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	8476.65	6	1412.78	2.14	.046
Within Groups	671515.6	1018	659.64		
Total	679992.2	1024			

Generally speaking, the data indicates an ongoing drop in involvement intensity as students age, but then picking up again when the student is over 23 years of age. Presuming that age is directly correlated to the student's progression through college, these results seem to confirm the available research which states that students become less involved in local churches as they age and progress through school. In 1969, a study by Feldman and Newcomb found that seniors, compared with freshmen, were

consistently “less favorable to the church as an institution” (Feldman and Newcomb 1969, 23). Pascarella and Terenzini, citing 28 separate studies, conclude that “the literature published since 1967 fairly consistently reports statistically significant declines in religious attitudes, values and behaviors during the college years” (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 280). However, when the classification variable is considered, the situation appears brighter.

### *Classification in School*

The second demographic variable that was analyzed was the independent variable of classification in school (grade). The researcher examined the mean intensity of involvement scores to determine if there is statistical significance in intensity of involvement for classification in school at the .05 level. Table 5 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the classification in school variable.

Table 5. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores by classification

Classification	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
Freshmen	33.04	293	26.60
Sophomore	29.76	259	24.25
Junior	29.42	221	27.12
Senior	30.08	252	25.06



Although the classification “freshmen” represents the highest mean, it is not remarkably higher. Even the standard deviations within the classifications are within three points of one another. Figure 10 graphically depicts the intensity of involvement scores according to the independent variable of classification in school.

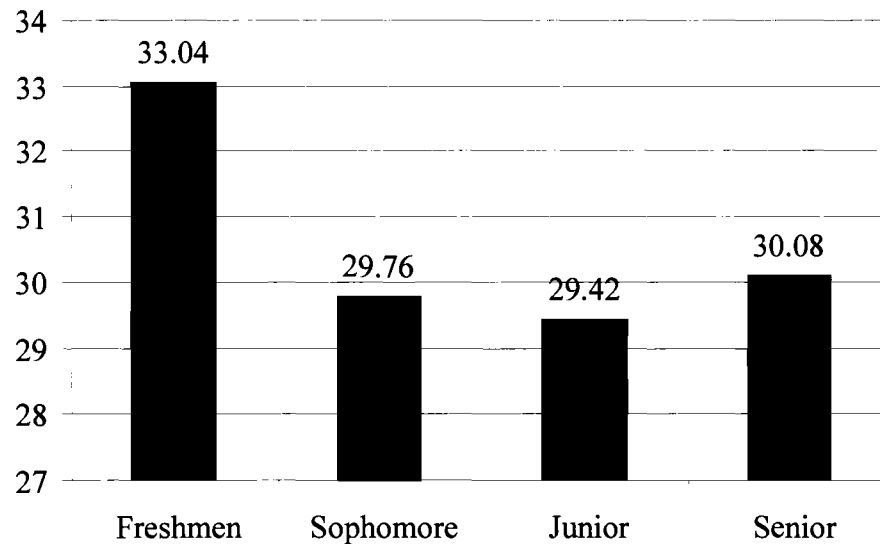


Figure 10: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to classification in school

The researcher then conducted a one-way ANOVA test to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to the classification variable.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA for the classification variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	2288.22	3	762.74	1.149	.328
Within Groups	677704	1021	663.76		
Total	679992.2	1024			

Since the  $p$  value  $> .05$ , the results of the ANOVA test reveal that the classification variable does not have a statistically significant impact on the student's intensity of involvement. The researcher, consequently, accepts the null hypothesis that classification in school has no statistically significant impact on intensity of involvement.

This conclusion seems to conflict somewhat with the conclusion of the age variable, which is logically related to the classification variable. However, if one considers that the  $p$  statistic for the age variable was only less than .05 by .004, the conflict may be understood by the lack of consistently direct correlation between age and classification. While the freshman classification indeed represented the highest mean, the means were not statistically significantly different. In short, while freshmen (typically 18 year olds) do have a higher mean involvement score, the classification variable may temper the significance of the age variable. The rise in intensity in the senior year may also indicate that, while involvement intensity does seem to decrease throughout at least the first three years of college, perhaps it does not decrease as significantly as the national averages.

### *Gender*

The third demographic variable that was analyzed was the independent variable of gender. The researcher examined the mean intensity of involvement scores to determine if there is statistical significance in intensity of involvement for gender at the .05 level. Table 7 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the gender variable.

Table 7. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores by gender

Gender	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
Male	30.45	313	26.51
Female	30.81	712	25.45

The intensity of involvement scores according to the independent variable of gender are statistically equal, females scoring higher than males by only .36. The scores are depicted graphically below (Figure 11).

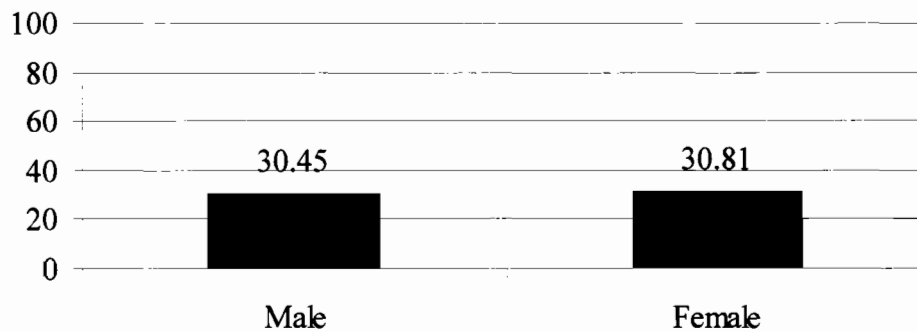


Figure 11: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to gender

Again, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to the gender of the students. The results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 8 below. As might be assumed by the means, the *p* value was greater than .05, which suggests that gender does not significantly affect the intensity of involvement of students, causing the researcher to accept the null hypothesis for the gender variable.

Table 8. One-way ANOVA for the gender variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	27.88	1	27.8847	.041	.837
Within Groups	679964.4	1023	664.6768		
Total	679992.2	1024			

### ***School Attending***

The fourth demographic variable that was analyzed was the independent variable of school attending. The researcher examined the mean intensity of involvement scores to determine if there is statistical significance in intensity of involvement related to the school attended at the .05 level. Table 9 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the gender variable. Because of an agreement with the schools to refrain from displaying results regarding them in a negative manner, the schools are represented here as Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College.

Table 9. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores by school attended

School	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
Alpha College	34.86	282	25.16
Beta College	30.21	480	26.00
Gamma College	27.14	263	25.47

Although the standard deviations within the schools are essentially equal, the mean intensity of involvement scores are significantly different, having an almost 8 point spread between the highest and lowest, as the graph below shows (Figure 12).

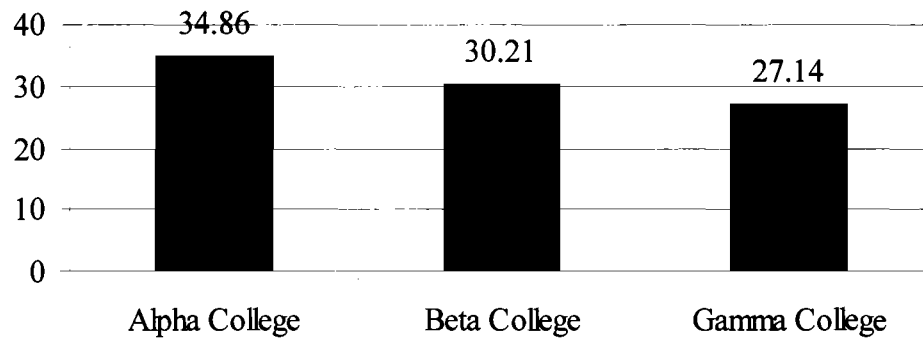


Figure 12: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to school attended

The researcher again conducted a one-way ANOVA test to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to the school the students attend. The results of the ANOVA suggest that the school does have a statistically significant impact on intensity of involvement as the p value is less than .05, which has implications and applications for CCC member schools and their approach to local church involvement, as well as implications for the local churches in the vicinity of CCC member schools. These implications and applications will be discussed in chapter 5.

Due to the p-value of the school variable, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis that the variable of school attending has no effect upon involvement intensity. The results are reported in Table 10 below.

Table 10. One-way ANOVA for the school variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	8324.96	2	4162.48	6.33	.0018
Within Groups	671667.3	1022			
Total	679992.2	1024			

### *Employment Status*

The fifth demographic variable that was analyzed was the independent variable of employment status. The researcher examined the mean intensity of involvement scores to determine if there is statistical significance in intensity of involvement related to the level of the student's employment at the .05 level. Table 11 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the employment variable.

Table 11. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores according to the student's employment status

Employment Status	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
Not Employed	28.14	345	23.66
Employed less than 10 hours per week	29.95	329	25.54
Employed 10 to 20 hours per week	33.48	285	27.11
Employed over 20 hours per week	35.86	66	29.94

Interestingly and contrary to what might be assumed, those employed over twenty hours per week scored highest in local church involvement, their mean score being almost 8 points higher than those not employed, as Figure 13 shows. In fact, the more hours per week the student worked, the higher the LCIS mean score and the higher the standard deviation. This means that for full-time students, generally speaking, the more they worked, the more they were involved in a local church. This conflicts somewhat with Astin's 1984 research that suggests that if a student holds a part-time job on-campus, they will be more involved in extracurricular activities because of the increased psychological attachment to the college produced by the on-campus employment (Astin 1984, 302).

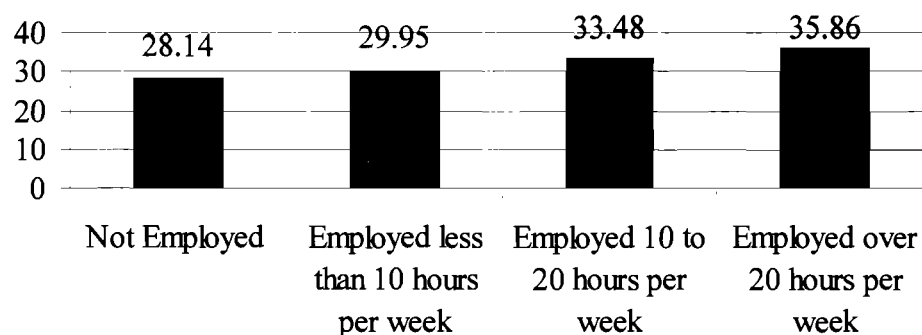


Figure 13: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to employment status

A one-way ANOVA test was again performed to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to the time a student spent at a job. Results of the ANOVA, reported in Table 12 below, suggest that employment does significantly impact the students' intensity of involvement and therefore caused the researcher to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 12. One-way ANOVA for the employment status variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	6401.21	3	2133.73	3.23	.021
Within Groups	673591	1021			
Total	679992.2	1024			

### ***Current Housing Situation***

The next variable studied was the students' housing arrangements, specifically, whether they lived on campus or not. The mean intensity of involvement scores were examined to determine if there is statistical significance at the .05 level in intensity of

involvement related to whether or not the student lived on campus. Table 13 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the housing variable.

Table 13. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores according to the student's housing situation

Housing Situation	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
Live on-campus	30.08	818	25.22
Live off-campus	33.14	207	27.76

The intensity of involvement scores, which show a slightly higher mean belonging to those living off-campus, are depicted graphically below (Figure 14).

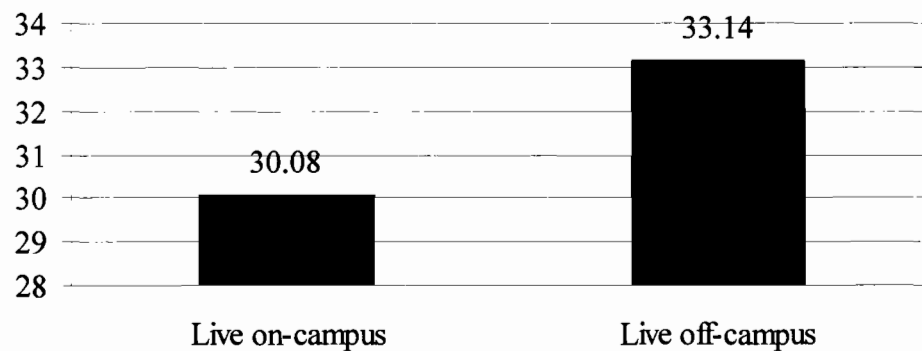


Figure 14: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to housing situation

A one-way ANOVA test was again performed to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to whether the student lived on-campus or off-campus. Since the results of this test show  $p > .05$ , the variable of housing does not have a statistically significant impact on intensity of involvement. The researcher is



forced to accept the null hypothesis that housing situation has no significant bearing on the students' intensity of involvement.

