

Religion and Mentalities within Kids

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Abstract

Christianity is a huge religious practice that dates back to early human times. There are many different branches and common beliefs that shape how the religion is today, providing community for millions around the world. This research addresses the gap of children growing up in the Christian church compared to those who don't, and how it specifically affects their mentalities. The chosen method is phenomenology, a study of how people's lived experiences impact them. Interviews conducted with participant groups led to findings that religious children are more likely to experience guilt within their practice and set their future success apart from themselves. Implications give communities the opportunity to know the effect they have on children's goal setting abilities and possibly help them learn how to set goals. This could potentially increase success rates of achieving goals within the community.

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1.Introduction

Christianity is a religion based on the person and the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and holds beliefs and practices based on the bible. Christianity dates back to 40 C.E. [1]. It was developed from the teachings of Jesus and later the writings from his missionaries Paul and Tarsus. In the beginning, it was a small and unorganized sect that promised salvation after death [2]. Salvation was believed possible by believing in Jesus as the son of God. Originally it was debated if they should preach only to Jews, but then it spread throughout the Roman world and non Jews became Christians too. After Jesus's death, Paul, an Apostle, wrote many letters that are now in the New Testament, or the Christian Bible. These letters were spread around to other Christians in the Roman world and it was clear that they were still figuring out what it meant to be a Christian; the difference between Judaism and Christianity, along with how Christianity fit in with the form of government at the time. Judaism became known as a legal religion in the Roman Empire, and even though Christianity stemmed from Judaism it did not have the same protections and many were persecuted for their beliefs [2]. Christianity was officially given legal status in 313 C.E. In 325 C.E. The Council of Nicaea was called to decide the formal beliefs of Christianity [2]. These beliefs stated that there was only one god. God sent his son Jesus down to Earth to be crucified among humans. Three days after his death he rose from the dead to ascend into the heavens. This leads Christians to believe that they are gifted with an eternal life, even after their death. The council also solidified the belief in the Holy Spirit. One of the beings of God and Jesus in the Holy Trinity. Their final belief is that Jesus will return to judge those who are living or dead to see who can enter God's kingdom [3].

The Bible is a Holy Scripture that explains the history of the Earth from the very beginning to the spread of Christianity in the first century A.D.. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have gone through changes over the centuries. Through new publications, to the King James bible in 1611, and the discovery of new books later on [4]. The Old Testament is the first part of the Christian Bible. It was translated by Christians from the Hebrew Bible. It talks about the origins of the world and the accord between God and the ancient people of Israel. The New Testament is the second part of the Bible. It was originally written in Greek and eventually translated to other languages, and it speaks on the life and teachings of Jesus with his original followers, along with the founding of the Christian Church.

In the beginning, Rome didn't pay a lot of attention to Christianity as it was viewed as a harmless practice posing no threat to their current religious teachings. However, as the movement spread, this idea began to change. The Christians started refusing to worship any other god. They even refused, "the conventional emperor worship of the deified Augustus" which was a requirement to all Romans [5]. Christians began meeting in secret and only those who were initiated could attend. Rumors began to spread that Christians were drinking the blood and eating the bodies of small children during their assemblies. This eventually led to the persecution of the religion. The first widespread persecution of Christians did not happen until the city of Rome burned down, and it was pointed at them. Even with the persecutions, Christianity continued to spread. In fact it was said that they made the movement stronger [5]. The Christian Church entered a stage of underground movements in the West of Europe while the East was never subject to persecution or hiding. In Egypt the Christians faced the persecutors and practiced their religion openly. Egypt became the first "seat" of Christianity after Jerusalem [5]. Even in modern times the oldest copies of the New Testament were found in Egypt. Christianity spread so rapidly throughout

Egypt due to the religion and its practices being so similar to Ancient Egyptian religion. The very first Christian School of Theology was built in Alexandria and its mission was to formulate Christian Theology. Hercules, the patriarch of Alexandria, was the first ever individual to take the title of Pope. This title then caught on and began to spread especially in the East. It was declared that every priest in the East would take the title, however in the West the title was reserved for the Bishop of Rome [5]. It was in the fourth century that Christianity finally became a tolerated religion and by the end of the century it had become the State Religion of the Empire. Once Christianity was a tolerated religion it allowed Christians from different lands to speak to one another about the religion, this uncovered a division between Christians as not all of them agreed on certain aspects of the religion. This was due to different cities claiming different doctrines. As religion grew in popularity people started adapting different versions of the religion to fit their community.

