

Twenty-First Century Seventh-day Adventist Connection Study
Research Report
Robert H. Pierson Institute of Evangelism and World Missions

Douglas Jacobs
Douglas Tilstra
Finbar Benjamin
Cheryl Des Jarlais
Mia Lindsey
Hollis James
Alan Parker
Sharon Pittman
Octavio Ramirez

Twenty-First Century Seventh-day Adventist Connection Study

Recent research studies have found alarming declines in the number of young adults who are actively involved in a local church. Although very few studies have been completed on young adult retention within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) denomination, developments in culture and religion suggest that this denomination is also experiencing a decline in young adult membership. Almost half of White North American Seventh-day Adventist members are 60 years of age or older (Sahlin & Richardson, 2008), while the median age for the general population of the United States is currently 37 (US Census, 2010). Unless something is done to reverse the trends of the last two decades, the alarming exodus of young people from the church will only intensify.

The purpose of this research project is to help the Seventh-day Adventist Church discover the levels of local church connection or disconnection among recent SDA university graduates, to provide some understanding of why connection or disconnection takes place, and, most importantly, to provide insights into effective ways to retain and reclaim young adults as active members of local Seventh-day Adventist churches. The Adventist Connection Study (ACS), commissioned by the General Conference Future Plans Working Group and conducted by the Robert H. Pierson Institute of Evangelism and World Missions at Southern Adventist University surveyed graduates between the years of 2001 and 2012 from Southern Adventist University (SAU), Oakwood University (OU), and Pacific Union College (PUC). The research data collected was not aggregated for individual universities; instead, by including several universities, the data provided a diverse sample of Adventist young adults.

To accurately measure young adult attitudes toward church involvement, the Pierson Institute conducted a two-phase research project. Because there is no established theory which explains why graduates connect or disconnect themselves from the church, researchers used Phase One as an opportunity to listen carefully to young adults before crafting the research instrument. Phase One involved inductive, qualitative research using several focus groups of university students and recent graduates. Phase Two was the development and administration of a deductive, quantitative instrument that was sent to all graduates of participating universities from 2001 to 2012.

One result of the Phase One focus group research was the change in name and focus from the Adventist Retention Study to the Adventist Connection Study. After listening to self-

described “active” and “inactive” focus group participants, researchers realized that perceptions of what it means to be an active or inactive member vary widely. Creating a research definition of a church member in regular standing would draw an arbitrary line which would not accurately represent the complexity of today’s relationships between Adventist churches and young adults. Every young adult interviewed had points of both connection and disconnection with the church. Researchers decided, in consultation with the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, to focus their research on the various ways that young adults connect and disconnect with both the denomination and with local Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Study Background and Significance

Recent research studies by Adventist and other researchers have found alarming declines in the number of young adults who are actively involved in a local church. Such declines are found even in churches with active youth ministries. For example, a recent research study found an approximate 68% attrition rate among the young people who are raised in the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists (Rainer, 2009). However, this trend is not unique to the youth of the Collegedale Church. Rainer and Rainer (2008) found that across Christian denominations in America, the attrition rate is at 70%. “If this trend is not reversed, the viability of Christianity in America, including Adventism, could come into question” (Cross, 2011, p. 2).

One research study (Hadaway & Marler, 1998) confirms that most research in this area may be significantly over-reporting levels of church involvement because researchers depend on people to self-report their attendance habits. When researchers Hadaway and Marler (1998) counted the actual church attendance for Protestant and Catholic churches in Ashtabula County, Ohio, they discovered that it was about half the rate indicated by national public opinion polls—40% versus 20% for Protestants and 51% versus 24% for Roman Catholics.

If a similar disparity exists between Adventist youths’ self-reported and actual attendance/attachment to their local churches, then the church’s young adult retention rate could be far lower than previously reported. Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow (2007) concludes in his book *After the Baby Boomers*: “A central argument of this book is that unless religious leaders take younger adults more seriously, the future of American religion is in doubt” (p. 17).

Research has been conducted within the Adventist denomination on the subject of youth retention in the church. Although most of the studies are several years old and surveyed

teenagers—individuals a few years younger than this study’s target age range—the research does provide insight by showing whether the key factors behind the youth’s leaving the church then are still valid today. Some of the questions from previous research studies were used in the quantitative instrument’s correlation points to determine if there are trends and patterns that are continuing today.

Dr. Roger Dudley (2000) in his book *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church* reports his findings from a ten-year study of hundreds of Adventist youth. He draws this conclusion based on information gathered from mail and phone questionnaires: “It seems reasonable to believe that at least 40 percent to 50 percent of Seventh-day Adventist teenagers in North America are essentially leaving the church by their middle 20s” (Dudley, 2000, p. 35). Another important conclusion drawn from this longitudinal study is that church membership does not necessarily mean high church involvement or connection. By the time the participants completed the last questionnaire, they were all in their mid-twenties. While 80% of the 783 young adults who answered the last survey reported that they were still members of the Adventist Church, only 55% reported that they attend church services regularly, only 34% attended Sabbath School regularly, and only 25% attended other meetings such as prayer meeting or small study groups (Dudley, 2000).

In 1990 and 2000, the Seventh-day Adventist Church conducted Valuegenesis¹ and Valuegenesis² respectively. Through these studies, more than 30,000 youth in grades 6 to 12 from Adventist schools across the North American Division (NAD) were surveyed about their commitment to God and the Adventist message (Gillespie, 2002). The results of this study showed significant trends. First, belief in several key Adventist doctrines declined significantly: belief in Ellen G. White and her prophetic role in the church went from 51% to 42%, belief in the Adventist Church as the remnant church went from 45% to 27%, and belief in the sanctuary message of 1844 went from 61% to 47% (Gillespie, 2002). Also, the percentage of those who prayed “once a week or more” rose from 54% to 74%, while those who read the Bible “once a week or more” fell from 39% to 29%. Those who read Ellen G. White’s writings also decreased from the already-low percentage of 13% to 6%. Lead investigator Bailey Gillespie concluded: “As you can see, our most recent portrait of Adventist youth in Adventist schools shows them to be more spiritual, but somewhat less Adventist. We should explore ways to instill love and commitment to the church in our youth as they grow toward God” (Gillespie, 2002, p.12-16).

Several Adventist scholars and youth ministers propose comparable reasons as to why youth and young adults do not get involved in church. The reasons vary from common responses, such as boring worship services and hypocritical members, to more disconcerting responses such as being attracted to a different lifestyle and feeling that the church is restrictive and resistant to new ideas (Gane, 2010). Bailey Gillespie and Timothy J. Gillespie, a father-and-son duo with experience in youth ministries, write: “Unless the church is seen as warm and friendly, nurturing of a decisive thinking climate—one open to new ideas, ready to explore new questions and answers, along with acceptance of youth during times of doubt—most youth won’t continue to see the local church as a viable source of spiritual life” (Gillespie, 2011, p.39).

In one of the most recent Adventist studies on retention, Cross (2011) in his D.Min. research gets to the heart of the problem the church has with youth and young adults. He finds “a strong consensus among authors that is articulated well by Smith and Denton, ‘Viewed in broad historical perspective, contemporary teenage autonomy from adults is unprecedented and astounding’” (Smith & Denton, 2005, p. 185). As the gap between young people and adult members grows, the exodus of young people from the church will intensify. Research on young adults has to deal with the large gulf between the thinking of older and younger church members.

The Barna Group, a leading religious research institution, has done a substantial amount of research in the area of youth and retention within Christianity at large. Research from the Barna Group (2006) reveals a trend for young adults to live with seemingly contradictory values and opinions. The Barna Group reported that “most ‘twenty-somethings’ pull away from participation and engagement in Christian churches, particularly during the ‘college years’” (2006). David Kinnaman, director of research for the Barna Group, writes: “The current state of ministry to twenty-somethings is woefully inadequate to address the spiritual needs of millions of young adults” (2006).

In his latest book, *You Lost Me*, Kinnaman (2011) goes on to state that “most young Christians are struggling less with their faith in Christ than with their experience of church” (p.27). Kinnaman (2011) identifies six broad categories where young adults disconnect from the church. There are two types of youth that leave the church: head-driven youth leave because of rational, logical reasons, while heart-driven youth have more emotional reasons for walking away from the church (Kinnaman, 2011). However, it is important to keep in mind that each young adult’s story is different, and his or her reasons may be a mixture of logic and emotion.

Research Questions

The original design planned to look at how young people were retained by the Adventist Church, but the revised study looked more closely at how young people connect or disconnect from the church. As a result, the following research questions were suggested. (There are multiple research questions for this project, which is expected with a research study of this magnitude.)

1. Who is most likely to be connected to or disconnected from the Adventist Church?
2. Why do young Adventists think others leave?
3. What correlations, if any, are there to education?
4. What correlations, if any, are there to personal spirituality?
5. What are young adults' perceptions of and attitudes towards the church?
6. What is their current connectedness to the Adventist Church?
7. What does "church" mean to young adults?
8. What are graduates' perceptions of the church's core beliefs?
9. Have their church attitudes changed recently?
 - a. If yes, why were these views impacted?
10. How knowledgeable are young adults about Adventist media?
11. What sources do young adults use for staying in touch?
12. What are young adults' present feelings about Adventism?

This research study is classified as exploratory research, and no hypotheses were tested.

Delimitations

Participation in this study is delimited to college graduates who (a) completed their undergraduate degree at Southern Adventist University, Oakwood University, or Pacific Union; (b) were between the ages of 18 and 40 at the time of completing the quantitative survey in Phase Two; and (c) are current or former members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Methodology

Phase One

There were a total of 66 participants; all participants were either alumni or seniors at participating universities. Between April and October 2012, potential participants—graduates of SAU and OU between the years 2000-2012—were solicited and recruited based on contact information received from the Office of Alumni Relations. There were ten different focus groups that were classified as follows: seven “active” Adventist groups, one “inactive” Adventist group, one of dropout students varying in church activity levels, and one of “former” Adventists. Ten different focus groups were arranged; however, there were a total of 12 sessions held because two groups, an “active” group and an “inactive” group, were invited back for a follow-up since the researchers felt there was more information that the participants wished to share but may not have had the opportunity due to the large size of the group. Each group had between four and ten participants. Their ages ranged from 21 to 43, and about 56% (n=37) were females. The participants self-selected which group they belonged to because the researchers did not want to impose a possibly outdated measure or definition of activeness. The dropout students were not included in Phase Two because they did not meet the delimitation criteria but were included in Phase One to test for differences in response, of which there were none reported.

The focus group sessions involving SAU students and alumni were held in Market Research Institute, a facility on the campus of Southern Adventist University equipped with audio and video recording capabilities. The focus group sessions involving OU alumni were held on the campus of Oakwood University, either in the C. E. Moseley Complex or the Blake Center President’s Board Room, and were audio-recorded. The participants were compensated for their time with a free meal, and the dropout students and “former” Adventists also received a \$20 gift card. Each session lasted between one and two hours.

Analysis

The focus group recordings were transcribed using Express Scribe software. The participants’ identities were replaced with a special code based on their group, schooling status, and gender. After the transcription, Atlas.ti software was used to analyze the data and to code recurring themes. The research team, in order to test the validity of the codes from the computer software, held two sessions where they manually read through the transcripts and categorized the

data into themes by cutting out phrases and taping them to large white poster pages with theme headings on them. Those present at the coding sessions included not only the primary researchers but also interested faculty from the University and graduate assistants. The list of themes and related codes are provided in Appendix A along with a full narrative of findings from Phase One.