Astin's theory of student involvement suggests that the amount of discretionary time a student possesses is a determining factor in a student's involvement in extra-curricular activities (Astin 1984, 301). Although the difference in mean LCIS score is not statistically significant, the data does not seem to support his theory. The data seems, instead, to suggest that those with more responsibility for living arrangements (cooking, cleaning, driving and parking, etc), or, in other words, less discretionary time, are more involved in their local church than those who live on-campus and presumably eat at campus cafeterias, walk to class, and have smaller quarters to maintain. Chapter five will discuss possible rationale for this inconsistency.

Table 14. One-way ANOVA for the housing situation variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	1547.41	1	1547.41	2.33	.126
Within Groups	678444.8	1023	663.19		
Total	679992.2	1024			

### ***Current Marital Status***

The final demographic variable studied was the students' marital status. Like the rest of the variables, the mean intensity of involvement scores were examined to determine if there is statistical significance at the .05 level in intensity of involvement related to whether or not the student was married, single, or single again. Table 15 shows the comparisons of mean intensity of involvement scores for the marital status variable.

Table 15. Comparison of mean intensity of involvement scores according to the student's marital status

Marital Status	Mean	<i>n</i>	Std. Deviation
Single	30.22	954	25.52
Single Again	21.43	7	23.37
Married	38.86	64	28.43

The means of these three groups of students seem to be quite different, the lowest representing those students who are divorced or widowed, and the highest being married students. The intensity of involvement scores according to the independent variable of marital status are depicted graphically below (Figure 15).

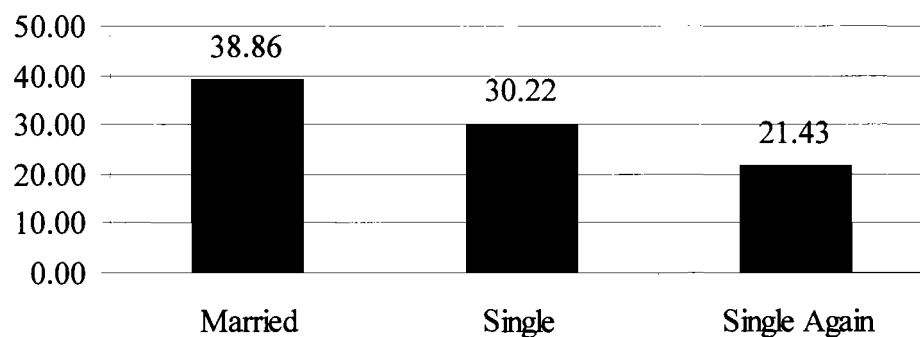


Figure 15: Histogram of intensity of involvement scores according to marital status

It is not surprising that married students might score higher than those students identifying themselves with the other two marital categories – casual observation would substantiate this response. Those who indicated they were single again due to divorce or death, however, scored lowest, nearly 18 points below married students score, and nearly

9 points below single students. This is surprising, given the church's goal and mission of providing a larger family of faith, particularly to those who are hurt or grieving.

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to whether the student was single, single again, or married. The results of the ANOVA, reported in Table 16 below, suggest marital status plays a significant role in a student's intensity of involvement, since  $p < .05$  and allows the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 16. One-way ANOVA for the marital status variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	5079.35	2	2539.68	3.84	.021
Within Groups	674912.9	1022	660.38		
Total	679992.2	1024			

### ***Conclusions of Demographic Factors***

In the current study, the demographic variables of student age, school attending, employment status and marital status exerted a statistically significant impact upon the student's intensity of involvement in local churches, the strongest effect made by the variable school attending. The variables of the student's classification in school, gender, and housing did not influence the student's involvement intensity in a statistically significant manner.

### **Intensity of Involvement Scores and the Qualitative Factors**

In addition to the demographic variables, the current study also sought to

determine the relationship of nine qualitative factors with a student's intensity of involvement in local churches while attending college. These qualitative factors, which are designed to answer research questions 2 through 6 specifically address: the participation of the student's friends, the student's relationship with the local church pastor, the student's assumption of a leadership role in the local church, the students' perception of college sponsored, on-campus opportunities for spiritual growth, the student's perceived sense of church commitment to the student's spiritual growth, the student's perceived sense of college commitment to the student's spiritual growth, the importance of worship to the student, the importance of intergenerational involvement to the student, and the opportunity for the student to do ministry.

As previously stated, respondents ranked their responses to the triangulated questions using a 5 point Likert-response scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (assigned a value of 1 point) to "Strongly Agree" (assigned a value of 5 points). Since questions were triangulated, a student could score a minimum of 3 points and a maximum of 15 points for each variable.

After these scores were determined, a regression analysis was then conducted on the mean of each individual variable to determine whether or not a linear trend exists between each variable and the measured intensity of involvement. The regression analysis also determines the strength of the relationship according to the *R* factor; the *R* square factor indicates the percentage of the variance in intensity accounted for by the independent variable.

Finally, a one-way analysis of variance test was performed on each variable to determine if there were significant differences in intensity of involvement according to

the qualitative variable. The results of the ANOVA test were then analyzed for significance to the .05 level.

### ***Friendship***

The first independent variable considered in the current study was whether or not a student's friends' participation in a local church influences that student's intensity of involvement in the local church. This corresponds to the second research question, "In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the participation of a student's friends in local churches?" The three triangulated questions asked were, "The involvement of my friends in a local church encourages me to participate also," "Many of my friends attend the same local church that I do," and "I usually go to church where my friends go." Table 17 is a summary of the linear regression analysis of the friendship variable.

Table 17. Summary of the regression analysis of the friendship variable

<i>R</i>	.078
<i>R</i> Square	.006
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.005
Standard Error of Estimate	.835

The regression analysis suggests a very weak positive relationship exists between the friendship variable and the intensity of involvement score, as indicated by the *R* value of .078. The *R* square value indicates that .6% of the variance of intensity of involvement is accounted for by the friendship variable.

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if the independent variable, friendship, significantly affects the dependent variable of intensity of involvement at the  $P < .05$  level. The results, reported in Table 18 below, indicate that since the  $P$  value  $< .05$ , the friendship variable does have a significant impact upon the intensity of a student's involvement in a local church. Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the variable of friendship had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

Table 18. One-way ANOVA for the friendship variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	4.363	1	4.363	6.263	.012
Residual	712.764	1023	.697		
Total	717.128	1024			

According to the one-way ANOVA test, the data suggests that a typical student's local church involvement will be influenced by how involved that student's friends are in a local church. According to Fowler's work on the faith-development stage of college students, which describes faith development as having to do with one's relations to other humans and to one's physical environment, students' dependence upon the influence of friends during their search for spiritual growth should not be surprising (Fowler and Keen 1978, 18). Friends, representing peers in common faith development stages, are depended upon to help inform students' choices and preferences.

### ***Importance of Intergenerational Involvement***

The next independent variable considered in the study was the importance of including an intergenerational element to the student's spiritual and social life. This variable was designed to correspond to the second research question, "In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the participation of a student's friends in local churches?" The three triangulated statements to which students were asked to respond were "I participate in the life of a local church because of the intergenerational (the inclusion of the young and old) nature of the fellowship," "I enjoy being involved in a local church because I like spending time with people who are not my age," and "I enjoy regularly spending time around people who are not college students."

Table 19 is a summary of the linear regression analysis of the intergenerational variable which indicates a positive relationship exists between intergenerational variable and the student's intensity of involvement. The R square value suggests that this independent variable is responsible for 11.4% of the variance of the intensity of the student's involvement.

Table 19. Summary of the regression analysis of the intergenerational variable

<i>R</i>	.338
<i>R</i> Square	.114
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.113
Standard Error of Estimate	24.264

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if the intergenerational variable plays a significant role in students' intensity of involvement at the  $P < .05$  level. The resulting P value of .000 suggests that this variable does exert a significant impact on intensity of involvement. Table 20 details the ANOVA test results.

Table 20. One-way ANOVA for the intergenerational variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	77707.982	1	77707.982	131.990	.000
Residual	602284.262	1023	588.743		
Total	679992.244	1024			

Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the intergenerational variable had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

### ***Relationship with the Pastor***

The third independent variable considered in the current study is the student's relationship with the pastor of the local church and whether or not that relationship influences the student's intensity of involvement in the church. This corresponds to the third research question, "In what way is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the student's relationship to the local pastor or campus minister?" The three triangulated statements to which students were asked to respond were, "I am involved in a local church because I really like the pastor and/or college minister," "I would become involved in a local church if I felt I could get to know the pastor or campus minister there," and "The personality of the pastor or campus minister is an



important reason why I am involved in a local church.” Table 21 is a summary of the linear regression analysis of the relationship with pastor variable which indicates that a slight positive relationship exists between the relationship with pastor variable and the student’s intensity of involvement. The R square value suggests that this independent variable is responsible for 5.6% of the variance of the intensity of the student’s involvement.

Table 21. Summary of the regression analysis of the relationship with pastor variable

<i>R</i>	.238
<i>R</i> Square	.057
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.056
Standard Error of Estimate	.732

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if the independent variable, relationship with pastor, significantly affects the dependent variable of intensity of involvement at the  $P < .05$  level. The resulting  $P$  value of .000 suggests that the relationship with pastor variable does exert a significant impact on intensity of involvement. Table 22 details the ANOVA test results.

Table 22. One-way ANOVA for the relationship with pastor variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	32.825	1	32.825	61.301	.000
Residual	547.792	1023	.535		
Total	580.617	1024			

Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the variable relationship with pastor had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

***Perceived Sense of Church Commitment  
to Spiritual Growth***

This study also sought to determine whether a student's perceived sense of their local church's commitment to their spiritual growth made a significant impact upon the student's intensity of involvement in that church. This segment of the research was also designed to assist in answering research question number three, "In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the student's relationship to the local pastor or campus minister?" For the purposes of this study, the researcher has chosen to link this variable with the research question regarding students' relationship with a church authority figure.

The three triangulated statements to which students were asked to respond were, "I would enjoy participating in a local church that I sensed really cared about my spiritual growth," "I believe that the church I attend is genuinely concerned about my spiritual growth," and "I believe the church I currently attend really wants me to grow spiritually."

Table 23 is a summary of the regression analysis of the church's commitment to spiritual growth variable. The results of the regression analysis suggest a positive relationship exists between the church's commitment to the spiritual growth of the student and the student's intensity of involvement. According to this analysis, over 25% of the variance in intensity of involvement can be accounted for by this variable.

Table 23. Summary of the regression analysis of the church's commitment to spiritual growth variable

<i>R</i>	.506
<i>R</i> Square	.256
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.256
Standard Error of Estimate	22.225

Performing a one-way ANOVA test then suggested that the independent variable, church's commitment to spiritual growth, significantly affects the dependent variable of intensity of involvement as the  $P$  value  $< .05$  level at .000. Thus, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the church's commitment to spiritual growth had no significant impact on the students' intensity of involvement. From this, the researcher understands that the student's perception as to whether the church cares about them significantly impacts their willingness, or lack of willingness, to be involved.

Table 24. One-way ANOVA for the church's commitment to spiritual growth variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	174678.888	1	174678.888	353.635	.000
Residual	505313/356	1023	493.952		
Total	679992.244	1024			

### ***Leadership Role***

The next independent variable considered in the study was whether or not a role in leadership played a part in students' intensity of involvement in their local church.

This corresponds to research question number 4, “In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by their having a role of ministry or leadership in the local church?” Toward answering this research question, students were asked to respond to the following three triangulated statements: “I have volunteered for, or have been asked to undertake a role in the ministry of the local church I attend,” “I was asked to take, or have volunteered to take a ministry responsibility in the local church I attend,” and “My leadership role at a local church increases my level of involvement and commitment.” Table 25 is a summary of the linear regression analysis of the leadership variable, which shows a significant positive relationship between the independent variable of leadership and intensity of involvement. The R square value suggests that almost 36% of the variance in the intensity of involvement variable can be accounted for by the leadership variable.