As time passed Christianity moved from a public practice to also being a private practice. People began taking the religion into their households. This leads parents to bring their children into the religion. Raising them in the church, teaching them the bible, and shaping them to be Christians. Growing up in an environment such as this could have a large impact on the children. Not only does the church create a space that children want to be a part of, it also fosters the need for them to share their experiences. The methods of the church can have a vast impact on the mentalities of the children. This impact could be both positive or negative.

A study performed by Daniel Edward Stockum showed that four practices- mutual

support, vulnerability, forgiveness, and accountability- proved to create a sense of community in the church. The church creates a sense of belonging. This can increase “one’s attachment” to their church if these four things are practiced [6]. However, this attachment cannot take place without the sense of belonging. While some tests have found that there is a connection between a single one of these practices and a sense of belonging, it is seen that when all four are practiced the feeling strengthens [6]. The Bible also urges Christians to participate in all of the practices. God desires for his children to experience the fullness of life through Him and His church [4]. Christians believe that God will lead them to their best life. This instills the need to not disobey Him as that could “diminish” their life in one way or another [6]. Through this, being in the church creates community. Belonging is a fundamental need of all humans [7]. The need to belong is part of human biology. The brain and the immune system prioritize things such as food, shelter, and water. However, belonging is just as important for people as it tells the body you are not only physically safe, but also biologically safe; it provides people with social safety [7]. When one feels a sense of belonging it allows them to lean on the people around them. This is what creates the community. A community is a group of people that can provide support for each other. They can help one another find their identities as they share beliefs and values [8]. Community is crucial as it allows people to step away from their feelings of loneliness and stress. It helps people feel as though they are a part of something bigger [8].

If one refers to the formal definition of a goal, an aim or desired result, something as easy as going to get gas after work before heading home can be seen as one. However, for this paper’s sake, that is not the kind of goal that will be referred to. In this paper, a goal will be viewed as something that is wanted that will be difficult to achieve, and will not be accomplished until much later in life, something that will take a long time to accomplish. Reaching a goal can be hard. To achieve a goal one must create new behaviors, this is what makes reaching them so difficult

Reference [9]. But why is implementing new behaviors a struggle? It's because of the reinforcement learning cycle, which plays a crucial role in the dopaminergic reward system. Old behaviors have been rewarded in the brain numerous times, that's what makes them so easy. However, new behaviors haven't been rewarded yet, making them harder to do and to continue [9]. At the same time, building these new behaviors is much easier for children than it is for adults. It's scientifically proven that children and young adult brains are much more impressionable than adults are. For example, researchers have found that environmental "determinants" such as repeated exposure to something can cause kids to get involved with it, and that they are more likely to be susceptible to it than adults [10]. This makes creating habits much easier for children since their neural pathways are still forming. This is why when children are raised within a religion, religious concepts like prayer are so easily learned. Children learn from those that surround them such as their parents [11]. So when children are raised in a religious household these habits, such as prayer, seem natural as they have seen their parents do them.

The psychological reason for people to set goals is that they long for purpose and direction. Purpose is powerful in the brain. Science has shown that people who lack a feeling of purpose are more likely to get depression, suffer from anxiety, abuse substances, and experience feelings of loneliness [12]. The opposite goes for people who feel as though they have a purpose. Purpose is a "central component" of a good psychological state, leading to "optimal well-being and human development" [12].

While there is a great amount of research done on belonging and how it builds community, along with setting goals and the brain chemistry behind it, there is a gap in researching how both of these things affect children in a religious setting; specifically, within Christianity. There are many papers that pave the way to this topic; none have specifically connected the two when dealing with the age range of 6 to 17 year olds. This topic is so important as it is so prominent in the world today. Christianity has become the largest religion in the world and it affects so many people.