Phase Two

Phase Two took place between the months of January and May 2013. A quantitative instrument was formed based on the language, themes, and topics that came out of the focus groups in Phase One. About half of the survey questions were original questions, and the other half were adapted from questions in the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey by Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (Pew Research Center, 2010), the European Valuegenesis Questions (1999), and the Southern Adventist University Student Spiritual Life Survey (Center for Creative Ministry, 2010). In February, a pilot version of the survey was sent to SAU alumni who were participants in Phase One and to recent SAU alumni from the School of Religion who had experience in youth ministry. After receiving feedback, the survey was then shortened to 70 questions, which took the average participant 25 minutes to complete. The final survey was created in SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool.

The survey was launched on April 2, 2013 and remained accessible for four weeks. The survey was distributed by several different methods. SAU emailed a link to the survey to all 3,494 prospective participants from a neutral email address not affiliated with the University. Two follow-up emails were sent as reminders to those who had not responded or had only partially filled out the survey. A link to the survey was also included in SAU's monthly alumni newsletter and posted on the alumni Facebook page. OU included a link to the survey in their weekly public relations email announcements. PUC emailed a link to the survey from their Alumni Office and posted a link on their alumni Facebook page. The link was also placed on Facebook and shared virally among faculty and graduates and on a fan page pertaining to the research study. All of the methods were successful in varying degrees. The best method was from the neutral email address, which saw about a 19% response rate (n=663) of those who had at least partially answered the survey with an estimated 13% completing the entire survey. Altogether, the links shared on Facebook received close to 1700 responses, although the majority of these responses were from individuals who did not fall within the parameters of this study. The Pierson Institute plans to analyze these responses in the future.

At the time of the first cutoff date, a total of 3,311 surveys were started, with about 68% (n=2,251) completing the survey in its entirety. Since then, more responses have come in but have not been included in this initial report. After filtering the responses to only those within the qualifications of this research study, there were 1,153 responses used in the analysis. About 62% (n=660) of the participants were female, which is close to the average percentages of the schools' graduates. The mean age was 28.11. The race with the highest representation was Whites or Caucasians with 68%, and the largest minority was Blacks or African Americans with 11%. A little more than half reported that they were married, and less than 25% of the participants have children. The majority (approximately 94%) of the respondents lived within the United States. About 40% are from the South, 29% from the West, and 10% and 4% from the Midwest and Northeast, respectively.

Analysis

All the results were exported from SurveyMonkey to SPSS. Chi-square tests and one-way ANOVA were performed on the data to discover if there were correlations between any of the dependent and independent variables.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this research study. For Phase One, the focus groups involved participants who lived within a 30-mile radius of either Southern Adventist University or Oakwood University. Both of these universities are located in Southern states; thus, those from other regions of the United States were not included in the first phase. However, the results from the survey in Phase Two can determine if there were themes and ideologies that are associated with the other locations.

For Phase Two, although there were a large and varied number of responses from the sample, the results seemed to show that those who responded were at a high level of connection with the Adventist Church. This study was not able to attract a large response from those who have totally disconnected from the Adventist Church and is limited in being able to describe accurately what is taking place in that population. The research is also limited because of the disproportionate sample from each school. There were more than double the amount of respondents from SAU (n=864) than from OU (n=115) and PUC (n=174) combined. This influence from one school may have impacted the results.

Also, the researchers chose to analyze partially completed surveys, and even though there were a total of 1,153 surveys used, many of the figures reported are less than the total because it is based on whether the participants answered that specific question. Due to a technical error in the online survey order, the question on church attendance was skipped by many individuals. More than half of the sample (n=645) answered the question, but there may have been a missed trend with those who did not respond to the question.

There was also the limitation of false data that comes with any self-reporting data collection process. Although the participants were encouraged to give honest answers—and we believe the majority did—there is always the possibility that participants gave responses that they thought the researchers wanted to see.

Results

The data set for this study is very large, and there are many variables to be explored. Presented here is just a sampling of the preliminary results and the requested highlights from the primary donor. Over the next few months, the research team will continue to expand its analysis of the data.

Of those who took the survey, close to 86% still identify as Seventh-day Adventists (Table 1), and all but 13 have been baptized (Table 2). The majority of the sample were third- and fourth-generation Adventists (Table 3). More than 71% attend church at least every week, with about 13% actually attending several times a week (Table 4). Although more than 65% of young adults reported that they pray at least once a day, only about 30% read their Bible at least once a day (Table 5). About 37% reported they read the writings of Ellen White less than once a week, and another 30% reported they never read the writings of Ellen White (Table 5). Almost 70% return tithe often or very often and about 39% attend Sabbath School often or very often, with another 17% reporting they sometimes attend Sabbath School. The church activities with the lowest reported involvement were church-sponsored mission trips (75% selected “never” or “rarely”), music ministry (59% “never” or “rarely”), and evangelistic outreach (55% “never” or “rarely”).

This sample data revealed that those who answered the survey were generally very connected. A large portion of this sample agreed with the statement “I am connected to a local Adventist church” (70%; n=1063). Only 7% agreed with the statement “I was once an Adventist, but I have few connections to the Adventist faith today.” As for church membership, 47% said

their official membership was at the church they currently attend, with another large group of about 40% having their membership at a previous church or the church they grew up in. Only 4% have had their membership removed from the Adventist Church (Table 6). About a quarter of the sample (24%; n=1,062) are employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church or one of its affiliates.

Of those who attend church, the majority of the respondents attend medium- to large-sized churches. Only 89 individuals (about 8%) attend house churches, small groups, church plants, or small churches. This sample reported high levels of fellowship and hope during the worship service (n=1,040; 63% and 5%, respectively, said “usually” or “always”). The top three areas of church with which the respondents indicated they connect are the music (49%), fellow church members (45%), and activities outside of the worship service (42%). When it came to what attracted young adults to churches, the most important aspect was the relevance of sermons, with 85% saying it was important or extremely important. Other important characteristics were having people their age that attend (66 % selecting “important” or “extremely important”) and the personality of the pastor (64% selecting “important” or “extremely important”). The least important characteristic was the requirement of having members of similar ethnicity attend.

About 140 people from the total sample do not attend church or attend church very infrequently. The main reasons they do not attend (which are not mutually exclusive because they could select more than one option describing why they do not attend) are because they have not found one where they fit in (n=84), they do not see the need or benefit of going (n=83), and they disagree with what is being taught at church (n=76). Within these reasons, there was a clear difference between those who never attend church and those who attend infrequently. The main reason for those who do not affiliate with a church is that they do not see a benefit. However, for those who attend infrequently, their main reason for not going was because they have not found a church where they fit in.

The majority of this sample received Adventist education from first through twelfth grades with the numbers increasing as they aged (see Tables 7 and 8). The majority of the respondents reported positive experiences during their college years at an Adventist institution. About half (46%) reported that they have experienced conversion at some point in their lives, and 26% reported that they were unsure if they had or not. A large portion of the individuals

have been involved in mission work. There were 717 who had been on a short-term mission trip, 236 that had served as student missionaries, and 74 who had served as full-time missionaries.

This sample data also showed a very strong level of clarity when it came to their religious identity. Most agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I am very clear on what I believe as an individual” (83.2%; n=1142). An almost identical percentage agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I’ve considered and reconsidered my religious beliefs and know what I believe” (83.3%; n=1139). Tables 9 and 10 show that the majority of participants believe the Bible to be inspired and authoritative. About 62% hold a traditional view of the Bible’s inspiration, and 58% hold a traditional view of the Bible’s authority (24% actually hold a more conservative view of the Bible’s authority). About 87% of the sample either agree or strongly agree with the idea that God is actively working in their lives, and 76% have assurance that they will make it to heaven by God’s grace; however, only 59% agree or strongly agree that they have a vibrant personal relationship with God. Very few (n<5%) hold a legalistic view of Christianity, believing it is possible to earn their way into heaven.

The majority of the Adventist doctrines saw a strong positive agreement. The highest was the belief that God created the world which received close to 85% of the sample marking “strongly agree” and another 9% selecting “agree.” Belief in Jesus’ role in salvation, the Ten Commandments’ validity today, and the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week each displayed results of more than 75% in strong agreement. The doctrines with the lowest support were the pre-Advent judgment and the Adventist Church as the remnant church. The belief in the pre-Advent judgment received only a 44% “strongly agree” response, and the remnant church only received 40%. Refer to Table 11 to see a full list of the doctrines and the varying levels of agreement.

Questions on Adventist standards resulted in some interesting data. There was strong disapproval on viewing pornography and using illegal drugs (both received over 80% saying they were never or rarely acceptable). On the other hand, drinking caffeinated beverages is always or usually acceptable to more than 55% of the sample population. Eating clean meat is deemed acceptable by more than 70%, but the comment section revealed that many more individuals in this sample do practice vegetarianism but do not see eating meat as a problem for those who choose to eat it. Another question revealed that 71% actually wholeheartedly embrace the Adventist teaching on healthful living. The Adventist teaching on discouraging wearing of

jewelry was not accepted by 31% of the respondents, and about 14% said they had major doubts about it.

While premarital sex and homosexual relationships had similar numbers with those who disagreed with the practice of it, homosexual relationships were slightly more acceptable, with 71% saying “never” or “rarely” acceptable compared to 77% saying premarital sex is “never” or “rarely” acceptable. Also, about 10% of the population found homosexual relationships “always acceptable.” Another interesting result was that non-practicing homosexuals were more accepted as members and leaders of the church than cohabitating unmarried couples (Table 12). Practicing homosexuals as church members also saw strong support, with about 50% usually or always in support of their inclusion as members. However, about 72% said they were against practicing homosexuals as church leaders.

Overall, the perceptions of Adventists and the Adventist faith were positive. The idea that Adventists are Christians, know their Bible, and are warm and friendly each received high percentages of agreement. The attributes with the lowest positive ratings were that “Adventists are welcoming toward people of different faiths” (only 40% agreed or strongly agreed), “I can talk with them about sensitive topics” (only 38% agreed or strongly agreed), “they encourage me to ask questions” (only 37% agreed or strongly agreed), and “they are open-minded” (only 31% agreed or strongly agreed). Of those who identified as Adventist, more than 70% said they were proud to tell people they are Adventist (n=922). However, only about 43% of young adults would invite a non-Adventist friend to a church event. About 85% of the sample said that the Adventist beliefs give them hope and comfort, and 88% claimed that even if they disagree with church politics, they still believe in Adventist doctrines.

With finding cross-correlations, there were several variables that showed high levels of significance. We used an alpha level of .01 for all statistical tests. One variable that displayed differences were that of years in an Adventist elementary school. There were 230 who did not attend Adventist elementary schools, 156 who were enrolled between one and four years, 191 between five and seven years, and 467 who spent all eight years at an Adventist elementary school. As can be seen by the cross-tabulation in Table 13, there is a significant relationship between years in an Adventist school and experiencing conversion ($[6, N=1,044] = 51.18, p=.000$). The less time spent in an Adventist school, the more likely they reported having experienced conversion. A one-way ANOVA was run on the variable of education. It showed a

greater acceptance of Adventist standards for the more time spent in an Adventist elementary and secondary school ($F[3,1000] = 5.28, p=.001$); however, there was no significance on the question of belief in the core doctrines and school attendance ($F[3,1010]=1.10, p>.01$) (Table 14).

The level of activity and engagement in the Adventist church of participants' parents had an influence on their connection to the church. The more involved the mother was in church, the more likely respondents were to say that they felt connected to a local church ($[8, N=1,043]=37.80, p=.000$) and believed Ellen White was a prophet ($[12, N=1046]=48.92, p=.000$) (Tables 15 and 16). There was also significance in strength of agreement with doctrines when correlated with the mother's involvement in church ($F[4,1061]=6.03, p=.000$). Also, the more involved the mother was in church, the more likely respondents were to say they would remain members of the Adventist church in the future ($F[4,1032]=7.82, p=.000$) (Table 17).