Table 25. Summary of the regression analysis of the leadership variable

<i>R</i>	.599
<i>R</i> Square	.359
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.358
Standard Error of Estimate	.847

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if the independent variable, leadership, significantly affects the dependent variable of intensity of involvement at the  $P < .05$  level. Astin, Pascarella and Terenzini and other researchers discuss aspects of integration and the assumption of leadership roles as part of the

socialization process for college students. The assumption of leadership roles, one might theorize, would naturally increase a student's involvement intensity. The results of the analysis, as they appear in Table 26 below, indicate that the variable leadership exerts a significant impact on intensity of involvement, as indicated by the P value of .000. Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the variable of leadership had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

Table 26. One-way ANOVA for the leadership variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	411.412	1	411.412	572.834	.000
Within Groups	734.723	1023	.718		
Total	1146.135	1024			

### ***Opportunity for Ministry Involvement***

The sixth independent variable considered in this study was whether or not the opportunities for ministry involvement in a local church significantly affected the student's intensity of involvement in that local church. This variable was included to help answer the fourth research question number, "In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by their having a role of ministry or leadership in the local church?" In reference to this variable, those surveyed were asked to respond to the following statements: "I like being able to do ministry in a local church setting," "The opportunity to do ministry is crucial to my involvement in a local church," and "I enjoy being able to do ministry in a local church setting."

Table 27 is a summary of the linear regression analysis of the ministry opportunity variable.

Table 27. Summary of the regression analysis of the ministry opportunity variable

<i>R</i>	.540
<i>R</i> Square	.292
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.291
Standard Error of Estimate	21.694

The regression analysis suggests a positive relationship exists between the friendship variable and the intensity of involvement score, as indicated by the *R* value of .540. The *R* square value indicates that 29.2% of the variance of intensity of involvement is accounted for by the ministry opportunity variable.

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if the independent variable, ministry opportunity, significantly affects the dependent variable of intensity of involvement at the  $P < .05$  level. The results, reported in Table 28 below, indicate that since the *P* value  $< .05$ , the ministry opportunity variable does have a significant impact upon the intensity of a student's involvement in a local church. Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the variable of ministry opportunity had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

Table 28. One-way ANOVA for the ministry opportunity variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	198539.539	1	198539.539	421.861	.000
Residual	481452.705	1023	470.628		
Total	679992.244	1024			

### *Importance of Worship*

Another variable considered in the study was whether or not the student's philosophy of worship made an impact on the students' intensity of involvement in their local church. This variable seeks to assist in answering research question number 4, "In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by their having a role of ministry or leadership in the local church?" Toward answering this research question, students were asked to respond to the following three triangulated statements: "Worshipping with a local church body is very important to me," "Worship is a major factor in my decision to be involved in a local church," and "I enjoy the worship experience of a local church." Below, Table 29 provides a summary of the linear regression analysis of the worship variable, which shows a positive relationship between the independent variable of worship and intensity of involvement. The R square value suggests that 8.3% of the variance in the intensity of involvement variable can be accounted for by the worship variable.

A one-way ANOVA test was then performed to determine if the independent variable, worship, significantly affects the dependent variable of intensity of involvement at the  $P < .05$  level.

Table 29. Summary of the regression analysis of the worship variable

<i>R</i>	.290
<i>R</i> Square	.084
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.083
Standard Error of Estimate	24.674

The results, as they appear in Table 30 below, indicate that the worship variable exerts a significant impact on intensity of involvement, as indicated by the P value of .000. Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the worship variable had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

Table 30. One-way ANOVA for the worship variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	57163.630	1	57163.630	93.892	.000
Residual	622828.614	1023	608.826		
Total	679992.244	1024			

### ***On-Campus Spiritual Growth Opportunities***

The fourth independent variable studied was the opportunity for spiritual growth available to the students on their college campuses. The results of this segment of the study correspond to the fifth research question, “In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by college sponsored spiritual growth opportunities on campus?” The researcher sought to determine if an inverse relationship



exists between the student's satisfaction with on-campus spiritual growth opportunities and the student's intensity of involvement in a local church.

Students were asked to respond to three triangulated statements in an effort to ascertain the students' perception of the on-campus spiritual growth opportunities offered them by their college. The statements to which students responded were, "The college I attend provides me with good opportunities for my personal spiritual growth," "Most of my spiritual growth needs are met through college-sponsored campus ministries," and "There are lots of opportunities on campus for spiritual growth." Table 30 summarizes the regression analysis of this variable and suggests that a weak positive relationship exists between the spiritual growth opportunities students perceive on campus and their intensity of involvement in a local church. According to the regression analysis, only .2% of the variance in intensity of involvement can be accounted for by the on-campus spiritual growth opportunity variable.

Table 31. Summary of the regression analysis of the on-campus spiritual growth opportunities variable

<i>R</i>	.047
<i>R</i> Square	.002
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.001
Standard Error of Estimate	.788

Table 32. One-way ANOVA for the on-campus spiritual growth opportunities variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	1.434	1	1.434	2.308	.129
Residual	635.801	1023	.622		
Total	637.236	1024			

As Table 32 above indicates, conducting an ANOVA test indicates that the variable, on-campus spiritual growth opportunities, does not significantly impact the intensity of a student's involvement, since the P value  $> .05$ . Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the variable of on-campus spiritual growth opportunities had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

### ***Perceived Sense of College Commitment to Spiritual Growth***

The sixth independent variable of this research study was the student's perceived sense of the college's commitment to his or her spiritual growth. The research sought to determine whether or not this variable significantly affects college students' involvement in local churches, thus informing the answer to the sixth research question, "What is the relationship between the college's intensity of commitment to provide students with spiritual growth opportunities (as perceived by the student) and student's intensity of involvement in local churches?" Once again, the researcher sought to determine the existence of a inverse relationship between the student's perceived sense of his or her college's commitment to his or her spiritual growth, and the student's intensity of involvement in a local church.

The three statements students were asked to respond to, relating to this research question, include, “I’m convinced that my college really cares about my spiritual growth,” “I believe the college I attend is very much interested in my spiritual development,” and “I think the college I attend goes out of its way to help me in my spiritual growth.” Table 33 summarizes the regression analysis of this variable and suggests that a slight positive relationship exists between the student’s sense of their college’s commitment to their personal spiritual growth and their intensity of involvement in a local church. According to the regression analysis, 1.8% of the variance in intensity of involvement can be accounted for by this variable.

Table 33. Summary of the regression analysis of the perceived sense of college commitment to spiritual growth variable

<i>R</i>	.134
<i>R</i> Square	.018
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	.017
Standard Error of Estimate	25.546

A one-way ANOVA test was then conducted to ascertain what impact the student’s perception of their school’s commitment to their spiritual growth has on their intensity of involvement in a local church. The P value of .000 indicates that the independent variable has a significant effect upon the intensity of involvement.

Table 34. One-way ANOVA for the perceived sense of college commitment to spiritual growth variable

Variation	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P-value
Regression	12345.099	1	12345.099	18.916	.000
Residual	667647.144	1023	652.636		
Total	679992.243	1024			

Based on this analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that the variable of perceived sense of college commitment to spiritual growth had no significant impact on intensity of involvement.

### **Evaluation of Research Design**

The purpose of this study has been to explore and understand the ways selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years. The purpose of this section is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the research design, with special focus on the reliability and structure of the instrument, the Local Church Involvement Survey. The following describes what the researcher believes to be the strengths and weaknesses in the methodology and integrity of the study.

### ***Quantifying the Data***

Turning subjective opinions and feelings into objective, measurable data is always a challenge; doing so for this study was no exception. The adaptation of Baker's scoring mechanism, which he adapted from Winston and Massaro's scoring of the EII allowed the researcher to use an already substantiated method that proved efficient and

seemingly reasonably accurate (Baker 2003, 54). Although the Likert-response scale has proven useful and efficient, the overall mechanism is cumbersome and requires much additional manipulation of numbers. This mechanism also depends heavily on mean scores, which do not adequately reflect the nuances of individual questions, particularly the triangulated questions. The development of a scoring mechanism that allows for a reasonably simple sorting and evaluation of individual questions may lend itself to clearer results.

### *Sample Size*

According to Leedy and Ormrod, “The larger the sample, the better”; this was the researcher’s thinking (Leedy and Ormrod 2001, 221). The original intention of the study was to consider a representative sample of students in colleges and universities which hold membership in the Christian College Consortium because of the CCC’s philosophy of maintaining “quality academic programs, a commitment to an evangelical, Protestant heritage and a wide geographical distribution” (www.ccconsortium.org 2005). Since the population of the study exceeds 25,000 students, a sample size of 3635 students, or 14.5% seemed reasonable, particularly recognizing that the actual return would likely be less than 50% of that number. Although the researcher’s goal was 30%, or 1090, his main interest was getting the 400, or approximately 12% most research guides suggest. Although the initial return exceeded the 30% goal, the final number of usable surveys was 1025, 28.2 % of the sample, or approximately 4.1% of the population. Given this rate of return, a smaller sample would have been sufficient.

Another factor affecting sample size, however, was the distribution method of the survey. Realizing that mailing a paper survey to 3635 students would be untenable

for financial reasons if nothing else, the electronic survey format became attractive. The researcher's original intention was to petition the schools for permission to contact students via e-mail and solicit their participation in the study. This methodology required the schools to release e-mail addresses of their undergraduate student bodies, which none of the schools were willing to do. Each of the participating schools, however, were willing to assign a contact person to electronically distribute the surveys to the students through a "send all" feature on each school's e-mail system. This not only saved the researcher from keying in individual e-mail addresses, it preserved the privacy of the school's e-mail address directories and allowed a far larger sample size to be contacted more efficiently than a smaller one. In the end, it was a win-win for the researcher and the school.

### ***Survey and Tabulation Methodology***

After a review of several electronic survey instruments, the Select Survey software package was chosen as a very cost-effective option with more than sufficient tools for this application. The software was easy to install, simple to manipulate, and offered a wide range of survey question types and options. Select Survey also offers a variety of export and sorting capabilities that proved very helpful. While the researcher is not exceedingly adept with computer technology, he found this software almost fun to use.

The survey software allows for anonymous completion, which may have helped enhance the response rate. Also, the software contains several mechanisms which catch errors in survey completion, which likely limited the number of surveys omitted due to improper completion.

The bulk of tabulation and sorting was accomplished on Microsoft Excel, which, while challenging to learn, proved to be extremely capable for use in applications like this study. Excel provided all the functions needed to sort, manipulate, analyze and format the data, and was particularly helpful in dealing with the relatively large sample size.

### *Variables*

In retrospect, some inherent flaws in the survey design come to the fore. While the demographic variables are somewhat standard and helpful to the study, some of the independent variables could have been deleted and others added to make the research more comprehensive and/or more specific.

The primary variables of participation of friends, relationship with pastor, leadership role, college sponsored opportunities, and college commitment to spiritual growth relate directly with research questions two through six. Other variables were added to supplement these, such as opportunity for ministry (RQ number 3) and church commitment to spiritual growth (RQ number 6). Although the remaining two variables, intergenerational involvement and worship do somewhat inform research questions 2 and 5, they should probably be replaced with variables that more directly address these issues. Also, an additional triangulated variable should be added to supplement research question number 4.

In addition, variables addressing other issues could have been added, such as those that measure the student's involvement in their local church while they were in high school, which would add a historical component, making an informative comparison to their current involvement. A variable regarding the student's perception of how much

free time they possess may be helpful. Perhaps a variable regarding their parents' faith or parents' local church involvement would be informative as well. Finally, a demographic variable indicating the student's grade point average may inform the results of a similar study.

### ***Timing of the Survey***

The researcher was generally pleased with the timing of the survey, completing the collection of data after October 1, 2005 and before Thanksgiving, 2005. Casual observation suggests the beginning of the fall semester might be, not only the most likely time when students might fill out the survey due to lack of mid-terms and finals, but also when most students might be optimistically looking for a renewed connection with a local church.

A possible bias for freshmen could occur due to this timing of the survey, since freshmen would be just arriving on campus. While these students may indeed highly value local church involvement, they may not yet have had opportunity to make meaningful connections.

### ***Limitations in Generalization of Findings***

The researcher acknowledges that another weakness in the current study may be that the data obtained may not be reflective of the involvement intensity of students at public or otherwise non-Christian schools, or at Christian schools with no relationship with the CCC. Since the researcher did not distinguish between those students living at home and commuting to school and those living on-campus in the overall findings, some



bias may be incurred by those students who live at home and continue to attend a “home church” where they have possibly attended and have been involved for many years.