2.Methods

For this project there will be two groups of participants. Group One will be children ages 6 - 17 who were raised in the Christian church, still go to church (on a regular basis - a minimum of 2 times per month), and consider themselves to be Christians. They will have to be a denomination of Evangelical Protestantism (Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Reformed/Calvinist, Lutheran, Anglican) or nondenominational. Group Two will be children ages 6 - 17 who were not raised in the Christian church, they don't go to church, and don't consider themselves to be religious. This project is being conducted because of the need to understand how the church impacts kids and shapes their mentalities when looking to their future. It's the need to understand the sway the church has and how much influence it has on these children. This project will take a long time to conduct but through the interviews, it should shed light onto the situation. The materials needed for this study are as follows: list of interview questions, a computer, a camera and a microphone. The procedures for this study are: find a person who fits the criteria of one of the study groups (could be through talking to people, going to a church, finding people the researcher knows, people in the researcher's work or school, etc.), get the person's permission to be involved in the study, have the person sign the liability contract, give them a liability contract for their parents to sign, get a way to contact the person and send them a message asking for available interview times,

schedule the interview, meet for the interview, set up equipment, interview the person, at the conclusion of the interview thank the participant for their time and remind them that their response will be anonymous, look over footage and answers to the questions, analyze the data; being the participants responses. Do this for every participant individually. Analytic strategies for this project include immersion in data, identifying significant statements, and synthesizing them into themes. Documentation was filed to show that this project is ethical and that there are no risks for participants. It showed all questions that will be asked to each participant and the forms they will have to sign to participate.

Phenomenology being the chosen method means that there will only be qualitative research. The goal of phenomenological research is to explore the essence of the experience. This requires in-depth data collection; however, it is non-numerical as the participants will be answering questions about themselves and their religion. This method relies on interviews and observation to gather descriptive information about the participants' lived experiences. Due to the use of this method, there is no statistical analysis, meaning no quantitative data will be collected. Statistical analysis is not appropriate for this research question since it focuses on the understanding of people's personal lived experiences, not generalizable data. Instead of statistical analysis, this research method uses thematic analysis in order to find patterns within experiences. While this research method works great for this project, there are some limitations. This method takes a large amount of time. This could cause issues getting large amounts of participants. Since each interview will take roughly twenty minutes and every participant has to be interviewed independently, this could lead to the participant groups being quite small. Small interview groups will impact the scope of the research. All experiments and interventions are the in-depth interviews being conducted which is why phenomenology is perfect for this project. Data will be collected through interviews. Each participant will be subject to a set of questions based on if they were Christian or not religious. Their answers will be collected through video and through written responses from a scribe (the researcher). The participants will be collected from a number of churches as well as the researchers' school and people in the researchers area. Each participant will be told about the project and asked if they would like to participate, if they say yes then they will be given the consent forms to sign and an interview will be scheduled. If they say no, they will simply not be in the project. All participants and their remarks will remain anonymous as in the paper they will not be named and no footage will be released where their faces can be seen or where their names are mentioned. Potential bias in the data collection is that the researcher does not practice a religion nor do they believe that any religion is the truth or that the Bible is real. This could create a subconscious bias as the researcher did not grow up in the church and their parents do not practice religion. The research project will begin in December and go through mid March.

Another researcher could reproduce this study with all the same methods if they so pleased. This project is going to take a long time. The data provided in this study will not fully answer this question. The conclusion will begin to scratch the surface of the issue at hand; however, to fully answer this question, many years of research will need to take place. All necessary data points are properly provided. There is enough information to allow someone else to conduct this research. If someone were to replicate this experiment they could get the same results as this study; however, due to this topic being controversial, biases can be present and swing/skew data. This could lead to others to not come to the same conclusions.

3.Results

The interviews were conducted in two groups. The first group being Participants A-J, and the second group being Participants 1-7. The interviews led to the following qualitative tables:

Table 1: Religious children's interviews

Participant	Branch	Length in church	Close friends that go to church or youth group	Why your church	Spreading the word about God	Have brought new people into the church	Feelings after church and prayer
Participant A	Nondenominational	Whole life	2-3	Been going entire life, emotional spiritual ties, friends	Yes	Yes	Refreshed, ready to take on the new week, positive attitude, stress free, relaxed, at peace
Participant B	Nondenominational	Whole life	75%	Feels good to go, younger congregation, pastor is active in his speaking	Yes	Yes	Relieved, called out sometimes, conviction kind of thing, connected to God, good.
Participant C	Nondenominational	Whole life	25-50%	Reality check, feel good, focus on the important things	Yes	Yes	Happy, connected, honest, at peace, calm
Participant D	Nondenominational	2nd grade	100%	The people, going for a while	Yes	Yes	Relaxed, calm, good, positive all the time, really like

							worship and learning new things about the bible that relate to spirit life or actual life
Participant E	Nondenominational	Whole life	6	Community, makes me happy	Yes	Yes	Amazing, love it, fills my cup, released, at peace, exhausted, time with God slows things down
Participant F	Lutheran	Whole life	10+	Know a lot of people there	Yes	Not yet	Good
Participant G	Nondenominational	Whole life	2	The community	Yes	Yes	Better human, relieved, weight come off of me
Participant I	Nondenominational	Whole life	50%	God, pastor speaks of history with the bible	Yes	Not as much as I should or want to	Greatful, at peace, sad sometimes but mostly happy
Participant J	Nondenominational	Whole life	50%	Know a lot of people there	Yes	No	Connect w/ people, peaceful, more energy

Caption: This table shows the responses of all religious participants to the bringing questions/ideas of the interview. It starts with basic questions such as denomination and why they go to their church. It also shows if the church has asked them to bring in new people. It holds baseline information which should help with the first half of the research question.

Table 2: Religious children's interviews

Their goals	Plan on facing challenges	Does religion influence the goals they set for themselves?
Spread Jesus, preach the gospel into my kids, God's faithful servant	Prayer and faith, God's servant, "he will use me to give him all the glory"	Yes
Executive at a public company, Georgia for undergraduate, UPenn for grad, have land in Texas, a wife and two kids	Perseverance, pray, ask for help, let god know how things go	Yes
Doctor, get married, have a family, bring more kindness to the world	Not isolate myself, make sure I have a community I can rely on, also on myself, guidance from god	Yes
Family, continue my sport into college, using my gifts I've been given to produce a well benefiting career	Support from friends and family, pray	Yes
Be a man of god, lift up others	Help from others, having trust that when hard times come I just have to trust god	Yes
Financially stable, good life, nice family	Open mind	Yes, I pray a lot, god watch over me and assist me and give me the belief I can get out of complications
Well traveled, live different place, family, experience	Bracing myself for a lot of student loan debt, get a job and save money	How I plan to raise my kids
Do good in school, grow relationship with God	Persevere	100%, I don't want to be a bad person, revolve around christ
Book editor	Not worrying too much, taking it one step at a time	Yes

Caption: This is a continuation of *Religious children's interviews table 1* but it covers their personal goals for the future and if their religion plays a part in them. This table holds more information relating to the second half of the research question.

Table 3: Religious children's interviews

Optimistic about their goals	Mentioned giving back to their community within their goals	Key words, phrases, and ideas	Showed guilt	Do if they weren't religious
Yes	Yes	Family, Man of God	Yes	No
Yes	Family	Family, love	Yes	Sleeping around, drugs
Yes	Yes	Community, family	No	No
Yes	Family	Community, love	Yes	Drinking, sleeping around
Yes	Yes	Man of God,	No	Pursue money, success, power, fame
Yes	Family	Family, love	No	No
Yes	Family	Community, family	No	Interested in Buddhism
Trusts that god has a plan, hard for them to make goals bc they know god has a plan	Family	Gods plan, community	Yes	No
Yes	No	Community, family	No	No

Caption: This is a continuation of *Religious children's interviews table 1 and 2*. This table focuses more on the ideas of the interview over the actual questions they were asked. This table helps with the ideas that the research question is trying to get at.