The cross-tabulation of the father's involvement with other variables showed significance in the area of belief in the Bible's inspiration ($[16, N=1031]=45.87, p=.000$), Ellen G. White's prophetic gift ($[12, N=1021]=34.32, p=.001$), and church connection ($[8, N=1019]=27.64, p=.001$) (Tables 18, 19, and 20). The more involved the father was in church, the more likely respondents were to agree with Adventist doctrines ($F[4,1036]=6.95, p=.000$), believe in church standards ($F[4,1035]=5.22, p=.000$), and to say that they would continue to be members in the future ($F[4,1009]=6.51, p=.000$). They also were more confident in their personal religious identity ($F[4,1036]=5.62, p=.000$) (Table 21).

The more time spent interacting with social media, mainly Facebook, the more likely the participants were in support of female ordination ($[20, N=1062]=58.52, p=.000$) (Table 22). The less time they spent on the Internet or playing video games, the more they connected with Sabbath School classes ($[5, N=963]=17.05, p=.004$) and felt connected to a local church ($[10, N=1053]=45.13, p=.000$). There was a relationship between media consumption and several beliefs and behaviors. The more media consumed, the less they were to agree with Adventist doctrines ($F[5,1084]=3.74, p=.002$) and Adventist standards ($F[5,1085]=10.48, p=.000$) and the less likely they were to have an active personal devotional life ($F[5,1080]=11.89, p=.0000$) (Table 23).

As for baptismal age, those who responded that they were baptized before the age of ten reported being more connected to a local church than those baptized at later ages ($[12, N=1037]=28.36, p=.005$) (Table 24). Results also indicated that those baptized at age ten

($M=2.45$, $SD=0.08$) or younger ($M=2.55$, $SD=0.93$) and those baptized above the age of 15 ($M=2.41$, $SD=0.99$) had a slightly stronger personal devotional life ($[F(6,1125)=2.84, p=.009]$ (Table 25).

The size of the church played a factor in areas where young adults connect at church. The smaller the church, the more likely they were to connect with activities outside of church ($[5, N=1017]=17.14, p=.004$) (Table 26) and with potlucks ($[4, N=1017]=21.77, p=.001$). The larger the church attended, the more likely respondents were to choose the sermon style ($F[5, N=1028]=6.92, p=.000$), the sermon relevance ($F[5, N=1030]=3.49, p=.004$), and the personality of the pastor ($F[N=1032]=5.84, p=.000$) (Table 27).

The independent variable which provided the strongest correlations was personal devotional practice. Those with high frequencies of Bible reading, prayer, Christian book reading, family worship, and discussion of spiritual topics had a high level of significance of $p=.000$ when correlated with almost every other dependent variable. Those with a more active devotional life showed a higher agreement with Adventist church doctrines and standards, better satisfaction and connection with the church, a better personal relationship with God, and more favorable views of Adventism. This variable was determined to be extremely important and influential when analyzing the results of this sample of data. See Table 28 for a complete listing with figures.

Discussion

As we stated before, these results only briefly highlight the findings from this study. Future analysis and reports will provide more insight on the data. From this initial report, the researchers determined eight important themes that merit further discussion:

1. This sample revealed that there is a large group of connected and active young adults in the Adventist Church today. Respondents, in general, expressed support for an Adventist understanding of biblical inspiration, the ministry of Ellen White, the health message, and Adventist doctrines like the Sabbath and salvation. They attend church and return tithe regularly, and have positive views of Adventism. They also expect to remain connected to Adventism. Close to 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they would be Adventist in ten years, which is only 6% less than those who are currently identifying as Adventists. Of the young adults who do have children or plan to have children, 77% of them ($N=924$) intend to pass on their Adventist beliefs to the next generation. A high percentage (93%, $N=913$) selected that they

will attend church with their kids. Family worship, reading the Bible together, and attending Sabbath School together were also high priorities (each had percentages of 80% or above). This is good news for those who believe that the millennial generation is completely lost.

2. The strength of one's devotional life had a clear correlation to the strength of one's acceptance of Adventist doctrines and lifestyle. Regular personal devotional practice is an essential factor in church retention. Prayer is practiced very often, but very few are spending quality time in the Word of God on a regular basis. The Valuegenesis results from more than a decade ago found similar results. There has been seemingly no growth in this area. Strengthening the personal devotional life of its members should be one of the highest priorities for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

3. Young adults prefer to attend medium- to large-sized churches. The findings suggest that the size of the church plays a role in the connection of young adults to the church. Most of the young adults were attending larger churches, which may be due to the fact that larger churches can provide more resources and programming that attract young adults. This result is supported by a study by the Barna Group (2009) which found that the majority of young adults attend large churches. However, many young adults, especially those who do not find jobs near Adventist meccas, will mostly find themselves at smaller churches since, according to Monte Sahlin's profile of Adventist churches (2003), the majority of churches (39%) in North America have an average attendance of up to 50, and only 6% of churches have an average attendance of more than 350 people. Further research needs to be done in this area to better understand this finding.

4. While young adults showed strong support for some doctrines, their support for other doctrines seems to be weakening. Table 11 shows that young adults have maintained their belief in God as Creator, Jesus as Savior, the Sabbath, and the law of God. Even focus group participants who self-identified as "ethnic" Adventists still lived differently on Sabbath than on other weekdays. Doctrines which had less support include a six-day literal Creation, the inspiration of Ellen White, the sanctuary, the pre-Advent judgment, and the remnant identity doctrines.

5. Young adults are questioning the church's stance on homosexuality; at the same time, they generally accept the church's teachings on heterosexuality. This was one of the most surprising finds regarding the disparity between the Adventist Church's ethos and many

young adults' ethos on the issue of homosexuality. This topic came up several times in the focus groups, and extra questions were included in the quantitative survey to address it. Overall, there was a more favorable view of homosexuality than there was toward cohabitation. The majority of this sample does not support premarital sex. This was an interesting discovery, since although God treats all sin the same, for many young adults, cohabitation and other sins may be deemed more taboo than homosexuality. In the focus groups, the respondents did mention that they did not necessarily want the church to accept homosexuality but to be more accepting of those who are homosexuals. This is summed up in the common expression to "love the sinner but hate the sin." The average Adventist church is not "gay-friendly," and this is a point of disconnection from the church for many young adults who have close friends and family who are homosexual.

6. Adventist media has little influence on young adults. Many young adults are unaware of Adventist media despite most young adults' connection to media, especially through Facebook. The majority of young adults do not interact with Adventist TV, magazines, and other SDA media outlets. This is an important form of connection that is not reaching this demographic group of Adventists. Additional research can determine whether young adults who lack interest in Adventist media also lack access to Adventist media, but either way, the percentages reported show that this is a connection point that is not being used effectively. In the comments section, one participant wrote, "... didn't even know there were Adventist smartphone apps." Because millennials get much of their information from the Internet, the Adventist church needs to research why their media is not reaching young adults. More research should be done to evaluate the effectiveness of Adventist media. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Adventist media sites are oriented more to providing information for members rather than to developing relationships with friends and neighbors.

7. There is a lack of evangelistic efforts being carried out by young adults. The data showed that this sample is not involved in evangelism and does not invite their friends to church events. They do not see the church as welcoming toward other faiths, and they may not want to expose their friends to this environment. Also, there were fewer first-generation Adventists than there were those whose family lineage went back five generations or more. This will have repercussions for the future of the church if the Great Commission is not actively being fulfilled and new disciples are not being created.

8. The transitory lifestyle of many young adults negatively impacts their connection with local churches. About half of the respondents are single, three-fourths do not have children, and many are in graduate school. They struggle to find time to connect with local churches. Jeffrey Arnett, who is credited with coining the phrase “emerging adults” to describe young adults, commented on this transitional lifestyle:

Overall, what we see from the demographic outline is that in the past half century, the age period from about 18 through the mid-20s has changed from being a time of settling down into adult roles of marriage, parenthood, long-term work, and a long-term residence to being a time that is exceptionally unsettled, a period of exploration and instability, as young people try out various possible futures in love and work before making enduring commitments (Arnett, 2006, p.7).

This transitory nature was a major reason why many young adults’ official membership is not at their current church. Statements in the comment section reveal that many young adults do not feel like their life is settled enough to commit to a church. One individual wrote, “I wanted to wait until I settled permanently. When I did, I wanted to wait to move membership when I married, so that my husband and I could join a church together . . . but I have yet to marry.”

The church must think strategically about how to connect with the new realities of a generation that is increasingly mobile and unattached. Specialized connection strategies need to be developed to provide a place of refuge and stability for those whose lives are constantly shifting. Many Adventist churches have no programming or connection points for young adults in the period between college and married-with-children. One suggestion might be another level of church membership which allows people to have a primary membership in one church and at the same time have an affiliation with another church. Further research should be done across North America to discover strategies that are working in individual churches.

Recommendations

Although the results from this study provide some data on what is taking place with recent graduates from North American Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities, there are still many variables that need further exploration. First, researchers should look at young adults who dropped out of Adventist schools and those who did not attend an Adventist college or university. The Pierson Institute would like to expand the Adventist Connection Study to

Adventist young adults who graduated from secular colleges and universities and to Adventists who started but did not complete their university education. Such research will require significant investments of both time and money, since the church seems to have little information about these two groups. A significant challenge to research in this area is the fact that the e-Adventist membership information record system is controlled at the local conference level. Researchers must obtain permission from each individual conference in order to search for young adults attending secular universities.

Another area for further study is where young adults choose to live. This survey only asked where respondents lived by U.S. regions (further analysis according to region will be done in the future) but not specifically what states and cities. Do young adults tend to congregate in Adventist “islands” like Loma Linda, Orlando, Chattanooga, and Huntsville because they still want to live with other ethnic Adventists? Or because Adventist universities educate them for jobs found in these areas? Or because they want the big-church environment? Or because they have grown accustomed to the style of worship at the university church during college and do not want to attend a smaller church that may not have the same level of programming and resources?

More research should also be done on how social media affects the way young adults connect or disconnect with local churches. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Adventist young adults retain their connection with other Adventist young adults through social media and through social and spiritual gatherings outside of the official church. One example would be a Friday-night Bible study in the Chattanooga area popular with night shift nurses and other young adults. The meal and Bible study starts at 9:30 p.m. and often goes to 2:00 a.m. We are also aware of former Oakwood graduates living in Huntsville who participate in the weekly Friday evening AY program, which is completely organized and run by students with an attendance of approximately 1,000 current and former students. This program is also streamed by Oakwood and is viewed by an average of 300 individuals from around the world. Further studies would need to be done to ascertain the effectiveness of such media in keeping graduates connected to the church. Participants are connecting socially and spiritually independent of any local church.

Also, more research should be done on the attitudes of young adults regarding church school and homeschool. Of the 913 individuals who answered the question about the preferred methods of passing religious values onto their children, only 486, a little over 50%, plan to send their children to Adventist elementary schools, and the numbers are even lower (26%) for

sending their children to Adventist boarding schools (Table 29). These numbers, of course, are projections, especially since only about a quarter of the sample has children. However, this data shows weak support for Adventist K-12 education, especially in the area of boarding academies. The stronger support for an Adventist college education (61%) is encouraging but needs further study to understand how attitudes are changing in this area.

This report did not look into connection differences among university majors because the format of the question was direct input and was not analyzed in this report. More research should be done on the effect one's major and one's profession have on one's connection with the church. Adventist young adults seem to find work in areas of healthcare (16%), education (16%), business (6%), management (2%), and ministry (4%). Almost 14% of respondents were students. Are those in other professions graduating from secular schools, and how well is the church connecting with these graduates?