### ***Limitations of Precedent Literature***

The review of precedent literature conducted for the current study revealed that, although through the years much research has been done on college student life and spirituality in a general sense (thinking particularly of Astin, Barna, Hoge, Pascarella and Terenzini, and the research groups they represent), there is a significant lack of literature and research that works to define exactly what “spirituality” means to college students, and specifically to involvement intensity of Christian college students in local churches; something this researcher sees as part of the “working out” of Christian spirituality.

Also, there is a lack of precedent literature and research on the relationship between the Christian college student and the local church, particularly in the Wesleyan theological tradition, which has historically valued a vital connection between the academy and the Church. The Wesleyan value of applying faith and education to experience is a worthy topic of research that needs further mining, specifically where it relates to the lives of today’s college students.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

Following a reiteration of the research purpose and the research questions, this chapter suggests possible implications and applications of the analysis of the current study data, seeking to answer the research questions as posed by the study. Limitations of the current research are then stated. Recommendations for future research close the chapter.

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the ways selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years. The results of this study may prove informative and useful to the Christian college student spiritual development discipline in determining factors that positively and negatively affect college students' spiritual growth. The results of this study may also prove informative and useful to pastors or campus ministers serving churches located near Christian colleges in their efforts to involve students in the ministries of the church, as well as in their efforts to minister to the needs of college students. The results of this study may also inform both college student spiritual development personnel and local church ministers as to how their efforts toward college student spiritual development may be, in fact, duplicated by one another. Finally, the

results of this study may suggest ways in which local churches and Christian colleges are effectively working together toward the common goal of student spiritual development.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were used to guide the researcher toward analyzing the selected factors influencing evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years:

1. In what ways is intensity of involvement in local churches of students who attend Christian liberal arts colleges affected by selected demographic variables?
2. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the participation of a student's friends in local churches?
3. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by the student's relationship to the local pastor or campus minister?
4. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by their having a role of ministry or leadership in the local church?
5. In what ways is intensity of student involvement in local churches affected by college sponsored spiritual growth opportunities on campus?
6. What is the relationship between the college's intensity of commitment to provide students with spiritual growth opportunities (as perceived by the student) and student's intensity of involvement in local churches?

Each of these research questions are revisited here in light of the information discovered by the statistical analysis of Chapter 4.

### **Research Implications of Demographic Variables**

The first research area sought to examine the intensity of involvement of college students in local churches as it relates to seven selected demographic variables which describe significant characteristics of the students. The demographic variables selected for analysis in this study were age, classification in school, gender, school

currently attending, current employment status, current housing situation, and current marital status. The implications of each variable upon the student's intensity of involvement score are discussed below, and include implications that may apply to the individual students, to the schools in which they are enrolled, and to the churches that they attend.

### *Age*

The current study explored whether or not the age of the student contributes in a significant manner to that student's intensity of involvement in a local church while at college. Since the  $p$  factor  $< .05$  for the age variable, the statistical analysis concluded that the age variable does in fact play a significant role in a student's church involvement, if only a weak role, since the  $p$  factor was .046, only slightly less than .05. Although the mean intensity of involvement scores for students aged 19, 20 and 21 were very close, 30.20, 28.34, and 30.96 respectively, the mean scores for students 18 years old and over 23 years old were noticeably higher, 33.66 and 39.16, respectively. Also, the mean intensity of involvement scores, other than the 21 year old, fall consistently throughout the college years, from a high of 33.66 for the 18 year old, to a low of 25.58 for the 23 year old.

Robert Gribbon's research suggests that a consistent drop in church involvement occurs in young adults, particularly those between 18 and 24 years of age, due especially to the lack of parental involvement in their church attendance (Gribbon 1982, 4). Bruce Kreutzer, in his 1998 study, found that most of the students he interviewed admitted that they were not as involved (in the local church) as they had been in the past (Kreutzer 2001, 93). The results of the current study largely confirm these

conclusions that college student involvement in local churches declines as the student ages. The results of this analysis may imply that students, at 18 years of age, have not yet fully developed the needed discipline to continue with meaningful and/or consistent church involvement. The results of this study may also imply that students do not seem to develop this discipline throughout their college years. As students age in the college environment, apart, of course, from the influence of their parents, and where the prevailing intensity of involvement in local churches by their peers is somewhat low, students in CCC-affiliated schools may continue to regress in the area of church involvement. This is consistent with Fowler's observation that as individuals of this age group experience relocation of authority from without to within, they distance themselves from faith groups (Fowler 1981, 179).

The jump in involvement scores at age 21 (up over 2.5 points from age 20), and the relatively high intensity scores for those students over age 23 may imply that as students prepare to leave college as many do at these ages (in this study, 66% of 21 year olds and 57% of the over 23 crowd are seniors) they are preparing themselves for the next step in their lives by reconnecting with an institution that was meaningful to them in the past. Casual observation suggests that as students prepare to graduate, more involve themselves in relationships, internships, and other activities which require extra measures of responsibility. Perhaps the higher results for those aged 21 and over 23 are due to those factors as well.

### ***Classification in School***

The second demographic variable this study considered was a student's classification in school, whether their standing as a freshman, sophomore, junior or senior

played a role in their intensity of involvement in a local church. The statistical analyses employed in this study concluded that a student's classification does not exert a significant impact on the student's intensity of involvement at the  $p < .05$  level. Since the previous variable, age, did exert a significant impact upon intensity of involvement, one might wrongly conclude that classification must also exert a significant impact, due to the two variables being, traditionally, closely tied together. This disparity, first of all, implies that researchers should not make such traditional assumptions about the relationship between a student's age and classification.

The precedent literature upon which the current study was based suggested that the classification of the student would negatively impact the involvement of the student in a local church. The 1969 Feldman and Newcomb study, *The Impact of College on Students*, found that seniors, compared with freshmen, were consistently "somewhat less orthodox or fundamentalist in religious orientations, somewhat more skeptical about the existence and influence of the supreme being, somewhat more likely to conceive of God in impersonal terms, and somewhat less favorable to the church as an institution" (Feldman and Newcomb 1969, 23). The studies of Kreutzer, Poe and Astin broadly concur with Feldman and Newcomb's conclusions. These conclusions suggest that, as students move closer to graduation, participation in local churches might decrease.

The results of this study, however, do not support a continual decrease in local church involvement throughout the student's matriculation toward graduation. The mean intensity of involvement score of seniors is 30.08, the second highest score next to freshmen (33.04), which indicates an upturn in local church involvement toward the end of their college career. In ways similar to the age variable, these results may imply that

as students mature, even in the relatively short chronological period that defines their college years, their need for involvement in a local church may be awakened, or re-awakened. The results of this research may also imply that there are specific activities in the student's senior year, whether personal, educational, professional, or social, that turn or return the student's interest to the local church, such as the realization that mechanisms for spiritual growth, provided by the school, will no longer be available after graduation. Additionally, the results of this study may imply that there is something different about CCC related schools and students that positively affects a student's renewed interest in local churches as the student's academic career winds down.

### *Gender*

The variable of the student's gender, and whether it exerts a significant impact upon his or her involvement in a local church, was considered next. The response to the LCIS was weighted heavily toward females. Although the three schools surveyed collectively have slightly more females in their student bodies than males (44.6% male versus 55.4% male), the survey participants consisted of far more females (69%) than males (31%). This skewedness in the sample response toward females, along with the researcher's casual observation, suggests that females may be more willing participants in general, and that females may be more responsible and involved in those things in which they choose to participate, such as ministries in a local church.

Kreutzer's research confirms the notion that females are the more responsible and involved gender. According to Kreutzer, female students who participated in local churches more than six times per month outnumbered the males 22 to 12. Also, females reported stronger agreement as to the importance of church commitment, outnumbering

the males, 40 to 28 (Kreutzer 2001, 92). The current study, however, suggests that gender does not have a significant impact upon a student's intensity of involvement in local churches. The mean intensity of involvement scores of male and female students in the current study are separated by only .36 points, 30.45 and 30.81, respectively. An analysis of variance test between the gender variables resulted in a P value of .837, indicating that the student's gender makes no statistically significant impact on involvement intensity.

The results of the current study may imply that, although perhaps a greater number of students of one gender may participate in a given activity, the intensity of involvement of that gender in that activity may not necessarily be higher. Also, the results may imply that students in CCC-affiliated schools are more balanced regarding their view of involvement in local churches than college students in general.

### ***School Currently Attending***

The three CCC-affiliated schools that permitted this researcher to survey their undergraduate students for the purposes of the current study were Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College. The results showed an eight point spread between the intensity of involvement scores between the schools. The results of the one-way ANOVA test suggest that the school attending variable does play a significant role in determining the students' intensity of involvement, with the P statistic being  $< .05$ .

In Morris Baker's 2003 research, he found that the students attending schools with little or no affiliation with the Baptist denomination were more intensely involved in Baptist Student Unions than those students attending Baptist-affiliated colleges (Baker 2003, 133). This seems to suggest that an inverse relationship exists between the



intensity of a school's "baptistness," and the interest of the students who tend to be involved in a Baptist extracurricular organization. This translates to students seeking religious fellowship most significantly in places where such fellowship may not be found on campus.

Considering the results of Morris' study, the results of the current study may imply that a school's spiritual climate may inversely affect a student's intensity of involvement in a local church, meaning, students may be seeking the spiritual fulfillment in a local church that they cannot get on-campus.

The results of the current study may, however, imply the opposite: that the positive spiritual climate of a given school encourages further spiritual growth and involvement intensity in local churches, thus failing to correspond with previous research. The research may imply that Alpha College, which returned the highest mean involvement scores, encourages church involvement, while Gamma College, where scores were lowest, does not encourage local church involvement as much.

The results of this study could also imply that local church involvement opportunities are more significant and inviting in the town of Alpha College than in the towns of Beta and Gamma Colleges. Perhaps the spiritual state, convenience, transportation available, or other factors within the realm of the local churches in the areas more significantly impact involvement of students at these colleges than the colleges themselves.

The results of the current study could also imply a difference in attitudes toward local churches of students based on geographical location. For example, the study

results may imply that students in the west and Midwest are less likely to be involved in local churches than are students in the mid-south.

Other demographic differences at the colleges studied may come into play as well when investigating involvement intensity in local churches. The results of this study may imply that Caucasian students are more involved in local churches, since 95% of the students at Alpha College are Caucasian, as opposed to 87% and 85% at Beta and Gamma, respectively. This implication would not necessarily correspond with Kreutzer's findings that African-Americans responded with the highest percentage (80) of strong agreement on the importance of church commitment (Kreutzer 2001, 92).

### ***Current Employment Status***

Astin's involvement theory is grounded in the assumption that student time is the most precious resource on the college campus (Astin 1984, 301). Although the variable of time would apply in the lives of college students through the influence of a variety of variables, it seems that time might apply most directly, for the purposes of this study, through the variable of current employment status.

While one might expect that those students who are employed for the fewest hours per week, thus having more time available to them to use as they wish, would be more intensely involved in a local church, the study does not substantiate that assumption. On the contrary, the mean intensity of involvement score of students employed over 20 hours per week was the highest of the categories (35.86), while the mean involvement intensity score of those unemployed students was the lowest at 28.14 – an almost 8 point disparity.

The statistical analysis reveals that the variable employment status does have a statistically significant impact upon intensity of involvement scores, returning a  $P < .05$  result. It is not surprising that the variable does exert an impact on involvement. That an inverse relationship exists between employment status and involvement intensity is somewhat surprising to this researcher, and contrary to Astin's research.

Because of these surprising results, the researcher took just one element of the Involvement Intensity score, the qualitative time element, and compared it with the calculated involvement intensity score, relative to the employment status demographic variable. The results, displayed in table 35 below, indicate that those students employed the most hours per week also give the most time to local church activities, as well as being the most intensely involved.

Table 35. Mean hours per week and mean intensity of involvement according to employment variable

Student Employment Status	Mean Hours Involved	Mean Involvement Intensity Score
Unemployed	2.20	28.14
Employed under 10 hours per week	2.44	29.95
Employed between 10 and 20 hours per week	2.27	33.48
Employed over 20 hours per week	2.61	35.86

The results of this study may imply that students who work more hours at a job may be more responsible and/or more disciplined, thus they give more time and are more intensely involved in ministry and worship in a local church. Another implication of these results may be that students entrusted with more leadership in employment are

more likely to be intensely involved in other areas and activities of life, including the local church. The results of the current study may also imply that those students with greater personal financial need may be more intensely involved in local churches, looking for support and encouragement.