Table 4: Non-religious children's interviews

Participant	Why aren't they religious	Their goals	Plan on facing challenges
Participant 1	Own choice to not be religious	Writer, college, earn knowledge,	Remember why i'm doing it, even if its difficult know its what I want, as long as I work hard ill be proud of myself, remember it's what ive always wanted
Participant 2	Once my parents grew up they stopped practicing so I never did	College, well paying job, have a fulfilling rest of my life, help parents when they're older	Find help when I need it, don't be afraid to meet new people
Participant 3	Not how I was raised	Have a job I enjoy, life surrounded by people I enjoy, just kind of chill.	Pushing through it and having a support system
Participant 4	"I need to prove something through reasoning," early access to the internet and a lot of that is not religious	Architecture, start my own firm, run a marathon, bench 225, straight A's, owning a house if I can, getting married	Community support, knowing when to rest, asking for help, making a lot of money.
Participant 5	Guilt in my family around religion, dont agree with bible and they things surrounding it, I believe science	Astrophysicist, nobel prize, family, happy, discover something, good money, work for NASA	Mindset, positive outlook, always a way to fix bad situations
Participant 6	When I was a baby my parents were gonna put me in the church and my parents went to the church and it was right after Obama got elected and the preachers was mad about that so they left	Become rich, travel the world, be a doctor	Face them head on, keep going, yolo, dont give up

Participant 7	Wasn't raised with religion and my views are more mixed so one religion doesn't fit	Be happy	Diving into it and head on
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Caption: This table is the first of the Non-religious interview results. It holds the outcomes of the actual questions they were asked. This table is used as a comparison to the religious participants' answers and helps with the second half of the research question.

Table 5: Non-religious children's interviews

Optimistic about their goals	Mentioned giving back to their community within their goals	Key words, phrases, and ideas	Showed guilt
Yes	No	Passion, knowledge	No
Yes	Yes (Parents)	Work hard, knowledge, support system	No
Yes	No	Perseverance, support system	No
Yes	Yes (Family)	Support system, family	No
Yes	Yes (Discovery)	Science, mindset	No
Yes	Yes (Healthcare)	Knowledge, passion	No
Yes	No	Happiness, open	No

Caption: This is a continuation of *Non-religious children's interviews table 1*, however this one focuses on the ideas behind the interview rather than the questions that they were asked themselves.

The broad demographic for this study was kids ages six to seventeen. Within this demographic, two groups were formed. The first group had to be Christians specifically non-denominational or a branch stemming from Evangelical Protestantism (Lutheran, Baptist, etc.). They also had to have grown up religious and both parents had to be Christians. The parents should also be in the same branch or come from the same stemming. The second group was kids who weren't of any religion, their parents weren't religious, and they didn't grow up religious.

All participants were first contacted, whether they were found through the researchers friends or friends of a friend, and they were asked if they would be willing to participate in the research project. They were given a quick run down of what it consisted of and then the researcher waited on their responses. If they responded with a yes and they were religious they were asked if they were Christians, what branch they were a part of, and if their parents were the same religion. If all their answers fit the requirements (being Christian, non-denominational or a branch stemming from Evangelical Protestantism, and their parents being the same) interviews were then scheduled. For the non religious kids they were asked if their parents were religious at all and then interviews were scheduled if they met the requirements (parents could not be religious). Once interviews were scheduled the participants would be met with. Once at the interview the participants were read the consent form and it was given to them to be filled out. Then the researcher would begin the recording and start asking questions. While the participants answered all their responses that were relevant to the question were typed into a google doc. When the interviews were over the recording would be stopped and added to a photo album in the researcher's phone. Once all participants' interviews were completed they were compiled into tables.

Some of the limitations are the number of participants that were interviewed, as the sample sizes were small. There is also an uneven number of participants in the two groups. Only one of the participants considered themselves to be Lutheran while all other participants were considered non-denominational. One participant, while they considered themselves to be Christian, they did not fully believe in God, but rather the life and teachings of Jesus. This makes them an outlier. The biggest limitation of this project was the time constraints. There was very little time to conduct the research itself, which led to the sample sizes being so small. Scheduling the interviews was also a difficult endeavor as kids are very busy and are typically bad at scheduling things in their free time. Implications for this research would be that all of the religious participants stated their churches ask them to bring new people in. While most of them said their religion did not stop them from doing the things they wanted to, they still felt that their religion partook in the goals that they set for themselves. All religious participants also mentioned either their community or their family in their interview. While some religious participants showed guilt through their interview, not a single participant in the non-religious group showed any signs of guilt. While most religious kids said that when facing challenges to get to their goal, they would put faith in God, a lot of non-religious participants said they would work hard or push through. However, participants from both groups mentioned having a support system around them.