Further information will be available after a thorough analysis is done on the comment sections. Most of the questions had a space to leave comments at the end of the question, and there were a total of more than 3,500 responses in those spaces. Each question with a comment field averaged about 105 responses. In addition to these comments, there were open-ended questions that specifically asked what the Adventist church could improve upon and why young adults leave. More than 700 individuals took the extra time to write thoughtful responses to these questions.

The Adventist Connection Study provided an opportunity for young adults to share their concerns about the church. The Pierson Institute research team tried to remove anything that could be interpreted as evangelistic or an attempt to reclaim "backsliders." Perhaps ironically, it was the team's openness and honesty about its goals which became a means for reconnecting young adults with the church. There seems to be among Adventist young adults a huge, unmet desire for the church to actually listen to their questions, concerns, and opinions. One respondent wrote, "As I am filling out this survey, I am hesitant to be contacted, but if I change my mind, I'll e-mail the above address. I would enjoy dialoguing with someone about my experiences (as long as there's no pressure to 'please come back'), but I really haven't found the right person/people with which I can open up that conversation."

It is our belief that one of the most important needs today is for Adventist Church leaders and members at every level to humbly seek out young adults and listen to them without judgment

and without prejudice. We are not talking about an occasional well-publicized town hall, but a deep commitment to quietly, regularly seek out young adults and listen to what they have to say. Without exception, young adults thanked us for the opportunity to participate in our focus groups and survey. One focus group participant told Dr. Douglas Jacobs, “This study may be the most important thing you do in your life.”

Our data suggests that many Adventist young adults have not given up completely on the church. Many who appear to have disconnected continue to be connected in a variety of conventional and unconventional ways. Church leaders and members still have an opportunity to reclaim many, but the window of opportunity is limited and will be quickly shut if we do not approach young adults sincerely, genuinely, humbly, and acceptingly.

References

- Arnett, J. J., & Tanner, J. L. (2006). *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (1st ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Barna Group. (2009). "How faith varies by church size." Retrieved May 2013 from <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/289-how-faith-varies-by-church-size>.
- Creative Ministries (2010). Southern Adventist University Student Spiritual Life Survey.
- Cross, T. (2011). *Toward an integrated youth ministry: A case study of the application of principles from Ephesians among teens and their families for the Friday evening youth ministry programming of the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists* (Unpublished doctoral thesis project abstract). Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.
- Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2005). *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dudley, R. L. (2000). *Why our teenagers leave the church: Personal stories from a 10-year study*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publ. Association.
- European Valugenesis (1999) [Qualitative survey instrument].
- Ethos. (2013) In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved May 23, 2013, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethos> accessed 5/23/2013.
- Gane, B. (2010). *Loving them back, leading them home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publ. Association.
- Gillespie, V. B. (2002). *Adventist schools do make a difference! Journal of Adventist Education*, October/ November 2002. 12-16.
- Gillespie, V. B. & Gillespie, T. (2011). *Hey! love them and they will come*. Riverside, CA: Hancock Center.
- Hadaway, C. K., & Marler, P.L. (1998, May 6). *Did you really go to church this week? Behind the poll data*. *The Christian Century*, 472-475.
- Kinnaman, D., & Hawkins, A. (2011). *You lost me: Why young Christians are leaving church—and rethinking faith*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books.
- Kinnaman, D., & Lyons, G. (2007). *Unchristian: What a new generation really thinks about Christianity—and why it matters*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books.

- Pew Research Center, (2010). *Religion among the millennials: less religiously active than older Americans but fairly traditional in other ways*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.
- Rainer, S.S. (2009). *Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists young adult dropout and assimilation study*. Unpublished research, Rainer Research of Lakewood Ranch, FL.
- Rainer, T.S., & Rainer, S.S. III. (2008). *Essential church? Reclaiming a generation of dropouts*. Nashville: B&H.
- Rasi, H., & Vyhmeister, N. (2012). *Always prepared: answers to questions about our faith*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association,
- Sahlin, M. (2003). *Adventist congregations today: new evidence for equipping healthy churches*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- Sahlin, M., & Richardson, P. (Nov. 2008). *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A demographic profile*. North American Division secretariat demographic survey. North American Division and the Center for Creative Ministry. Milton Freewater, OR.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2011, May 26). 2010 census shows nation's population is aging by the U.S. Census Bureau. *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved June 2, 2011, from census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn147.html.
- Wuthnow, R. (2007). *After the baby boomers: How twenty- and thirty-somethings are shaping the future of American religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Appendix A
Charts and Tables

Table 1. Question 43: What is your religious affiliation?

Religious affiliation	Number of responses (Percentage of total)
Seventh-day Adventist	928 (86.1%)
Mainline Protestant	2 (0.2%)
Roman Catholic	2 (0.2%)
Non-denominational	25 (2.3%)
No affiliation	64 (5.9%)
Other	57 (5.0%)
Total	1,078 (100%)

Table 2. Question 14: At what age were you first baptized?

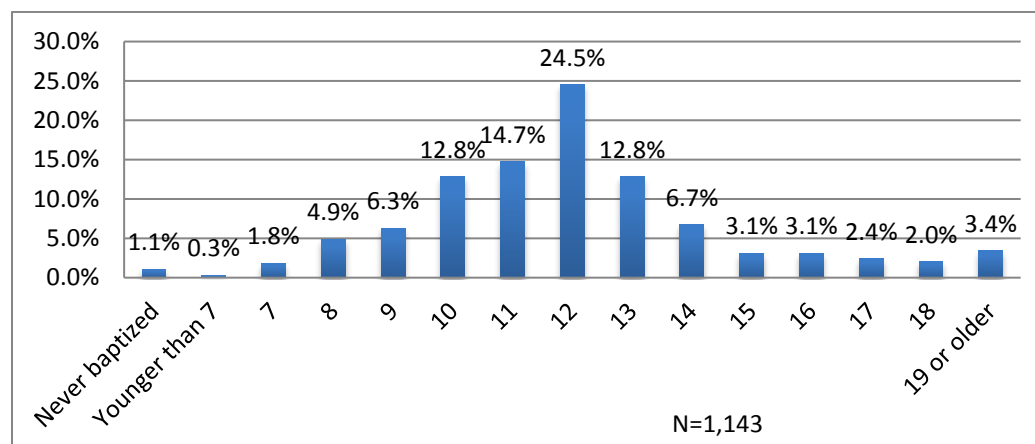


Table 3. Question 47: I am (or was) a ____ generation Adventist.

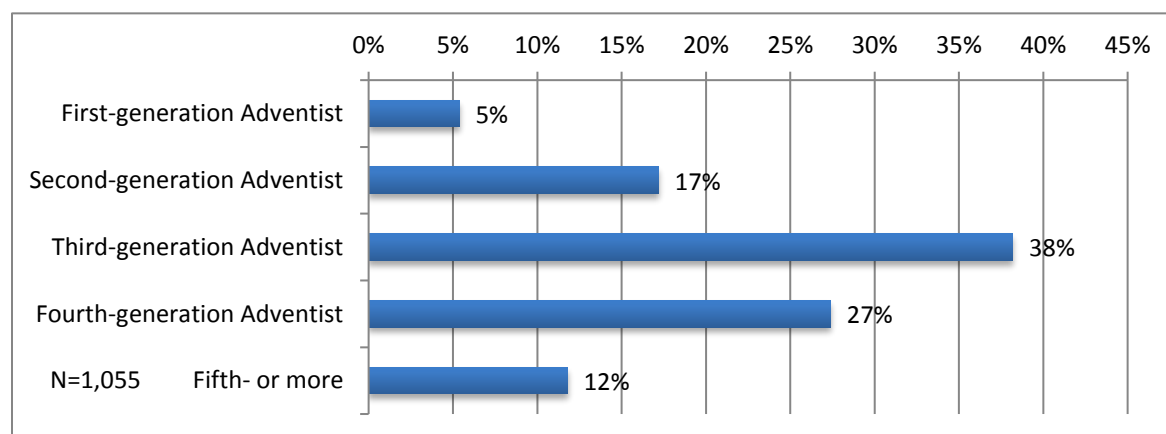


Table 4. Question 9: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

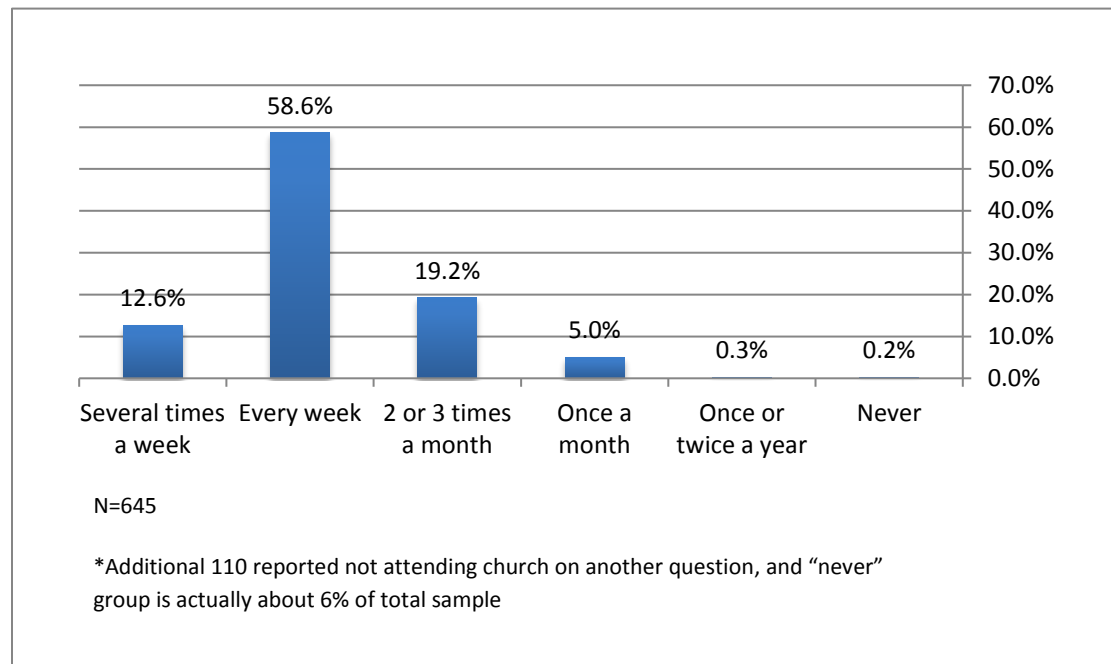


Table 5. Question 5: How often do you practice the following devotional practices?