### ***Current Housing Situation***

The current study classified students according to whether they lived in on-campus housing or off-campus housing. The survey instrument made no further distinction about type of housing, such as whether students lived at home or not, apartment, private room, dormitory, group home, or others possibilities. Likely because of the traditional nature of the three schools, the results of the study sample revealed that a vast majority, 818, or 80% of the participants live on-campus in college housing, while 207 students, or 20% of the participants, have off-campus living arrangements.

An analysis of the variable, current housing situation, revealed that there was not a drastic difference in the mean scores of students by housing situation. The mean intensity of involvement scores were 30.08 for students living in on-campus and 33.14 for off-campus students. Since the p factor for the housing variable was greater than .05, the one-way ANOVA test concluded that this variable does not exert a significant influence on the involvement intensity.

According to Levine and Cureton's research, students are becoming more interested in seeking social and purposive opportunities in off-campus settings (Levine and Cureton 1998). Baker's 2003 research concludes similarly, when exploring the relationship of housing status to the intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions. Students who lived off-campus reported that they were much more involved in the

extracurricular ministry than those on-campus. In Baker's analysis, he expected to find more on-campus students involved since the BSU meetings were held on-campus. Yet the students who chose to commute to the meetings, those living off-campus, were more intensely involved (Baker 2003, 137).

Since the local church is not an on-campus activity and consequently requires students to commute, at least minimally, to be involved, and to do so more frequently the more intensely involved the student might be, the results of the current study do not exactly correlate with Baker's results. Baker's findings suggest that a more equitable statistical result may be found regarding off-campus activities, which is exactly the case.

The results of this study may imply that students who have access to personal or church-provided transportation may be more intensely involved in the ministry of the local church. Considering that the housing variable plays no statistically significant role in involvement intensity, the results of the current study may also imply that students maintain their intensity of involvement in local churches regardless of their housing situation. Also, the results may imply that off-campus students are interested in connecting with off-campus organizations to take the place of the camaraderie of the on-campus experience.

### ***Current Marital Status***

Because the vast majority of traditional undergraduate college students are single, comparatively little research has been done about married college students, and particularly married college students' involvement in local churches. Even less research has been done with students who are single again due to death or divorce. Casual observation would suggest that married students might be somewhat more responsible

people, and therefore more interested in pursuing their spiritual lives through the ministries of a local church. Also, for many young people, marriage is time for re-evaluating life priorities and setting goals. For Christian college students, these may include a renewed interest in the local church. Casual observation also suggests that Christian college students who are single again may be more intensely involved in a local church where they might hope to find a source of encouragement and support.

In the current study, 93% of the participants were single, never married; 6% were married; and less than 1%, 7 students in all, were single again. Married students' mean intensity of involvement score was the highest of the group, 38.86, while single students scored second highest at 30.22. Students who were single again scored almost 10 points lower, at 21.43. Since the  $p$  factor for the marital status variable was less than .05, the one-way ANOVA test confirmed that marital status does exert a significant influence on the students' involvement intensity, which suggests several implications.

These results may confirm the casual observations already mentioned about married students, that they are more responsible individuals in general, and are more intensely involved in local church due to this increase in personal responsibility. The higher scores for married students may also imply an interest in being involved due to the presence of children in their home, although this study did not research that demographic. Since many married students live off-campus (in this study, 64 of the 65 married students, or 98.5%, lived off-campus), perhaps a correlation exists between the marriage and housing variables. The relatively high married-student scores may also imply that CCC schools lack adequate spiritual programming and opportunities for married students, hence married students seek to have these needs met in local churches.

The lower involvement intensity scores for single, never married students may imply a lack of commitment exists in single students, or that single students are more self-focused with the investment of their time. Another implication may be that single students tend to have their needs for spiritual growth and fellowship met in on-campus activities and feel less need to involve themselves in another group, such as a local church. The results of this study may also imply that local churches fail to provide programming or opportunities that are attractive to single students.

A surprising element in the results of the current study (for the researcher) was the relatively low involvement intensity mean score for students that are single again. Since only 7 single-again students participated in the study, the researcher suggests the following possible implications with due hesitancy. The results regarding single-again students may imply that local churches do not offer adequate or attractive opportunities to students who are divorced or widowed. The results may also imply that these students are not intensely involved due to their own increased personal responsibilities with home and school, particularly if children are involved, or if they have not been single again for a long period of time. Finally, these results may imply that CCC schools make special efforts in involving these students in on-campus activities that meet their needs for spiritual growth and fellowship.

### **Research Implications of Involvement Variables**

Research questions 2 through 6 examine the intensity of involvement of college students in local churches as it relates to nine selected independent involvement variables which describe the perceptions and involvement activities of students in local churches while attending college. An analysis of the findings related to these research

questions may reveal areas of relative strength and weakness in the practice of local churches located near college campuses as well as the practices of Christian colleges in encouragement of students' spiritual lives and relationship to local churches. Analysis of these questions may also assist students in determining and honing their own perceptions about the importance of these factors in their religious and spiritual lives.

### ***Involvement Variables***

The involvement variables selected for analysis in this study were friendship, relationship with the pastor or college minister, leadership role, on-campus spiritual growth opportunities, perceived sense of church commitment to the student's spiritual growth, perceived sense of college commitment to the student's spiritual growth, importance of worship, importance of intergenerational involvement, and opportunity for ministry involvement. The implications of each variable are discussed here separately and include implications for the local church, the school, and the student.

### **Friendship**

The first independent variable addressed in this study is the variable of friendship and how the actions of student's friends impact the involvement intensity of the student. Most current research discusses the importance of friendship to young adults and college students, although some research suggests that having friends of the same religious persuasion may not be critically important. Although Harold Hartley reports that over 86% of students say they discuss religion with their peers (Hartley 2003, 5), a 2005 Reboot study found that only 7% of students claimed that their friends



believed the same (religiously) as they did (Potts, Bennett, and Levin 2005, rebooters.html).

In the current study, a student's friend's involvement in a local church proved to be a weak indicator of a given student's involvement intensity. Although statistically significant at the .05 level with the R value registering at .078, this variable represents only .6% of the variance of intensity of involvement. This was the second lowest factor of the study, and the lowest factor with statistically significant exertion. This research, then, somewhat supports the precedent literature in suggesting a student does not depend heavily upon his or her friends' involvement in activities, or even their agreement in philosophy as a determining factor of whether or not he or she will be involved in a given activity.

The results of this study may imply that involvement intensity is not an easily transferable characteristic among groups of friends and that local churches should not presume that, just because one student is heavily involved in ministry, his or her friends will naturally follow suit. The research may imply, however, that friendship may play a role in factors such as student attendance at worship or other events of the church, where intense involvement is not required. The findings of this study may also imply that students are much more willing to commit themselves to individual causes than much conventional wisdom might suggest, meaning that while friendship is very important to persons in this age group, friends may be very diverse in what they value and to what they commit themselves.

### **Importance of Intergenerational Involvement**

Because college campuses are typically generationally homogeneous places, this study sought to determine whether or not college students value the intergenerational nature of the local church, and whether or not they might value it enough that it might be a factor in their own intensity of involvement. Casual observation suggests that college students tend to intentionally limit their acceptance of, and interaction with, adults of other ages and stages of life. Yet, social science research suggests that the disequilibrium that college students undergo during this transitory time may be soothed and helped by interaction with parental-type figures, which could be found in local churches and other places of intergenerational involvement. Current research has found that local church involvement may be particularly helpful with adjustment to college life (Low 1995, 411), helping to integrate students' beliefs into all areas of their lives (Bryant 2003, 737), helping with students' mechanisms for coping (Constantine et al. 2002, 610), and strengthening network ties (Smith 2003, 265), all of which come, at least in part, from the intergenerational element – students interacting with people who are not at their own age and stage in life.

Contrary to the researcher's casual observation, the results of the current study reveal that the importance of intergenerational involvement to college students does exert a statistically significant impact upon the student's intensity of involvement in a local church as the R value registers a moderate .338. This variable is also shown to account for nearly 11.5% of the variance of intensity of involvement, more than this researcher expected.

The findings here suggest that some college students value the intergenerational nature of local churches and are willing to involve themselves in significant ways where they can enjoy this benefit. This research may imply that students are aware of their own need of fellowship with persons representing different generations than themselves, and that they may also recognize the benefits of this type of interaction. These findings may also imply that at least some college students today recognize the limitations of the traditional college campus to provide for these intergenerational needs and are willing to make sacrifices of time and effort to achieve the benefits of intergenerational interaction. The study also may imply that churches need to more carefully segregate or desegregate college students from the other adult ministries, making careful efforts to enfold them into the whole of church life. Finally, these results may imply that colleges might explore ways to provide intergenerational opportunities in which students may participate.

### **Relationship with Pastor or College Minister**

The current study sought to determine the significance of the student's relationship with the local church pastor, or minister that would have the most direct contact with college students, and the student's intensity of involvement in the local church. Little research has been done regarding this element of local church involvement, although Baker's 2003 study concluded that students' relationship with the BSU director did have a significant bearing on their intensity of involvement in the BSU ministries (Morris 2003, 140).

The regression analysis of this study found that a student's relationship with a local church pastor or campus minister has a weak, positive affect on the dependent variable, intensity of involvement. The R value, .238, and the subsequent R square indicates that this independent variable accounts for 5.7% of the variance in intensity of involvement. Coincidentally, this is exactly the same percentage as Morris' study found in 2003 (Morris 2003, 140). The one-way ANOVA test concluded that this independent variable did play a statistically significant role in determining the student's intensity of involvement in local churches.

The results of this study may imply that at least some students will tend to become more involved in and committed to the ministries of a local church if they feel they will have the opportunity to personally know the pastor or campus minister. These results may imply that a personal connection to someone in a position of spiritual authority is important to college students, and may even imply that it is important that such a person be found outside the traditional college campus. The findings may also imply that larger college ministry groups may not be overly attractive to some college students if there is not a reasonable student-to-minister ratio, or that larger churches may not appeal to some students, if they cannot personally relate with a pastor or campus minister. The study also seems to imply that pastors and campus ministers of local churches may be able to significantly increase the involvement of some college students by simply making themselves available to students as mentors, or even in less intensive relationships.

### **Perceived Sense of Church Commitment to Spiritual Growth**

Another independent variable this study sought to analyze was how the student's perception of the church's commitment to the student's spiritual growth affects the intensity of involvement of the student in that church; in other words, "Will the student be more intensely involved if he or she senses that the church cares about him or her and his or her spiritual well-being?" This variable was not designed to measure whether the church does, in fact, care about the student's spiritual growth. The questions, instead, were designed to measure the student's sense of the church's concern, which is what impacts the student's actions.

The regression analysis conducted on this variable suggests a strong relationship exists between independent and dependent variables, the R value registering .506, meaning that over 25% of the variance of the student's intensity of involvement can be accounted for by the student's perceived sense of the church's commitment to their spiritual growth. The subsequent ANOVA test substantiates this significance since  $P < .05$ .

While little has been written specifically on the relationship between intensity of involvement and student's perception of a church's commitment to their spiritual growth, current research suggests that students do take their spirituality very seriously. Researchers, including Barna, the Reboot study, Astin, Rainer, Poe, and Hoge conclude that students are more spiritual than ever. That this spirituality is not always expressly Christian does not necessarily impact the student's perception that church leaders do or do not care about their views and development.

One dangerous implication of these results is that Christian college students may be willing to involve themselves in any church, mosque or organization that they perceive as truly concerned about their spiritual growth and development. This appealing to a person's perception of care is the classic method that cults use to gain members.

The current research may also imply that students will respond to a validation of and interest in their own spiritual searches and questions. The results of this study may further imply that church and other organizational leaders can enhance student involvement through simple gestures which demonstrate concern for the student's spiritual growth. A final implication of this research may be that church leaders and college students' perceptions of whether or not the church cares about the student's spiritual growth differ due to communication gaps, misunderstanding, or inattention.

### **Leadership Role**

Many studies have researched the leadership preferences, tendencies, and abilities of college students in on-campus and off-campus situations, and have found consistent increases in student interest and ability in leadership throughout the college years (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005, 246). The current study sought to determine whether opportunities for leadership offered students by local churches were a significant factor in students choosing to be more intensely involved in those churches.