The research question is answered through this research by the questions provided in the tables. Every participant in the religious group mentioned how their church asked them to bring new people in. They also all mentioned how they talk to others about God. All of them also responded that they believe their religion influences the goals they set for themselves. There is also a noticeable difference between the religious participants and non-religious participants when looking at what their goals are and how they plan on facing the challenges that come with them.

4. Analysis

As stated above, Daniel Edward Stockum found that church creates a sense of belonging, which in turn creates an attachment to one's church. The research that has been conducted in this study backs up his claim. When participants were asked why they go to their church in specific, many responded with talking about the community

or the people there. Many mentioned how they have been going to their church for a long time and have continued to stay there as well, showing that they've built the feeling of belonging. This allows them to feel more comfortable in their church and therefore they are more open to learning or being influenced [13].

This makes it easier for the churches to use children to spread the word of God. When interviewing the participants, all answered that their churches encouraged them to talk to others about God. This is the church influencing the kids in hope of them spreading the word. When they were further questioned and asked if they did spread the word, all of them answered yes, proving that the churches influence them and their lives. This question was taken further when they were asked if their church encourages them to bring new people into the church. Every religious participant responded with a "yes". However, when they were asked if they had brought new people, only 67% of them responded with a "yes". Although two of the "no's" mentioned that they plan on bringing someone eventually.

All religious participants were also asked if their goals were influenced by their religious practice, to which 100% of participants responded with a "yes" (Table 2). This shows how the church does change how they go about their lives, and how it is centered in their religion. These participants were asked if there is anything they would do that they don't do now (because of their religion's belief system or practice) that they would do if they weren't religious. 44% of them responded with a "yes", many of them mentioning chasing fame or getting into things such as alcohol or drugs. While the church doesn't explicitly state not to do these things, they feel it goes against their faith, continuing to shed light onto how they perceive people outside of their church. When they were asked about their opinions of people who don't practice or aren't a part of their religion, no one had anything against them. Some expressed sadness (Participant J), but otherwise, everyone either mentioned being neutral or still loving them. The religious participants were also asked if they thought that people who practiced Christianity in their life would be more successful, and 89% of them responded with a "yes". While most believed it depended on the goals you had in your life and that God doesn't promise anything, they still found Christians to be most likely to be more successful.

When talking to participants about how they plan on facing the challenges that come with achieving goals, there were a couple of recurring themes. For the non-religious participants, many of them mentioned working very hard or pushing through the struggles, emphasizing determination and perseverance. The religious participants on the other hand focused a lot on putting faith in God and trusting that He had a plan. While the two groups differed on this, they both had a theme in common. Many participants in each group talked about having a support system around them, whether that be friends, family, colleagues, etc. This shows how community is a big part in everyone's lives, as well as how people who do practice Christianity are more likely to set their success apart from themselves, trusting that God will have things His way.

One trend that was found throughout the interviews was guilt. When asking questions such as, "how often do you read the Bible?" or, "how often do you go to church?" many responded with, "not as much as I should." This feeling of guilt, or feeling like they need to be better, tied heavily with how religious they were. The not as religious participants did not feel this guilt as they practiced more loosely, as they became more religious the more guilt was expressed; however, there was one participant, the most religious one that was interviewed (Participant

E), and they had no guilt. This can be attributed to the fact they did the most for their religion. They go to church three days a week, read their Bible very frequently, leaving them feeling like they were doing what they needed, thus eliminating the feeling of guilt that other participants were experiencing. This is very different from the non-religious participants as not a single one expressed any feelings of guilt.

It has been shown that the church deliberately encourages their members to spread the word of God and to bring new people into the church. Since they have found community in the church they easily follow these requests. It is seen that being in the church affects kids' mentalities as they influence the goals that they make for themselves. They also reported different answers of how to achieve goals than kids who weren't religious. Thus proving that the church does cause them to have different mentalities when planning future goals.

The fact that the sample sizes of this project were small is a big limitation. Having a bigger sample size would help improve accuracy of the research and reduce the effect of outliers. There were two main outliers in this study. The first being Participant G, since their beliefs were slightly different (as stated above), they felt differently about others who didn't practice Christianity. They were more open to change and practiced very loosely. The second outlier was Participant F as they were the only Lutheran. While Lutheranism is very similar to non-denominational, there are still some differences. This could impact their perception on specific things such as priorities. There is also a missing participant who was not added into the tables, Participant H. This participant was unable to be included due to them being 18 at the time of the interview, even though they had agreed to participate before their 18th birthday. There were also an uneven number of participants within the study. The religious participants outweighed the non-religious ones, making it harder to reduce risk of accidentally having a biased lean in the research.