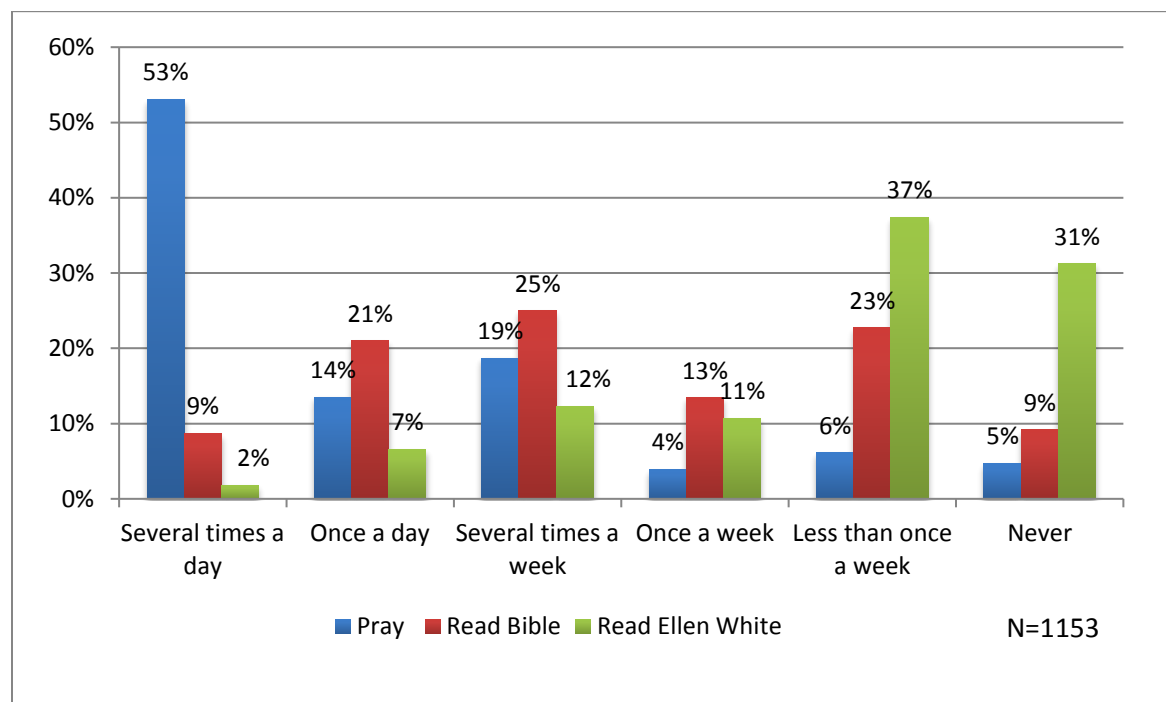


Table 6. Question 49: Where is your official church membership?

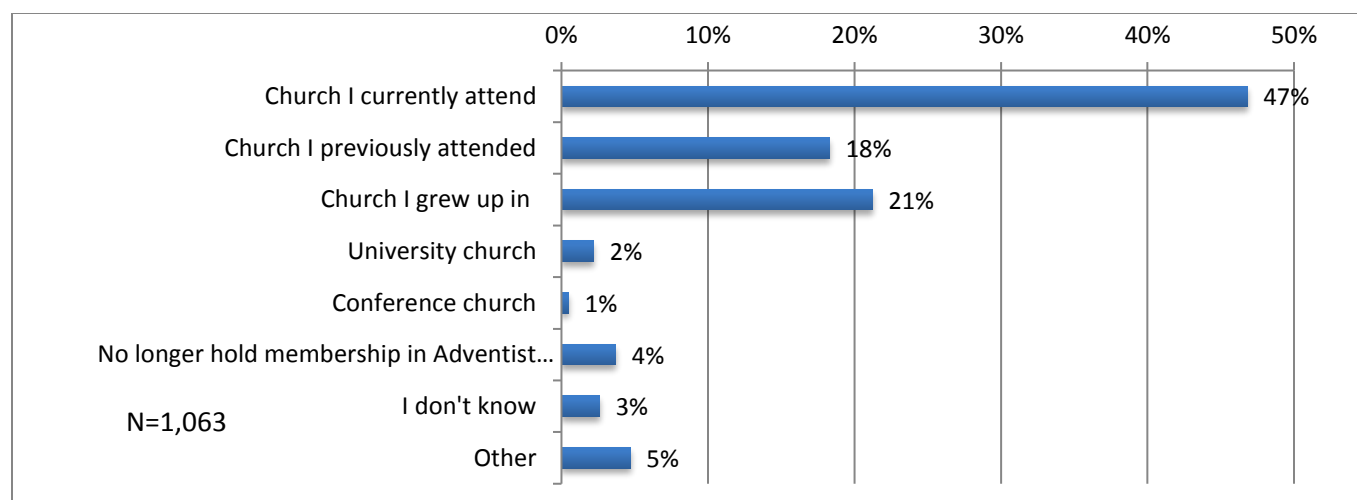


Table 7. Question 20: Please tell us what type of school you attended in elementary school.

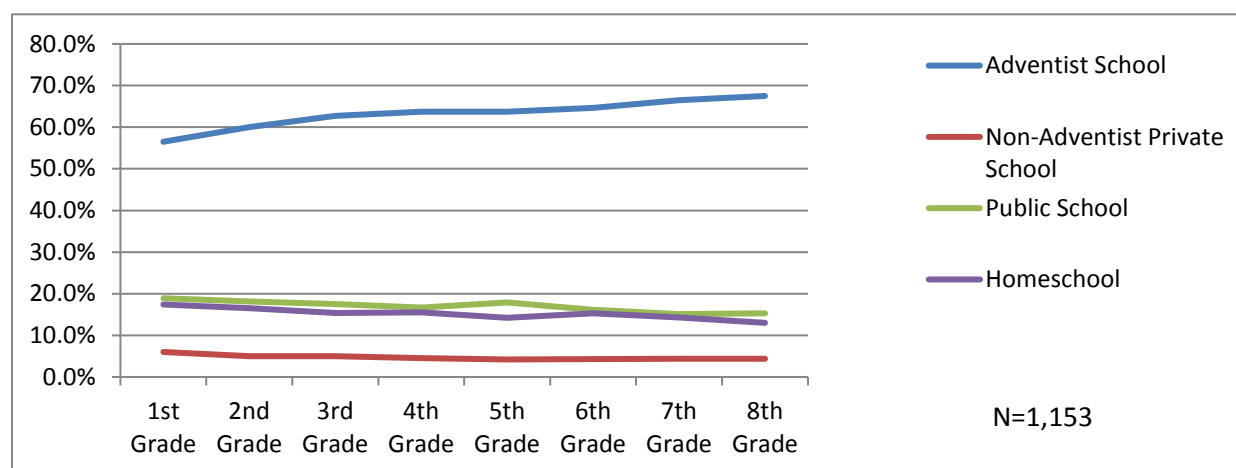


Table 8. Question 21: Please tell us what type of school you attended in high school.

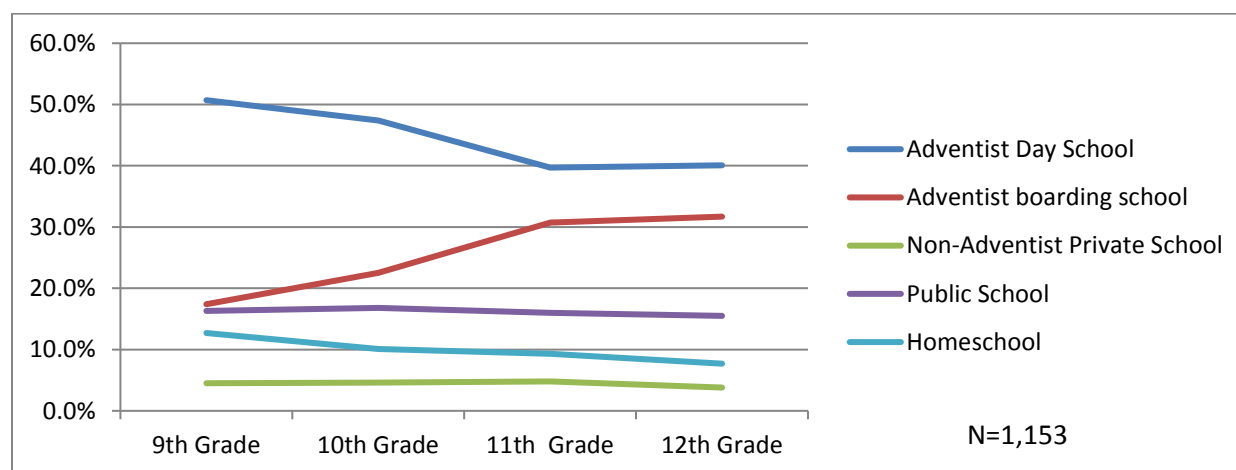


Table 9. Question 3: Which statement comes closest to your view of the Bible's inspiration?

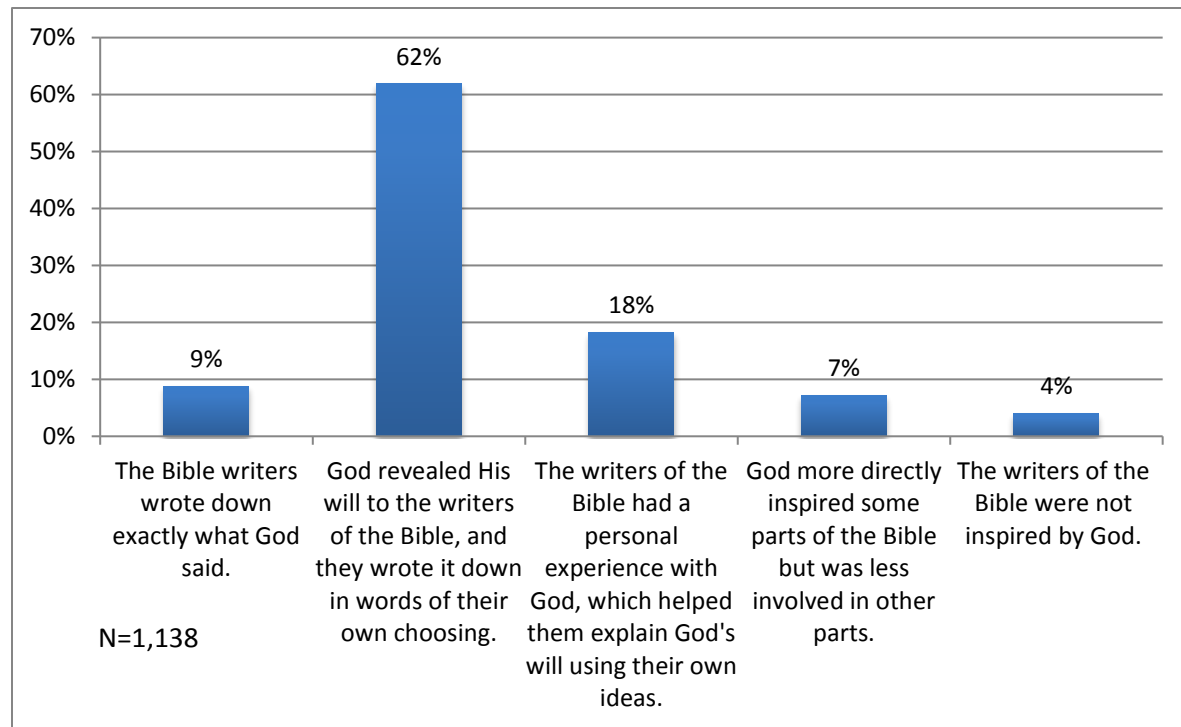


Table 10: Question 4: Which statement comes closest to your view of the Bible's authority?