The regression analysis indicates this independent variable has the strongest relationship with the students' intensity of involvement of all the variables studied. The linear regression returned an R value of .599; almost 36% of the variance in the intensity of involvement variable can be accounted for by a student's willingness to assume leadership. Conducting a one-way ANOVA also showed the significance of the impact

of this independent variable on the intensity of a student's involvement as  $P < .05$ . Although this study did not seek to identify changes or improvements in students' leadership ability, it does suggest that practicing leadership is important to students during their college years.

The results of the current study may imply that local churches would increase the intensity of involvement of their college student population by offering them positions of leadership in ministry areas. The results of this study may also imply that students who are not already involved in the ministries of the church may become involved if they knew the possibility existed that they could become ministry leaders. The findings from this research may further imply that students in leadership positions of local church ministries may integrate more fully into other areas and ministries of the church.

### **Opportunity for Ministry Involvement**

This variable was intended to help measure a student's interest in doing ministry in a local church setting, as opposed to a college or university setting, and to suggest whether or not the church setting for ministry has a relationship to a student's intensity of involvement in the local church. As opposed to the leadership variable, which was designed to measure a student's intensity of involvement relative to their interest in, or position of leadership, the current variable merely focuses on the setting and ministry opportunities that may be unique to the local church.

The regression analysis conducted on this variable revealed a strong positive relationship exists between the opportunity for ministry a student is given and their involvement intensity. The one-way ANOVA test confirmed that a statistically

significant relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables, as the resultant statistic  $P < 0$ .

The nature of this relationship may imply that one key element of involving college students in ministries of local churches may be finding ministries and places of service that are meaningful to students and that use students' gifts and talents, particularly capitalizing on those areas of service and giftedness that are drastically different from those available on-campus.

Another implication of this study may be that such ministry allows students to develop their own sense of purpose, which much precedent literature describes as important to college students (Poe, Overholt, Marquart, Marsden). College students may see these opportunities as invitations to try new things that may even help mold their future and vocational futures. This, of course, is nothing new. This is simply the informal application of an internship, supervised ministry, or protégé principle in helping to guide students toward their vocational calling.

### **Importance of Worship**

A summary of the linear regression analysis of the worship variable shows a positive relationship between the independent variable of worship and the intensity of students' involvement with the R value registering .29. The R square value then suggests that 8.3% of the variance in the intensity of involvement variable can be accounted for by the worship variable. The one-way ANOVA test confirmed that a statistically significant relationship exists, with the resulting  $P < .05$ . Casual observation suggests that worship style and preferences are a significant factor in American's choices of attendance and involvement in local churches for those who do attend and serve in churches. Moreover,



precedent literature seems to suggest that today's college students do value worship experiences, if in an abstract and individualistic manner. The research of Alexander Astin suggests that college students are actively dealing with existential questions; they are searching for deeper meaning in their lives and looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves (Astin 2005, 22). Poe concludes that Postmodernists have a profound craving for the spiritual, and they pursue it in many ways (Poe 2004, 21). College students today value choice, informality and personal expression (Wetzstein 2005, [washingtontimes.html](#)). These factors suggest that the idea of worship has taken on a quite individualistic tone and expression.

The findings of the current study, suggesting that worship is a significant variable that influences college students' intensity of involvement in churches, may imply that the worship experience, and the opportunity itself for worship, is a motivating factor for student involvement. These results may also imply that the worship style of the local church is a motivating factor for involvement – agreeing with student preferences regarding worship. The results of the current study may also imply that the social aspects created by worship experiences may encourage student involvement in the area/ministry of worship or in other areas of local church ministry.

### **On-Campus Spiritual Growth Opportunities**

Harold Hartley reports that by the end of their first semester, nearly 68% of freshmen college students reported that they were satisfied with on-campus opportunities for religious and spiritual development offered by their (United Methodist) college or university (Hartley 2003, 5). If this is true, do college students who are satisfied with

these opportunities look elsewhere for involvement opportunities to enhance their spiritual growth? This group of questions regarding on campus spiritual growth opportunities sought to determine whether or not a satisfactory (according to the student's perception) array of spiritual growth opportunities on campus would impact the student's intensity of involvement in local churches.

The regression analysis reported an R factor of .047, which indicates a very slight positive relationship exists between on-campus spiritual growth opportunities and the students' intensity of involvement scores. The subsequent R square factor reveals that only .2% of the variance in the intensity of involvement variable can be accounted for by the on-campus ministry opportunities variable. The results of the one-way ANOVA test produce a  $P > .05$ , which suggests that this independent variable does not exert a significant influence on the intensity of involvement score.

These results do not really confirm or deny the conclusions of Hartley and other precedent literature regarding college students' satisfaction with their on-campus spiritual growth opportunities, as the mean satisfaction level of this study was 3.74, or nearly 75% of the student's surveyed. Hartley's study was quite limited, as he only studied United Methodist schools. The results of this study may imply, however, that student's satisfaction with on-campus spiritual growth opportunities has little to do with student's intensity of involvement in local church activities. These results may further imply that college students' satisfaction with on-campus spiritual growth opportunities has little impact on their involvement in any off-campus spiritual growth opportunity. These findings may imply that colleges with strong on-campus spiritual development programming for students actually encourage student participation (slightly) in local

church ministries, or at least do not significantly discourage student involvement in local churches. Finally, the results of the current study may imply that colleges are doing reasonably well in providing spiritual growth opportunities to their students.

### **Perceived Sense of College Commitment to Spiritual Growth**

The final variable studied was the college students' perceived sense of the college's commitment to his or her spiritual growth. An analysis of this independent variable was included in the study to help determine whether a student who has a negative perception of his or her school's concern in this matter might be more intensely involved in a local church in an attempt to fill a perceived void in his or her spiritual development. The converse was also considered a possibility; that a student who sensed his or her college was strongly committed to the student's spiritual growth might not seek spiritual growth opportunities outside of those offered by the college or university itself.

The regression analysis suggests that only a slight positive relationship ( $R = .134$ ) exists between the college student's perceived sense of the college's commitment to his or her spiritual growth and his or her intensity of involvement in a local church. The  $R$  square value, .018, suggests that this variable accounts for only 1.8% of the variance in students' intensity of involvement. The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicate that this independent variable does exert a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable, intensity of involvement, which may result in the following implications.

These results may imply that college students who are satisfied with their school's interest in their personal spiritual development are encouraged to seek further development through local churches. These results also may imply that colleges make a

reasonable effort to encourage student involvement in local church. These results do not imply that a perceived lack of concern for the student's spiritual welfare and development on the part of the college or university indicate a strong reaction to be heavily involved in a local church to remediate that shortfall.

Before entering into the specific applications of the variables considered in this study, two overarching discoveries should be mentioned. First, comment will be made regarding the number of students who indicated that they have spent no time in worship or ministry in a local church. A second noteworthy result of the current study is the resultant sample mean intensity of involvement scores.

### ***Overarching Implications***

Before moving on to the application of the study results, the researcher would like to note two significant overarching implications of the data. Both of these implications are related to the overall intensity of involvement scores for the sample and therefore did not fall into the categories of the demographic or independent variables.

### **Zero Hours in Church**

In the current study, part of the calculation of the intensity of involvement scores included this quantitative question: "Over the past 12 months, approximately how many hours per week did you participate in the ministry of a local church while at school (including time in preparation, worship and ministry)? Do not include your participation in your home church over the summer." Of the research sample of 1025 students, exactly 163, or 16% of the sample responded that they have spent no time in a local church over the past 12 months.

This percentage of non-involvement seemed surprisingly high to the researcher at first, especially considering these were students who spent more (in some cases, significantly more) money to attend a Christian college or university. Given only this economic factor, one might assume that a student who makes this choice would have at least a minimal interest in participating in a local church.

These results, however, do support current research on the increasing separation of student spirituality and participation or involvement in local churches or organized religion. As many researchers have concluded, today's college students consider themselves increasingly spiritual, yet have increasingly less interest in participating in the events of local churches (Hoge, Regnerus, Barna, Potts, Bennett, Levin, Rainer). Kreutzer's study concluded that no evidence was found that correlates religious belief to church participation (Kreutzer 2001, 92). Perhaps Hoge best sums up this phenomenon in concluding that, "in the minds of a majority of non-church going Catholics . . . churchgoing and spirituality are commonly separated" (Hoge et al. 2001, 153).

The percentage of "non-involved" in this study is small, however, compared to national averages reported in the precedent literature. Regnerus says that only 31% attend weekly religious services, meaning 69% do not (Regnerus 2003, 7). The Rebooters study claims that 64% do not attend religious services weekly (Potts, Bennett, and Levin 2005, rebooters.html). The results of this study, which suggest that 84% of the students surveyed participate in some activity in a local church every week, indicate a much higher response than other studies and national averages, and offer several important implications.

Primarily, the results of the current study imply that students at CCC-related colleges are much more engaged in local churches than their typical national counterparts. These results may imply that these Christian colleges do encourage local church involvement in their students, at least more than their non-Christian, or even Catholic, counterparts. The results of the current study also imply that this significant participation may be due to the schools' theological tradition, which heavily values local church involvement.

### **Sample Intensity of Involvement Mean**

The researcher was also somewhat surprised at the seemingly low mean intensity of involvement scores. The scale of the scores was 0 to 100, 100 being the highest score available. The standard deviation (24.77) between the scores was statistically very high, which substantiates the researcher's supposition that high scores, translating into high self-expectations of church participation and involvement and a sound theological viewpoint of the church and its importance, were possible. Indeed, there were many high involvement scores. The overall sample mean, however, was only 30.7, the median score being an even 24.0.

Because of the calculations involved in determining the intensity of involvement score, there is little research available with which direct comparisons may be made. Baker's 2003 study, however, is the exception. Baker's study of intensity of student involvement in Baptist Student Union returned a sample mean score of 54.8 and a median score of 48.0, both nearly double the LCIS scores.

These results may imply that, while many CCC students participate in the local churches, their involvement intensity is quite low, at least compared to Baptist students'

participation in the on-campus BSU ministry. These results may imply that local churches are not offering significant opportunities for involvement for college students. The current study findings may also imply that, while students understand the importance of some participation in local churches, they don't understand the service aspect which typically increases involvement intensity. Another implication may be that students' spiritual development needs are met on campus, such that their involvement intensity in local churches is minimized.

### **Research Applications**

The current research findings and implications suggest insights that may assist in the practice of several disciplines, all of which contribute to the preparation, development, and needs of the Christian college student. Suggested application of the current study is outlined here according to the following ministry areas: ministries of local churches in college towns to the Christian college student, college student spiritual development efforts, on-campus ministry organizations, and local church youth ministries. Application of the current study results to the personal lives of Christian college students closes this segment.

### ***Local Church Ministry to Christian College Students***

Christian college students seem more likely to become involved in local churches if those churches are aware of and pursue the factors that strengthen and allow for involvement to occur. The primary factors that increase involvement intensity, according to the present study, include the student's ability to practice some form of leadership within the church, the opportunities for ministry extended to the student by the

church, and the student's perception that the church is concerned with the student's spiritual growth and development. Other factors of limited importance to a student's involvement include the student's ability to mix into a group of people who are of different ages and in different stages of life than the student, a student's ability to worship God with that group of people, and a student's ability to personally know the church pastor, campus minister, or other church leader specifically assigned to oversee the college ministry of the church. Demographically speaking, the variables with the strongest relationship to intensity of involvement, according to the current study, were the college or university from which the student comes, the marital status of the student, and the employment status of the student. In recognizing these factors, churches may wish to consider some of the following programmatic and philosophic suggestions.

Churches may wish to consider focusing on leadership training and practice in their ministries to college students. Students who sense they are needed and who see possibilities to practice leadership skills are likely to be more intensely involved. In their schools, and particularly in Christian schools, students are hopefully learning within the confines of a Christian world view. Students seem to respond to opportunities to put the theory into practice. Churches should make room for students to lead groups like Sunday school classes, small groups, seniors groups and other church ministries. Perhaps inviting students into leadership roles usually reserved for older adults, or even allowing students to assist longer-term leaders may enhance their involvement as well.

Also, because of the weak, positive relationship between involvement intensity and students' openness to heterogeneous situations, churches may consider promoting student involvement in intergenerational groups. At least some students seem to enjoy



opportunities to be involved in such groups, and churches may want to investigate how to best provide for those needs and desires as a means of increasing involvement of those students. Churches need not assume that, in all cases, confining college students to college-age groups will increase their involvement intensity.

