

**A Proposal for a Presentation to the Adventist Human-Subject Researchers Association Conference at Andrews University, May 16-20, 2018 on the subject:**

**“Adventist Millennials: Measuring Emerging Adults Connection to Church”**

**Presenters**

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**Presentation Summary**

Numerous research studies have demonstrated an exodus of emerging adults from churches throughout Christian denominations. As the United States becomes an increasingly post-Christian society, studying a Christian community whose identity has largely drawn from a minority position could provide helpful insight into maintaining relevance as Christianity moves into minority status. This paper examines how recent emerging adult graduates of Seventh-day Adventist universities connect with or disconnect from both the denomination as a whole and with local churches in the context of identity, community, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy. Through a two-phased mixed methodology approach, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with self-selected focus groups of recent college graduates, developed an inductively generated survey instrument, and then electronically distributed the survey via email to recent Adventist college graduates. The results suggested ten themes that require further discussion. Particularly notable is the influence personal religiosity has on the sample's acceptance of Adventist teachings and faith practice, as well as the negative impact participants' media usage and transitory lifestyles have on their connection to local churches. Overall, the majority of the sample identified as connected to the Adventist Church, and even many who appear to have disconnected from the Adventist Church remain engaged in a variety of nontraditional ways.

Due to the exploratory nature of the research and the voluntary response sample, extrapolation of the results to a wider population may be limited. However, the findings offer valuable insights and understanding into possible reasons for high attrition rates of young adults from the Adventist Church and provide an important foundation for further research both within the Adventist church and in the wider Christian community. Twelve of the created scales concerning Identity, Community, Orthodoxy, and Orthopraxy had a Cronbach's alpha between 0.814 and 0.942. The three remaining scales (all

related to Community) had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.610, 0.768, and 0.776 respectively. This shows that overall the scales had very good internal consistency and accurately measured the variables of interest. Hence, the research instrument created for this study is of value and can be used in future studies as well as serve as a guide to researchers who may want to build on this work.

Key Words: Seventh-day Adventist, millennials, emerging adulthood, higher education, personal religiosity

### **Abstract for Program**

How do graduates of Adventist universities connect with or disconnect from the church in the context of identity, community, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy? Findings include the influence personal religiosity has on acceptance of Adventist teachings and faith practice, and the negative impact media usage and transitory lifestyles have on connection to local churches.

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