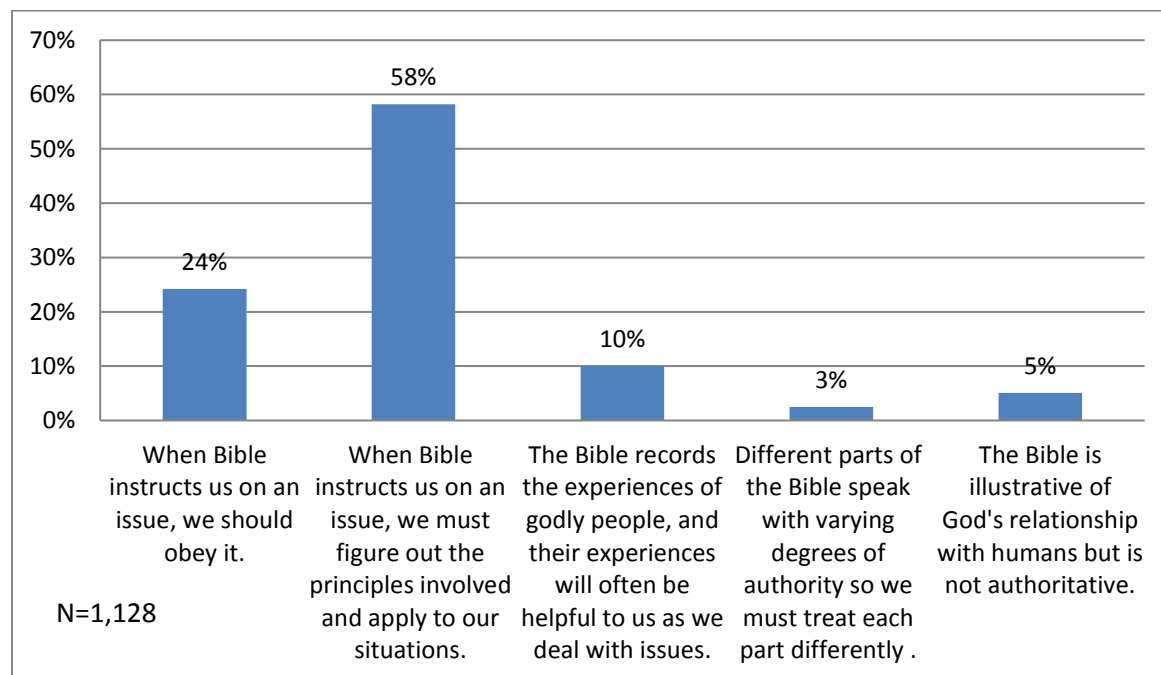


Table 11. Question 30: How strongly do you agree with the following doctrines?

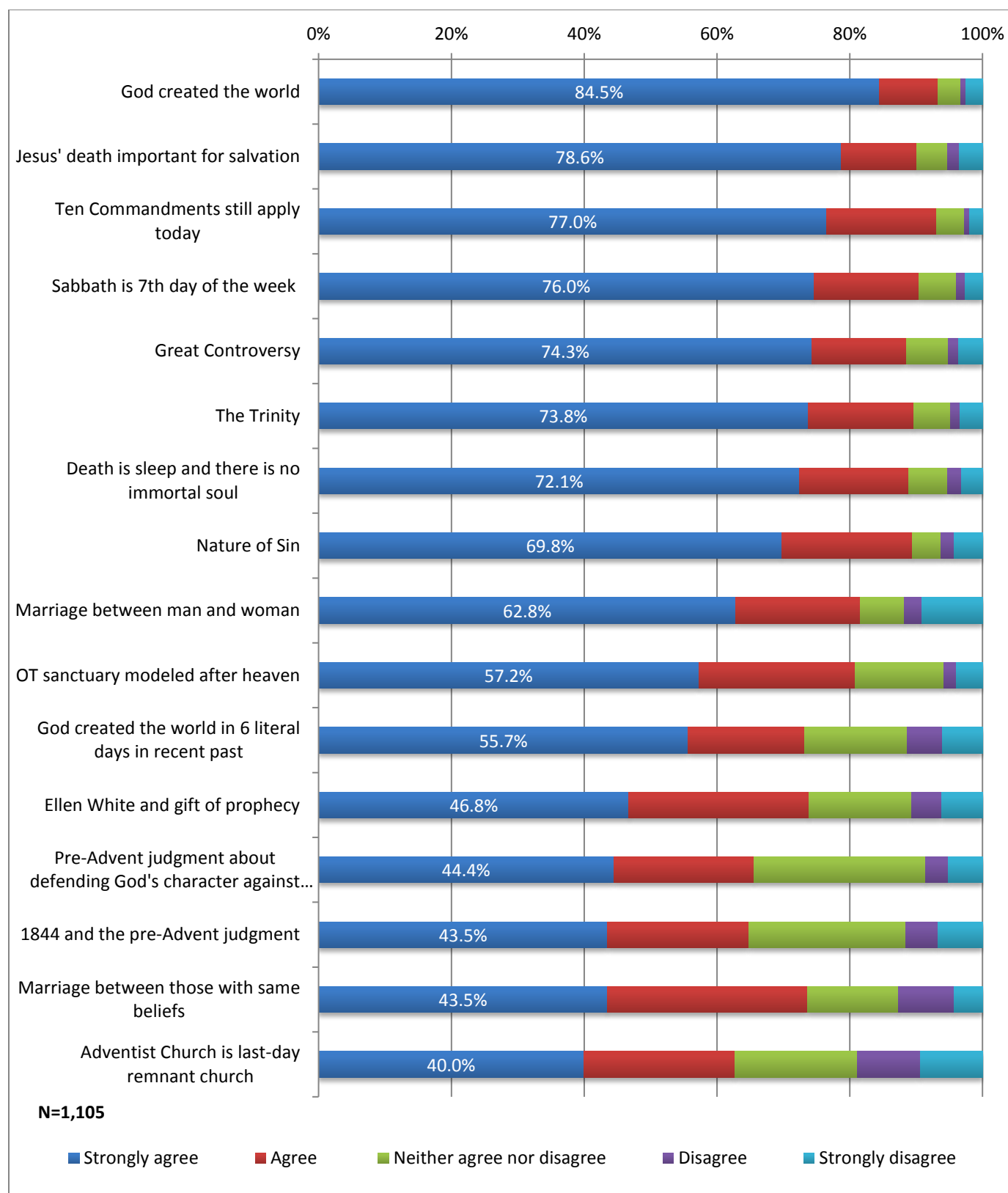


Table 12. Question 32: Based on your own personal standard, please tell us whether the following are acceptable:

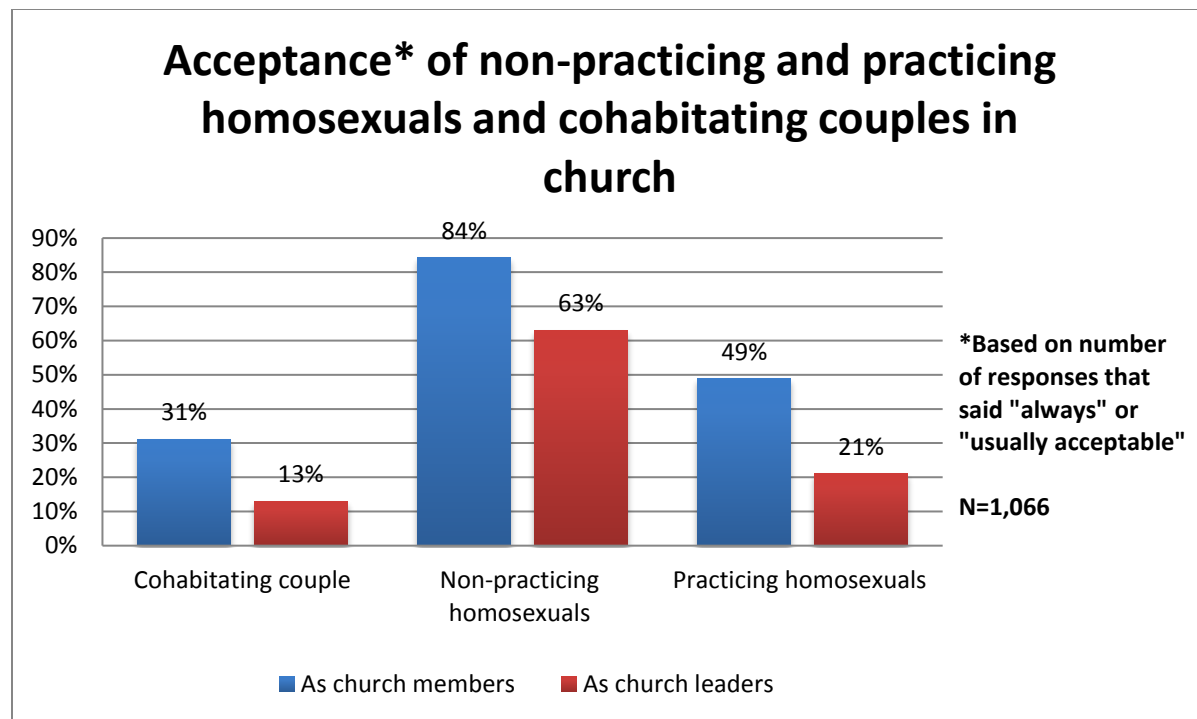


Table 13. Crosstab of Years in Adventist Elementary School and Conversion

			ConvertedQ18 Have you had a conversion experience?			Total
			No	I'm not sure	Yes	
YrsSDAEElementaryQ20	0 years	Count	36	56	138	230
			15.7%	24.3%	60.0%	100.0%
	1-4 years	Count	37	48	71	156
			23.7%	30.8%	45.5%	100.0%
	5-7 years	Count	41	62	88	191
			21.5%	32.5%	46.1%	100.0%
	8 years	Count	174	109	184	467
			37.3%	23.3%	39.4%	100.0%
		Count	288	275	481	1044
			27.6%	26.3%	46.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	51.180 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	51.285	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	37.556	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1044		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 41.09.

Table 14. Adventist Elementary School ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DoctrinalBeliefsQ30	Between Groups	2.318	3	.773	1.104	.346
	Within Groups	706.681	1010	.700		
	Total	708.999	1013			
StandardsBeliefsQ31_32	Between Groups	13.236	3	4.412	5.276	0.001*
	Within Groups	836.192	1000	.836		
	Total	849.428	1003			
AdventistStandardsQ35	Between Groups	19.094	3	6.365	3.965	0.008*
	Within Groups	1597.022	995	1.605		
	Total	1616.116	998			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesPersonalQ5	Between Groups	14.969	3	4.990	5.244	0.001*
	Within Groups	1001.016	1052	.952		
	Total	1015.985	1055			

*p<0.01

Table 15. Crosstab of Mother's Church Involvement and Connection to church

			AdventistChurchConnectionQ48			Total
			1.00 Poor connection	2.00 Marginal/Other Connection	3.00 Connected	
MotherQ39	Left Church	Count	22	7	14	43
		% within MotherQ39	51.2%	16.3%	32.6%	100.0%
	Never was Adventist	Count	1	2	15	18
		% within MotherQ39	5.6%	11.1%	83.3%	100.0%
	Irregular Attendance	Count	36	17	42	95
		% within MotherQ39	37.9%	17.9%	44.2%	100.0%
	Regular Attendance	Count	100	45	209	354
		% within MotherQ39	28.2%	12.7%	59.0%	100.0%
Total	Employed/Active in Church	Count	115	68	350	533
		% within MotherQ39	21.6%	12.8%	65.7%	100.0%
		Count	274	139	630	1043
		% within MotherQ39	26.3%	13.3%	60.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	38.796 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	38.830	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.785	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1043		

a. 2 cells (13.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.40.