Third, local churches may want to consider making extra efforts in incorporating college students into ministry positions and opportunities. Many churches located in close proximity to colleges and universities tend to operate on academic schedules. Casual observation suggests that those churches often fill ministry positions during times when college students may not be in session, so that the ministries of the church can be ready to begin when the scholastic semester or quarter begins. While this practice may be effective, it also tends to preclude college students from meaningful service opportunities in the church, and as they try to incorporate into the local body, they may interpret that efficiency as them not being needed. Churches may consider reserving some service opportunities specifically for college students, or creating specific ministry areas for college students that take their schedule into consideration.

Next, churches can expect students to be more intensely involved in their ministries and programs when the students sense that the church truly cares about them personally and about their spiritual development. Churches may need to consider how this “care” is communicated to the college student community, or whether it is at all, in their setting. Churches may not necessarily assume that because their doors are open to college students, those students will, in fact, believe that the church cares about them.

A church may communicate this care by providing careful and consistent communication with college students, by including them in the full life of the church, by

inviting them into membership, perhaps even creating an unofficial membership category specifically for college students who live apart from their home church and wish to keep their membership there. Churches may communicate care for college students by encouraging them in leadership positions and making ministry positions open to them, as already discussed. Churches may also communicate care for students by encouraging paid or volunteer staff to personally get to know individual students, often better facilitated by smaller discrete groups. Those churches who allow campus ministry staff to interact in these ways will likely make more personal connections with students, which may increase students' intensity of involvement.

Fifth, because of the somewhat low mean intensity of involvement scores, and because of the precedent literature's reports of what is, in effect, the increasing ignorance of the relationship between spirituality and religious behavior, perhaps the church should take special care to instruct college students in the biblical and theological foundations of the church. Classes and discussion groups focusing on a Biblical approach and definition to topics like spirituality, the church, religion, Christian praxis, systematic and Biblical theology, and morality may be in order. Casual observation suggests that many churches try to increase college student attendance by keeping class and group discussion tied to current events, relationships, dating, career counseling, and other more superficial topics. Perhaps the church should give more time to more substantial topics that will shape greater elements of students' world view.

The top four factors of this study influencing student involvement, meaningful leadership, opportunity for ministry, a sense that the church cares about them, and intergenerational involvement, seem to suggest that students' intensity of involvement is

increased when churches do not simply re-create environments and ministries that are available to students on-campus, but when churches emphasize those characteristics that make the church atmosphere different than the campus atmosphere. Local churches would be wise to investigate how their college or campus ministry might apply these principles effectively in their setting

Regarding the demographic variables, churches can seem to count on married and employed students to be more intensely involved than their counterparts. Other demographic factors (with the exception of the school attending variable that is discussed later) did not have a statistically significant impact on involvement intensity. Any invitation or encouragement toward involvement made by local churches should be made equally to students of both genders and of all classifications and housing situations, as none of these variables had a statistically significant impact on involvement. Although the age variable did make a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, its impact was so slight that the researcher is unsure if it deserves special attention. Churches should not assume that those students with (supposedly) more discretionary time available to them (unemployed and single) will be more involved; this research shows the opposite is true. Churches should cast their nets broadly, but not exclude married and employed students from consideration for significant ministry involvement because they might seem to have less time than others.

### ***College Student Spiritual Development Efforts***

According to this study, college students tend to be attracted to, and invest time in, people and places where they are given opportunities for leadership and ministry, and where they feel they are personally known and genuinely cared for. Since this study was

primarily concerned with college student involvement in local churches and not with on-campus ministries, the research results and implications do not necessarily generalize to on-campus ministries. College student development personnel (CSDP) should be aware, however, of these tendencies and seek to incorporate them into the student spiritual development plans of their schools in ways appropriate to their school. Some examples of such application may include making specific efforts toward putting college students and on-campus spiritual leaders in positions where they can know one another and develop significant relationships, creatively offering significant leadership and ministry opportunities to college students, frequent communications with students that survey the student's needs, and frequent opportunities for appropriate spiritual growth.

An analysis of the current research also found that college students are more likely to be involved in ministries of the local church if they sense that the college which they attend is genuinely interested in their spiritual growth. Here, assuming colleges see student involvement in local churches as a positive practice, colleges can help local churches and their students by encouraging their students, not only toward personal spiritual growth, but also toward practicing their faith in the local church context.

The one independent variable that showed a weak positive relationship to intensity of involvement, yet did not impact the dependent variable in a statistically significant way, was the quality of on-campus ministry opportunities the student was offered. This suggests to the researcher that the on-campus opportunities neither add to, nor take away from the student's tendency to be intensely involved in the local church in significant ways. This may, in fact, reveal that colleges, or at least the participating colleges, have adequately distinguished their own spiritual development programs from

those of the local churches in their areas, and vice versa. This may also indicate that the participating colleges programs are either so superior to, or inferior to those offered by local churches, they make no statistically significant impact. College spiritual development personnel may wish to determine if any of these implications are true for their situation, and work toward their resolution.

The demographic variable with the strongest impact upon student involvement intensity in local churches is the variable, school attending. Undoubtedly, this tendency may be attributable, in part, to geographical location and the underlying religiosity of that region of the country. This tendency may also be partly due to a school's constituency – the type of students that school has attracted over the years, along with the residual effects. About these types of contributors, CSDP have little current control.

Another element that may contribute to this variable's significant impact on intensity of involvement, and one that CSDP can actually affect, is the philosophy and practice of their school regarding the church life of their students. Since this variable contributed to an almost 8 point difference in LCIS mean intensity of involvement scores between the schools participating in this survey, CSDP should carefully consider if the philosophy of their institution is one that supports and encourages involvement in the local churches or one that is ambivalent or worse toward involvement in local churches. Since this study revealed a student desire to know people of spiritual authority in their lives, perhaps schools may wish to study the spiritual lives of their faculty, staff, and others, especially focusing on those who spend significant time with students. This type of study may suggest reasons for the level of student involvement in local churches at the school.

A final application of this study may be for CSDP and local church leaders to communicate more frequently and thoroughly regarding the spiritual goals that both have for students in their care. Although the study seems to reveal that little overlap in ministry is taking place, both school and church leaders would undoubtedly like to see the LCIS scores of their students rise, particularly as students prepare to leave the school environment and come to depend upon local churches alone for their primary means of spiritual growth.

### ***High School Student (Youth) Ministries***

One discipline that is not really studied in this research, but that directly contributes to the findings of this research is the youth or student ministry at the high school level. Astin's research, since it deals almost exclusively with incoming college freshmen, speaks directly to the product of this discipline, but most of the results of this study are, in fact, due to the foundation laid by the local church in the lives of students through ministry to them while they were children and teenagers.

Preparing students for what they will encounter at college is, hopefully, part of the ministry of most high school student ministries. Much research confirms the casual observation that students' involvement in local churches – even students who were intensely involved in high school student ministries – declines during college. The results of this study suggest that a more thorough grounding of the student in the philosophical realities and the theological importance of the local church is needed during their formative years in order to help students in their transition from high school to college to the non-student post-college lifestyle. This kind of education would also, hopefully, maintain their consistency of involvement in the local church.

Also, casual observation suggests that many high school student ministries tend to segregate students from other age groups of the church for worship, study and fellowship. Perhaps this is part of the reason college students' intensity of involvement declines in college – they may not be used to being considered a part of a heterogeneous group and do not understand how to relate in that fashion. At least some students participating in this study, however, note that their intergenerational connections do increase their intensity of involvement in local churches. It seems that more intergenerational involvement for high school students may carry over into the college years as an appreciation for involvement in more heterogeneous groups, like the local church.

Finally, this study shows that employment and marital status are statistically equally significant variables in determining local church involvement. Assuming that, in general, married and/or employed students are more responsible persons (or at least have a better understanding of the weight of responsibility), it seems that the more responsible the student, the more involved he or she is in the local church. High school student ministries, therefore, should encourage personal responsibility in their ministries through academic and practical methods appropriate to their curriculum and setting. The earlier the student comes to understand what it means to be responsible, the more effectively he or she may contribute to, not only the local church, but the Kingdom of God.

### ***Christian College Students***

The application of the results of the current study to individual college students will certainly be myriad; as different as every personality. However, some common possibilities are listed below:

1. Students should be aware of the personal benefits of local church involvement.
2. Students should consider the Biblical commands for life in the Christian “body” when making determinations about local church involvement and defining personal spirituality.
3. In their local church involvement, or lack thereof, students should consider the foundation they are laying for their future spiritual development in post-college years.
4. Students should consider their ministry to other Christians and their Christian witness in the world as it is seen by their local church involvement.

### **Research Limitations**

The results of the current study are already limited, of course, by its narrow ability to be generalized. As previously stated, the limits of generalization include:

1. The study’s generalizability to other CCC-affiliated institutions. Although the study’s population is the undergraduate student bodies of the CCC-affiliated schools, differences in locale may contribute to consequential incongruities in results between schools.
2. The study’s generalizability to other institutions of higher education, Christian or secular. Since these schools share a common theological heritage and heritage may impact the results, the results are not necessarily transferable.
3. The study’s generalizability to graduate students at these or other institutions of higher education. The variety of graduate programs, their delivery methods, and the inconsistency likely makes generalization here difficult. The current study was limited to traditional, undergraduate students.
4. The study’s generalizability to students who do not carry a full-time status. Part-time students, like graduate students, would have made the sample for this study less homogeneous.

These factors limit the accuracy of the research.

Other limiting factors of this study include its inability to answer questions participants might have about the survey form. The electronic delivery mechanism lacks



a personal element and there is no option for direct contact with the researcher during the time of the survey.

The questions themselves may include hints of bias of which the researcher is unaware. Even the order of the questions may imply a bias from the researcher that the student realizes. The questions may also fail to capture the essence of the variable being measured in the most efficient or effective manner.

Furthermore, this researcher is not convinced that the independent variables measured are the best source of information with which to evaluate intensity of involvement. There are surely other significant variables that would guide the research more effectively and produce more accurate results, such as amount of time spent in extra-curricular activities, family spiritual heritage, time spent in youth ministry in high school, questions about the student's personal spiritual journey, and others.

The current study is also limited by the lack of precedent literature on church involvement intensity and/or the researcher's inability to locate such literature. While it is simple to locate research on spirituality and religiosity in general, it is more difficult to locate contemporary research on engagement and involvement of, specifically, college students in churches, and that measured in a weekly fashion.

### **Further Research**

Research always seems to raise more questions that it answers, which is certainly true for the current study. Variables that make an impact on student involvement in local churches seem innumerable, which allows for intriguing options for future research in this area.

First, a replication of the current research may confirm or deny the results of the current study. The study could be replicated with the same population and a different sample from different schools, or a different population emphasizing slightly different demographic and independent variables. Possible alternative demographic variables might include a different theological tradition, the use of all denominationally-affiliated schools or all non-affiliated schools, or administering the survey exclusively to graduate students. Possible alternative independent variables might include those mentioned previously in the section, Research Limitations, as well as others such as student membership, the number of activities in which student is already involved, athletics, grade point average, etc.

A longitudinal study might also be conducted to determine if these variables have consistent effects upon persons after graduating from college. This would be especially interesting if one could maintain contact with students for 10 to 20 years.

Another element that this study raises, yet fails to fully explore, is the disconnect between spirituality and religiosity. A study looking at college students' response to questions aimed at defining these terms would be helpful for church and college leaders alike. This might be further defined by identifying a single theological tradition to survey, or perhaps a comparison of traditions would be appropriate.

Finally, a study seeking to define Christian college students' idea of spirituality and determining whether their definition of spirituality is truly Christian spirituality would be enlightening to church and Christian college leaders. Such a study would certainly help to identify points where both institutions are succeeding and failing in Christian discipleship.

## APPENDIX 1

### CORRESPONDENCE TO INSTITUTIONS

This section contains two letters. The first letter was sent to the registrars of participating institutions, following initial contact by telephone, formally requesting their permission to contact students and solicit participation through e-mail. The second letter assures them that the researcher and the current study will, in no way, reflect negatively on their school. The third letter thanks them for their participation following the data gathering phase and offers them a copy of the results of the study for their student development personnel.

Daryl A. Diddle  
1200 Lexington Road  
Wilmore, KY 40390  
859.858.3521  
ddiddle@wfmc.net

August 1, 2005

Dr. John Doe  
Registrar  
1 College Street  
Collegetown, State 54321

Dear Dr. Doe,

As per our telephone conversation, I write to ask permission to contact every undergraduate student at your school via e-mail and solicit their participation in a survey for my doctoral study. The study seeks to explore and understand the ways selected factors influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years. I have chosen colleges that are members of the Christian College Consortium because of the commitment of these schools to the traditions of Christian faith and of liberal arts education.