Table 16. Crosstab of Mother's involvement and belief of Ellen White

			EllenWhiteQ34 Read the following statements carefully; then mark next to the one that is closest to your understanding of the writings of Ellen G. White.				
			2.00 Ellen G. White's writings contain no more truth or wisdom than	3.00 Ellen G. White was a person who created stories of supernatural	4.00 Ellen G. White was inspired by God and presented God's message	5.00 Ellen G. White copied what God told her word for word, and was	Total
MotherQ39	1.00 Left Church	Count	10	6	25	0	41
		% within MotherQ39	24.4%	14.6%	61.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	2.00 Never	Count	6	0	13	3	22
		% within MotherQ39	27.3%	0.0%	59.1%	13.6%	100.0%
	3.00 Irregular	Count	24	3	68	1	96
		% within MotherQ39	25.0%	3.1%	70.8%	1.0%	100.0%
	4.00 Regular	Count	53	14	274	14	355
		% within MotherQ39	14.9%	3.9%	77.2%	3.9%	100.0%
	5.00 Employed/Active	Count	50	31	436	15	532
		% within MotherQ39	9.4%	5.8%	82.0%	2.8%	100.0%
	Total	Count	143	54	816	33	1046
		% within MotherQ39	13.7%	5.2%	78.0%	3.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.923 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	44.082	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	21.465	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1046		

Table 17. Mother's Involvement in church ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DoctrinalBeliefsQ30	Between Groups	16.859	4	4.215	6.029	.000*
	Within Groups	741.791	1061	.699		
	Total	758.651	1065			
StandardsBeliefsQ31_32	Between Groups	14.092	4	3.523	4.195	.002*
	Within Groups	891.832	1062	.840		
	Total	905.924	1066			
RelationshipWithGodPositiveQ19	Between Groups	10.952	4	2.738	4.304	.002*
	Within Groups	675.037	1061	.636		
	Total	685.989	1065			
RelationshipWithGodNegativeQ19	Between Groups	11.449	4	2.862	3.565	.007*
	Within Groups	851.097	1060	.803		
	Total	862.546	1064			
AdventistPrideQ44	Between Groups	7.403	4	1.851	2.900	.021
	Within Groups	578.731	907	.638		
	Total	586.134	911			
AdventistForeverQ66	Between Groups	39.690	4	9.922	7.824	.000*
	Within Groups	1308.727	1032	1.268		
	Total	1348.417	1036			
*p<0.01						

Table 18. Crosstab of Father's Involvement and View of Bible's Inspiration

			BibleInspirationQ3 Which statement comes closest to your view of the Bible's inspiration?					
			1.00 The writers of the Bible wrote down exactly what God said.	2.00 God revealed His will to the writers of the Bible, and they used their own words	3.00 The writers of the Bible had a personal experience with God,	4.00 God more directly inspired some parts of the Bible	5.00 The writers of the Bible were not inspired by God.	Total
FatherQ39	Left Church	Count	9	35	11	6	6	67
		% within FatherQ39	13.4%	52.2%	16.4%	9.0%	9.0%	100.0%
	Never was Adventist	Count	17	41	10	5	3	76
		% within FatherQ39	22.4%	53.9%	13.2%	6.6%	3.9%	100.0%
	Irregular Attendance	Count	2	47	17	10	7	83
		% within FatherQ39	2.4%	56.6%	20.5%	12.0%	8.4%	100.0%
	Regular Attendance	Count	11	159	43	12	6	231
		% within FatherQ39	4.8%	68.8%	18.6%	5.2%	2.6%	100.0%
	Employed/Active in Church	Count	50	360	103	42	19	574
		% within FatherQ39	8.7%	62.7%	17.9%	7.3%	3.3%	100.0%
	Total	Count	89	642	184	75	41	1031
		% within FatherQ39	8.6%	62.3%	17.8%	7.3%	4.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	45.874 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	40.700	16	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.803	1	.370
N of Valid Cases	1031		

a. 4 cells (16.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.66.

Table 19. Crosstab of Father's Involvement and Belief of Ellen White

			EllenWhiteQ34 Read the following statements carefully; then mark next to the one that is closest to your understanding of the writings of Ellen G. White.				
			2.00 Ellen G. White's writings contain no more truth or wisdom than other religious works	3.00 Ellen G. White was a person who created stories of supernatural guidance to explain	4.00 Ellen G. White was inspired by God and presented God's message in terms of time and place	5.00 Ellen G. White copied what God told her word for word, and wrote without influence of time and place	Total
FatherQ39	1.00 Left	Count	19	5	39	3	66
		% within FatherQ39	28.8%	7.6%	59.1%	4.5%	100.0%
	2.00 Never	Count	16	1	54	3	74
		% within FatherQ39	21.6%	1.4%	73.0%	4.1%	100.0%
	3.00 Irregular	Count	18	4	59	0	81
		% within FatherQ39	22.2%	4.9%	72.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	4.00 Regular	Count	30	14	178	5	227
		% within FatherQ39	13.2%	6.2%	78.4%	2.2%	100.0%
	5.00 Employed/Active	Count	60	29	462	22	573
		% within FatherQ39	10.5%	5.1%	80.6%	3.8%	100.0%
	Total	Count	143	53	792	33	1021
		% within FatherQ39	14.0%	5.2%	77.6%	3.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson	34.324 ^a	12	.001
Chi-Square			
Likelihood	35.013	12	.000
Ratio			
Linear-by-Linear	22.117	1	.000
Association			
N of Valid Cases	1021		

a. 6 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.13.

Table 20. Crosstab of Father's Involvement in church and Connection to church

			AdventistChurchConnectionQ48			Total
			1.00 Poor connection	2.00 Marginal/Other Connection	3.00 Connected	
FatherQ39	1.00 Left	Count	31	6	29	66
		% within FatherQ39	47.0%	9.1%	43.9%	100.0%
	2.00 Never	Count	15	13	41	69
		% within FatherQ39	21.7%	18.8%	59.4%	100.0%
	3.00 Irregular	Count	29	15	35	79
		% within FatherQ39	36.7%	19.0%	44.3%	100.0%
	4.00 Regular	Count	59	26	145	230
		% within FatherQ39	25.7%	11.3%	63.0%	100.0%
	5.00 Employed/Active	Count	139	74	362	575
		% within FatherQ39	24.2%	12.9%	63.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	273	134	612	1019
		% within FatherQ39	26.8%	13.2%	60.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.644^a	8	.001
Likelihood Ratio	25.868	8	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.199	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1019		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.68.

Table 21. Father Involvement ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DoctrinalBeliefsQ30	Between Groups	19.445	4	4.861	6.945	.000*
	Within Groups	725.160	1036	.700		
	Total	744.605	1040			
MarriageBeliefQ30	Between Groups	23.196	4	5.799	5.215	.000*
	Within Groups	1150.865	1035	1.112		
	Total	1174.062	1039			
StandardsBeliefsQ31_32	Between Groups	20.010	4	5.002	5.980	.000*
	Within Groups	867.425	1037	.836		
	Total	887.435	1041			
AdventistStandardsQ35	Between Groups	28.942	4	7.236	4.551	.001*
	Within Groups	1640.855	1032	1.590		
	Total	1669.797	1036			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesPersonalQ5	Between Groups	19.180	4	4.795	5.101	.000*
	Within Groups	973.003	1035	.940		
	Total	992.184	1039			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesCorporateQ6	Between Groups	30.729	4	7.682	8.848	.000*
	Within Groups	899.509	1036	.868		
	Total	930.238	1040			
ChurchAttendanceQ9 Church attendance	Between Groups	18.436	4	4.609	7.678	.000*
	Within Groups	354.799	591	.600		
	Total	373.235	595			
ConfidenceInPersonalReligiousBeliefsQ2	Between Groups	9.113	4	2.278	5.617	.000*
	Within Groups	420.177	1036	.406		
	Total	429.290	1040			
AdventistExperiencesQ45	Between Groups	9.616	4	2.404	4.931	.001*
	Within Groups	430.492	883	.488		
	Total	440.107	887			
AdventistForeverQ66	Between Groups	33.622	4	8.405	6.511	.000*
	Within Groups	1302.480	1009	1.291		
	Total	1336.102	1013			
*p<0.01						

Table 22. Crosstab of Media Consumption and View of Ordination of Women

			WomenInMinistryQ33 Read the following statements carefully, and mark which statement comes closest to your view of women in ministry.					
			1.00 I do not believe in female pastors.	2.00 I believe women should be pastors but not ordained.	3.00 I believe women should be commissioned as pastors but not or	4.00 I believe women should be ordained as pastors.	5.00 I'm not sure.	Total
MediaConsumptionQ36	1.00	Count	16	0	5	34	14	69
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	23.2%	0.0%	7.2%	49.3%	20.3%	100.0%
	2.00	Count	26	6	5	109	53	199
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	13.1%	3.0%	2.5%	54.8%	26.6%	100.0%
	3.00	Count	24	9	9	120	45	207
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	11.6%	4.3%	4.3%	58.0%	21.7%	100.0%
	4.00	Count	24	13	14	212	46	309
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	7.8%	4.2%	4.5%	68.6%	14.9%	100.0%
	5.00	Count	11	8	5	138	33	195
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	5.6%	4.1%	2.6%	70.8%	16.9%	100.0%
	6.00	Count	1	1	1	64	16	83
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	77.1%	19.3%	100.0%
	Total	Count	102	37	39	677	207	1062
		% within MediaConsumptionQ36	9.6%	3.5%	3.7%	63.7%	19.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	58.519 ^a	20	.000
Likelihood Ratio	61.473	20	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.466	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	1062		

a. 4 cells (13.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.40.

Table 23. Media Consumption ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DoctrinalBeliefsQ30	Between Groups	13.266	5	2.653	3.744	.002*
	Within Groups	768.249	1084	.709		
	Total	781.515	1089			
MarriageBeliefQ30	Between Groups	41.707	5	8.341	7.596	.000*
	Within Groups	1189.215	1083	1.098		
	Total	1230.921	1088			
StandardsBeliefsQ31_32	Between Groups	42.750	5	8.550	10.481	.000*
	Within Groups	885.094	1085	.816		
	Total	927.843	1090			
AdventistStandardsQ35	Between Groups	44.880	5	8.976	5.660	.000*
	Within Groups	1712.818	1080	1.586		
	Total	1757.697	1085			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesPersonalQ5	Between Groups	53.575	5	10.715	11.891	.000*
	Within Groups	975.936	1083	.901		
	Total	1029.511	1088			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesCorporateQ6	Between Groups	32.563	5	6.513	7.611	.000*
	Within Groups	927.516	1084	.856		
	Total	960.079	1089			
ConfidenceInPersonalReligiousBeliefsQ2	Between Groups	11.789	5	2.358	5.881	.000*
	Within Groups	434.195	1083	.401		
	Total	445.983	1088			
*p<0.01						

Table 24. Cross Tab of Baptismal Age and Church Connection

			AdventistChurchConnectionQ48			Total
			1.00 Poor connection	2.00 Marginal/Other Connection	3.00 Connected	
BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	Younger than 10	Count	23	15	96	134
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	17.2%	11.2%	71.6%	100.0%
	Age 10	Count	21	22	91	134
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	15.7%	16.4%	67.9%	100.0%
	Age 11	Count	41	16	99	156
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	26.3%	10.3%	63.5%	100.0%
	Age 12	Count	82	42	134	258
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	31.8%	16.3%	51.9%	100.0%
	Age 13	Count	42	14	82	138
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	30.4%	10.1%	59.4%	100.0%
	Age 14-15	Count	32	15	59	106
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	30.2%	14.2%	55.7%	100.0%
Total	Age 16 or older	Count	32	12	67	111
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	28.8%	10.8%	60.4%	100.0%
		Count	273	136	628	1037
		% within BaptizedAgeQ14 At what age were you first baptized?	26.3%	13.1%	60.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.364 ^a	12	.005
Likelihood Ratio	29.651	12	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.043	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	1037		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.90.

Table 25. Baptismal Age ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesPersonalQ5	Between Groups	16.054	6	2.676	2.843	.009
	Within Groups	1058.719	1125	.941		
	Total	1074.773	1131			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesCorporateQ6	Between Groups	16.140	6	2.690	3.072	.005
	Within Groups	985.954	1126	.876		
	Total	1002.094	1132			

Table 26. Crosstab of Church Size and Connection to activities outside of worship

			ConnectActivitiesQ12 Please select the areas of your church where you connect most. (Mark all that apply.)		
			.00 Other reason	1.00 Activities outside of worship service	Total
LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	2.00 House church or small group/Church plant/Small church	Count	38	50	88
		% within LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	43.2%	56.8%	100.0%
	3.00 Internet church/other	Count	61	46	107
		% within LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	57.0%	43.0%	100.0%
	6.00 Small to medium-sized church that shares pastor with other c	Count	85	83	168
		% within LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%
	7.00 Medium-sized church which is led by a single pastor and team	Count	161	111	272
		% within LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	59.2%	40.8%	100.0%
	8.00 Large church with one or two assistant pastors	Count	171	105	276
		% within LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	62.0%	38.0%	100.0%
Total	9.00 Megachurch with a team of pastors and elders to take care of	Count	71	35	106
		% within LocalChurchQ7 Which description most closely matches the church you usually attend?	67.0%	33.0%	100.0%
			587	430	1017
			57.7%	42.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.135^a	5	.004
Likelihood Ratio	17.094	5	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.105	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	1017		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 37.21.