The text of the e-mail I intend to send is enclosed in this letter for your review, along with a copy of the Local Church Involvement Survey, the instrument the students will be asked to complete. If you have any suggestions, comments, or questions, please contact me. I plan to send the e-mail invitation on September 30, 2005, and close the study on October 31, 2005. Before I send the e-mail invitation, I will contact you again by telephone to make sure all is well.

Thank you again for your cooperation!

Sincerely in Christ,

Daryl A. Diddle

Daryl A. Diddle  
1200 Lexington Road  
Wilmore, KY 40390  
859.858.3521  
ddiddle@wfmcc.net

September 15, 2005

Dr. John Doe  
Registrar  
1 College Street  
Collegietown, State 54321

Dear Dr. Doe,

As per our telephone conversation, I write to assure you that the research does not intend to cause harm or to reflect upon your school in a negative manner. Please accept my assurance that the school will be protected as much as possible from public scrutiny.

Again, thank you for this privilege. The conclusions of the study should be published in 2006. Please contact me if you would like a complete copy of the study. I would be happy to provide a copy to you.

May the Lord bless you today. Thank you again for your cooperation!

Sincerely in Christ,

Daryl A. Diddle

Daryl A. Diddle  
1200 Lexington Road  
Wilmore, KY 40390  
859.858.3521  
ddiddle@wfmc.net

November 1, 2005

Dr. John Doe  
Registrar  
1 College Street  
Collegetown, State 54321

Dear Dr. Doe,

I write to sincerely thank you for allowing me to survey the students at your school. Response to the surveys was excellent, and I am presently in the process of analyzing the data.

The conclusions of the study should be published in 2006. A complimentary extended abstract will be sent to you electronically. If you would like a complete copy of the study, please contact me. I would be happy to provide a copy to you.

May the Lord bless you today. Thank you again for your cooperation!

Sincerely in Christ,

Daryl A. Diddle

## APPENDIX 2

### CORRESPONDENCE TO PARTICIPANTS

This section contains the e-mail invitation sent to all undergraduate students at Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College, asking them to participate in the LCIS.

TO: All Undergraduate Students at (Name of College/University)  
FROM: Daryl Diddle, Pastor, Wilmore Free Methodist Church  
SUBJECT: Invitation to Participate in Doctoral Research Project

Dear Fellow Student,

First of all, let me say, this is not a joke! My name is Daryl Diddle and I am a pastor in the Free Methodist Church in Wilmore, Kentucky. For the past two years, I have been working on a doctoral degree, studying why students like yourself participate, or do not participate in local churches while you are at college. I have wondered this for a long time, and one day I thought, instead of wondering this for the rest of my life, I thought I would just ask you! And so I'm asking. ☺

Would you be willing to take just a few minutes to click on the link below and take the short survey? It's only about 40 easy questions. By doing so, you would help me tremendously AND you get to be part of a genuine research study. I've e-mailed every undergraduate student in your school, and every undergraduate student in three other Christian colleges similar to yours. The final day the survey link will be available is October 31, 2005.

Thanks so much!

Daryl Diddle

To participate in the survey, click → [www.wfmc.net/survey](http://www.wfmc.net/survey)



### APPENDIX 3

#### LOCAL CHURCH INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

This section contains the Local Church Involvement Survey, the data-gathering instrument made available electronically to all undergraduate students at Alpha College, Beta College, and Gamma College.

## **Local Church Involvement Survey, part 1 of 5**

### **Agreement to Participate (Legal Stuff)**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure college students' intensity of involvement in local churches while they are at school. This research is being conducted by Daryl A. Diddle as doctoral dissertation research. In this research you will be asked to give personal information regarding your involvement in a local church. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time by clicking "Cancel."

By your completion of the following survey, and clicking the "Next" box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research. If you'd rather not complete the survey, click "Cancel."

### Local Church Involvement Survey, part 2 of 5

For the following questions, please check on the one answer that most accurately describes your situation. Please check only one answer.

1. Please check your age:  
☐ 17    ☐ 18    ☐ 19    ☐ 20    ☐ 21    ☐ 22    ☐ 23    ☐ older than 23  
☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Please enter your classification in school:  
 Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Freshman    ☐ Sophomore    ☐ Junior    ☐ Senior  
☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Please indicate your gender:  
 Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ male    ☐ female
  
4. Please indicate which school you attend:  
 Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Alpha College    ☐ Beta College    ☐ Gamma College
  
5. What is your employment status?  
 Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ I am not employed  
☐ I work less than 10 hours per week  
☐ I work between 10 and 20 hours per week  
☐ I work more than 20 hours per week
  
6. What is your current housing situation?  
 Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ I live on campus    ☐ I live off campus
  
7. What is your current marital status?  
 Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ I am single/never married    ☐ I am married    ☐ I am single again (divorced, widowed, etc.)

**Local Church Involvement Survey, part 3 of 5**

For this question, please click on the one answer that most accurately describes your situation. Please click on only one answer.

1. Over the past 12 months, approximately how many hours per week did you participate in the ministry of a local church while at school (including time in preparation, worship and ministry)? Do not include your participation in your home church over the summer.

Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

☐ 0 hours   ☐ 1 hour or less   ☐ 1 to 2 hours   ☐ 2 to 3 hours   ☐ 3 to 4 hours   ☐ over 4 hours

### Local Church Involvement Survey, part 4 of 5

For these questions, please click on only one response for each question.

1. I consider myself actively involved in a local church here at college.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
  
2. I put much time and effort into the activities of my local church.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
  
3. Participating in the life of a local church is a high priority in my life.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
  
4. I consistently invite friends to church.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

### Local Church Involvement Survey, part 5 of 5

For the following questions, please click only one response for each question.

1. I would enjoy participating in a local church that I sensed really cared about my spiritual growth.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
2. I have volunteered for, or have been asked to undertake a role in the ministry of the local church I attend.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
3. I believe that the church I attend is genuinely concerned about my spiritual growth.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
4. The involvement of my friends in a local church encourages me to participate also.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
5. My leadership role at a local church increases my level of involvement and commitment.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
6. I am involved in a local church because I really like the pastor and/or college minister.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
7. Worship is a major factor in my decision to be involved in a local church.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
8. The opportunity to do ministry in a church setting is crucial to my involvement in a local church.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
9. I participate in the life of a local church because of the intergenerational (the inclusion of the young and old) nature of the fellowship.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
10. I'm convinced that my college really cares about my spiritual growth.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.  
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. The college I attend provides me with good opportunities for my personal spiritual growth.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
12. I would become involved in a local church if I felt I could get to know the pastor or campus minister there.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
13. I enjoy being able to do ministry in a local church setting.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
14. I believe the church I currently attend really wants me to grow spiritually.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
15. Many of my friends attend the same local church that I do.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
16. I enjoy the worship experience of a local church.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
17. I enjoy being involved in a local church because I like spending time with people who are not my age.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
18. Most of my spiritual growth needs are met through college sponsored campus ministries.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
19. The personality of the pastor or campus minister is an important reason why I am involved in a local church.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
20. I was asked to take, or have volunteered to take a ministry responsibility in the local church I attend.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
21. I believe the college I attend is very much interested in my spiritual development.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
22. I enjoy regularly spending time around people who are not college students.  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

23. There are lots of opportunities on-campus for spiritual growth.

Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

24. I like being able to do ministry in a local church setting.

Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

25. I usually go to church where my friends go.

Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

26. I think the college I attend goes out of its way to help me in my spiritual growth.

Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

27. Worshipping with a local church body is very important to me.

Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree



**Survey Completed**

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. If you would like a .pdf copy of the study once it is completed, please send an e-mail to [ddiddle@wfmn.net](mailto:ddiddle@wfmn.net) with the word "Study" in the subject line. Thanks again!

## APPENDIX 4

### EXPERT PANEL

This section contains information concerning the expert panel review of the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS), the recommendations made, and the specific revisions to the LCIS that resulted from the test.

The expert panel that will review the Local Church Involvement Survey will consist of 6 college professors and 1 research librarian: two professors of mathematics and 2 professors of Christian Education from Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky; one professor of Christian education from Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY; one professor of business from Transylvania University, Lexington, KY; and one research librarian from Eastern Kentucky University. These individuals were asked to participate personally, sent a personal letter, and then sent the e-mail invitation (Appendix 2) to complete the electronic survey. Following its completion, the researcher solicited feedback and suggestions via e-mail.

Each member of the panel was promised a summary of the research upon completion. The following letter was sent thanking them for their services.

Daryl A. Diddle  
1200 Lexington Road  
Wilmore, KY 40390  
859.858.3521  
ddiddle@wfmc.net

September 1, 2005

Dr. Ima Expert  
1 Pro Street  
Collegetown, State 54321

Dear Dr. Expert,

As per our telephone conversation, I write to ask for your help in evaluating a survey that I intend to use in my study on college students' involvement in local churches. You would help me greatly by looking over the instrument and making any suggestions and revisions you see fit, whether in content, form, usability, or suitability. I will be e-mailing you the same message that I will be sending the students. Simply follow the instructions on the screen to take the survey. I have enclosed a paper copy for your review as well.

I would like to send the students the e-mail invitation on September 30, 2005, and close the study on October 31, 2005.

I will happily send you a summary of my findings as a way of thanking you for your participation and help.

Sincerely in Christ,

Daryl A. Diddle

Daryl A. Diddle

1200 Lexington Road  
Wilmore, KY 40390  
859.858.3521  
ddiddle@wfmc.net

October 1, 2005

Dr. Ima Expert  
1 Pro Street  
Collegetown, State 54321

Dear Dr. Doe,

Thank you so much for helping to evaluate the Local Church Involvement Survey. I realize your time is limited, and I very much appreciate your willingness to help me in this manner.

I will be sure to send you an electronic copy of the summary of the research results. Thank you again for your cooperation!

Sincerely in Christ,

Daryl A. Diddle

## APPENDIX 5

### FIELD TEST PANEL AND RESULTS

This section contains information concerning the field test of the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS), the recommendations made, and the specific revisions to the LCIS that resulted from the test.

The convenience panel of students that performed the field test on the Local Church Involvement Survey consisted of 8 students from Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky. The students were asked to participate personally, and were then sent the e-mail invitation (Appendix 2) that would go to the student bodies of the schools to complete the electronic survey. Following its completion, the researcher solicited input from the participants for feedback. Other than a couple clarification questions about procedure and instruction, no changes were suggested. All participants completed the survey without incident, therefore no changes were made to the instrument.

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## ABSTRACT

### AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FACTORS INFLUENCING EVANGELICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENSITY OF INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL CHURCHES

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

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Why do Christian college students participate, or not, in local churches while they attend Christian colleges? This study was designed to investigate and help answer this question through an analysis of selected factors that influence evangelical college students' intensity of involvement in local churches during their college years.

Because most Christian liberal arts colleges and evangelical Christian churches share the common mission of assisting in students' spiritual development, this study was designed to help these institutions in understanding the declining participation of students in local churches, according to most current research. Since one might assume that more students who attend evangelical Christian colleges would participate in local churches, the current research focused on full-time undergraduate students attending Christian College Consortium-member schools.

Several independent variables were selected and analyzed to determine if they made a significant impact upon the student's intensity of involvement. Data was gathered electronically using the Local Church Involvement Survey (LCIS), an on-line instrument created by the researcher for this study. Besides standard demographic



variables, other independent variables studied included: student friendships, student relationships with ministry leaders, student leadership in church and college ministries, student opportunity for intergenerational involvement, student opportunities for ministry in church and college settings, and student perceptions of church and college commitment to students' spiritual development.

Data from 1025 surveys revealed a participation rate much higher than national averages, according to precedent literature. Nearly all of the independent variables and demographic variables studied made a statistically significant impact upon students' intensity of involvement in local churches, the exceptions being gender, classification in school, college opportunities for ministry, and housing situation. The strongest positive correlations existed between intensity of involvement and opportunity for student leadership, the student's perception that the local church genuinely cares for their spiritual growth, and the church's offering of significant ministry opportunities. The standard deviation between the LCIS scores was large and the mean and median scores were somewhat modest.

**KEYWORDS:** Church, College Students, Christianity, Involvement, Adolescence

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