Table 27. Church Size ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CongregationSermonStyleQ13 Sermon style	Between Groups	26.887	5	5.377	6.918	.000*
	Within Groups	799.087	1028	.777		
	Total	825.974	1033			
CongregationSermonRelevanceQ13 Sermon relevance	Between Groups	10.678	5	2.136	3.492	.004*
	Within Groups	630.027	1030	.612		
	Total	640.706	1035			
CongregationPastorPersonalityQ13 Personality of pastor	Between Groups	25.829	5	5.166	5.845	.000*
	Within Groups	912.028	1032	.884		
	Total	937.857	1037			

*p<0.01

Table 28: Personal Devotional Practice ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DoctrinalBeliefsQ30	Between Groups	197.367	3	65.789	120.827	.000*
	Within Groups	598.392	1099	.544		
	Total	795.759	1102			
MarriageBeliefQ30	Between Groups	304.206	3	101.402	117.361	.000*
	Within Groups	948.694	1098	.864		
	Total	1252.899	1101			
StandardsBeliefsQ31_32	Between Groups	246.804	3	82.268	131.241	.000*
	Within Groups	681.380	1087	.627		
	Total	928.184	1090			
AdventistStandardsQ35	Between Groups	417.363	3	139.121	112.223	.000*
	Within Groups	1341.337	1082	1.240		
	Total	1758.700	1085			
InvolvementInReligiousActivitiesCorporateQ6	Between Groups	452.204	3	150.735	304.278	.000*
	Within Groups	567.712	1146	.495		
	Total	1019.917	1149			
ChurchAttendanceQ9 Church attendance	Between Groups	95.658	3	31.886	65.070	.000*
	Within Groups	314.104	641	.490		
	Total	409.761	644			
ConfidenceInPersonalReligiousBeliefsQ2	Between Groups	146.260	3	48.753	167.982	.000*
	Within Groups	332.314	1145	.290		
	Total	478.575	1148			
CongregationSermonStyleQ13 Sermon style	Between Groups	18.252	3	6.084	6.799	.000*
	Within Groups	1010.243	1129	.895		
	Total	1028.494	1132			
CongregationMembersPersonalityQ13 Personality of members	Between Groups	22.644	3	7.548	7.300	.000*
	Within Groups	1171.509	1133	1.034		
	Total	1194.153	1136			
CongregationPastorPersonalityQ13 Personality of pastor	Between Groups	32.499	3	10.833	11.064	.000*
	Within Groups	1110.295	1134	.979		
	Total	1142.794	1137			

Table 28: Personal Devotional Practice ANOVA Continued						
CongregationSabbathSchoolQ13 Sabbath School classes	Between Groups	164.261	3	54.754	37.915	.000*
	Within Groups	1631.873	1130	1.444		
	Total	1796.134	1133			
CongregationChildrenProgramsQ13 Programs for children	Between Groups	117.870	3	39.290	19.059	.000*
	Within Groups	2313.036	1122	2.062		
	Total	2430.906	1125			
CongregationActivitiesQ13 Activities outside of church worship service	Between Groups	89.141	3	29.714	25.171	.000*
	Within Groups	1331.554	1128	1.180		
	Total	1420.695	1131			
CongregationInvolvementQ13 Opportunities to get involved	Between Groups	204.160	3	68.053	60.213	.000*
	Within Groups	1280.531	1133	1.130		
	Total	1484.691	1136			
CongregationMyAgeQ13 People your age that attend	Between Groups	27.199	3	9.066	8.169	.000*
	Within Groups	1255.271	1131	1.110		
	Total	1282.470	1134			
CongregationIntergenerationalQ13 Intergenerational church (both older and younger members)	Between Groups	66.906	3	22.302	18.517	.000*
	Within Groups	1358.606	1128	1.204		
	Total	1425.512	1131			
RelationshipWithGodPositiveQ19	Between Groups	282.009	3	94.003	224.977	.000*
	Within Groups	477.584	1143	.418		
	Total	759.593	1146			
RelationshipWithGodNegativeQ19	Between Groups	83.339	3	27.780	37.020	.000*
	Within Groups	856.199	1141	.750		
	Total	939.538	1144			
AdventistExperiencesQ45	Between Groups	142.985	3	47.662	139.610	.000*
	Within Groups	312.032	914	.341		
	Total	455.017	917			
AdventistUniquenessQ45	Between Groups	58.781	3	19.594	25.604	.000*
	Within Groups	698.688	913	.765		
	Total	757.469	916			
AdventistPrideQ44	Between Groups	129.511	3	43.170	84.215	.000*
	Within Groups	469.046	915	.513		
	Total	598.557	918			
AdventistForeverQ66	Between Groups	331.436	3	110.479	111.626	.000*
	Within Groups	1031.293	1042	.990		
	Total	1362.729	1045			

Table 29 Question 65: What method do you plan to use to share religious values?

Type of Schooling	Number of Responses
Adventist Elementary School	487 (53.20%)
Adventist Boarding School	237 (26%)
Adventist Day High School	447 (49%)
Adventist College	557(61%)
Homeschool	289 (31.70%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>913</i>

Appendix B

Author Biographies and Acknowledgements

The research team for the Adventist Connection Study provided outstanding research and knowledge domain credibility to this effort. The cumulative expertise of this team is outlined in the bios that follow.

Douglas Jacobs, D.Min.

A professor in the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University, Douglas Jacobs is the research coordinator of the Pierson Institute. He completed his first D.Min. at Andrews University and recently completed a second D.Min. in homiletics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (ABD). He previously served as a church pastor for 26 years in the Florida Conference and in his last church at Avon Park, had approximately 70 members who were university students. This research project flows from his passion to help graduates of Adventist universities to join and support local Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Douglas Tilstra, Ph.D.

Doug Tilstra is professor and director of Outdoor Leadership at Southern Adventist University. His Ph.D. dissertation at Capella University involved both qualitative and quantitative research, and he brings extensive experience as a pastor and professor who has ongoing contact with collegiate-aged young people, both in and outside the church.

Finbar Benjamin, D.Min.

Finbar Benjamin is associate professor in the School of Religion at Oakwood University. He is the principle investigator at Oakwood University and has an M.A. from Andrews University, a PGDip in Applied Theology, from the University of Oxford, and a D.Min. from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an ordained minister, a clinical chaplain, and a conflict mediator. His current academic research interests are in the intersections of empirical theological, contextual biblical hermeneutics and the integration of faith and learning as they relate to the African Diaspora.

Cheryl Des Jarlais, Ed.D

Cheryl Des Jarlais is associate professor in the School of Education and Psychology at Southern Adventist University. She has a M.A. in education from Andrews University. In 2009 she completed her Ed.D. from the University of Montana in Educational Leadership and her dissertation was on the ethnography of a Seventh-day Adventist mission school serving a native population in the Southwest. She brings an experience in qualitative research to the study and wrote the Adventist Connection Study Phase One narrative.

Mia Lindsey, B.S.

Mia Lindsey graduated *summa cum laude* from Southern Adventist University in 2012 with a B.S. in public relations. As a Southern Scholar, she conducted several research projects. She is the research assistant for the Adventist Connection Study. A recent university graduate, she adds a contemporary perspective toward understanding young adults.

Hollis James, Ph.D.

Hollis James is the director of institutional research and planning at Southern Adventist University. He holds a Ph.D. in behavioral disturbance education from Auburn University in Alabama. He brings seven years in institutional research to this project and also has extensive experience in statistics.

Alan Parker, D.Th.

Alan Parker is director of the Pierson Institute and a professor in the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University. He earned his D.Th. in practical theology from Stellenbosch University. His dissertation involved both qualitative and quantitative research in local Adventist churches.

Sharon Pittman, Ph.D.

Sharon Pitman is the director of the Graduate Global Community Development Program at Southern Adventist University. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. She has done extensive research in similar projects, including the National Institute of Health Research, the Teagle Foundation Funded Research, the North American Division Campaign for Community Research, and the Andrews University SDA Church Member Engagement Study. She brings ten years of both quantitative and qualitative research teaching and project implementation and she has helped to guide the research methodology of this project.

Octavio Ramirez, PH.D

Octavio Ramirez is professor and chair of the Social Work program at Oakwood University. He is the co-investigator at Oakwood University and has an M.S.W. from Rutgers University and a Ph.D. from Walden University. He holds clinical licenses in the states of Alabama and Tennessee. Dr. Ramirez has an established teaching, research, and professional record. His research interests are in the areas of sexual practices among University students, school social work, mental health, and spirituality and religiosity among Latinos.

Additional members of the Pierson Institute Research Committee at Southern Adventist University gave invaluable advice and support:

Evonne Crook, B.A., director of alumni relations.

Tim Cross, M.Div., youth pastor of the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists.

Robert H. Gadd, Ph.D., Vandever Professor of Accounting in the School of Business and Management.

Brennon Kirstein, D. Min., Chaplain.

John S. Nixon, D. Min., professor in the School of Religion.

Barry Tryon, D.Min., associate professor in the School of Religion.

Ruth WilliamsMorris, Ph.D., professor of psychology and director of the Psychology Program in the School of Education and Psychology.

We would also like to thank the following leaders at each of the partnering universities: Their support made this project possible.

Southern Adventist University

Gordon Bietz, D.Min., president.

Robert Young, Ph.D., senior vice president for academic administration

Vinita Sauder, Ph.D., vice president for strategic initiatives.

Oakwood University.

Leslie Pollard, Ph.D., president.

Garland Dulan, Ph.D., vice president for academic affairs.

George Ashley, Ph.D., assistant vice president for academic administration.

Prudence Pollard, Ph.D., assistant vice president for faculty development and research.

Pacific Union College.

Heather Knight, Ph.D, president.

Carolyn Hamilton, B.S., CFRE, interim vice president for advancement

Mark Ishikawa, B.S., director of alumni relations.

Several other individuals deserve special recognition:

Lisa Goolsby, M.B.A., assistant professor of Marketing in the School of Business and Management for the use of the Market Research Institute facility for Phase One focus groups.

Dan Maxwell, Ph.D., director; and Katie McGrath, M.Ed., reference and instruction librarian, at the McKee Library for providing us research advice, books, and other resources.

Jerome Thayer, PH.D., director of Center for Statistical Service, Andrews University, for running all of the SPSS analysis for this report.

Benedicta Ekeh and Darryl Walker, undergraduate students in Social Work program at Oakwood University for assisting in organizing focus groups.

Norma Brown and Dag Pontvik, graduate assistants in the School of Social Work at Southern Adventist University for helping in the coding process of Phase One.

Susan Brown, Evangelistic Resource Center Administrative Assistant, for general support of the study and providing focus group meals.

Galina Steele, D.Min., Research and Program Evaluation Assistant, Office of Archives, Statistics, & Research, and David Trim, Ph.D., Director, Office of Archives, Statistics, & Research, for their counsel, support, and visits.

And last but not least, we would like to thank all of the Adventist Connection Study participants for giving their time and insight. Without each participant, this project would not have been a success.