Another huge limitation in this research was the time constraints. This, paired with trying to interview minors with very busy schedules, made it extremely difficult to get interviews planned and completed. If there had been more time for the interviews to be conducted, then the sample sizes would have been much larger and even. Therefore, if there was more time, it would have been very beneficial to the research study. However, this research does help us understand how the church is using kids to spread the word of God and how the church is influencing the goals they set for themselves.

5. Conclusion

The research question throughout this project has been: how is the Christian church using children from the ages 6 to 17 to spread the word of God, and how do children who were raised in the church have different mentalities when looking at life goals than those who weren't? Through this research it has been found that the church encourages children to talk to others about God and to bring new people into the church. This effectively conditions the kids to bring up God in conversations and convince friends, family, etc., to come to their church. The church also has an impact on the goals kids set for themselves. While being religious didn't make them more optimistic, they do believe they will be more successful because of it. The mentalities of the religious participants and the non-religious participants differed when deciding how to face the challenges that came with their goal (as seen above). This is what makes all the difference as it is what will determine if they are successful or not. This

is a very important fact to take into consideration when looking at the effects of being religious or when looking into kids' mentalities. While the limitations of this project could cause over generalization due to the short time to complete the research and the small sample sizes, it is a good start to understanding how being religious, specifically Christian, affects kids' mentalities around facing challenges and setting long term goals.

As previously stated, the study by Berkman in 2019 shows that kids create habits more easily than adults do. This is why the church encourages kids to talk about God so much. It's a behavior children can easily learn and repeat out in the world. As the church mentions it more, the more the kids think about it, leading them to actually perform the task of sharing the word of God. This ties into Allen's study from 2022 as shown above, as it discusses how belonging is a need for all humans, and when they find it, it makes them more comfortable. This in hand makes kids more easily influenced. The church works to make kids more comfortable, and this can be seen as many of the religious participants mentioned community in their interviews. Creating this space for them helps the church influence them more into spreading the word of God. All of these studies connect to this research which has helped fill the gap of understanding the impact of the Christian church on young kids from the age of 6 to 17.

This research helps pave the way for future studies on religion, community, and the minds of kids. This research could potentially help communities realize the impact that they have on the kids within them. They could use this to teach members how to set goals and how to achieve them, potentially increasing the future success rates for children within the community.

The next steps for this project would be to gather more participants and conduct more interviews. This would increase the sample sizes of each participant group, creating less of a generalization and making it more accurate in its results. It could also be expanded to other branches of Christianity, seeing how they measure up to one another, and if they have the same impact. Another possible next step would be to speak to pastors within the participants' churches and get a new perspective on how they influence children, not only with spreading the word of God, but within their everyday lives as well. This would expand the scope of the research and create a deeper understanding of the question at hand.

6. Appendices

Interview questions for Christian children:

Are you a Christian?

What branch of Christianity are you a part of?

How long have you been a part of the church?

Were you raised religious?

Are/Is your parent(s) Christians?

How often do you go to church?

Does anything keep you from attending as much as you'd like to?

Would you go more often if you could?

- If so,
- Why?
- How much more would you go?

Did your parent(s) grow up in the church?

What is your family dynamic?

How much of your family attends church?

Do you go to a religious school?

- What denomination is it?
- What religious things do you have to do for your school?

Do you attend youth group?

How many of your close friends attend youth groups or church?

How does going to church make you feel?

What church/churches do you go to?

What keeps you coming back to your church?

How does being a christian play into your everyday life?

What is your opinion of people who don't attend church or don't practice your religion?

Do you tell others about God?

- If so, why?

Does your church encourage you to talk about God to others?

Does your church ask you to bring new people into the church?

Do you bring new people into the church?

How often do you read the bible?

What do you feel is the difference between practicing your religion and having faith?

What does it mean to have faith?

How influential is prayer in your daily life?

How do you feel after you pray?

Is your religion something you discuss with your friends outside of church?

Why do you think there are so many different types of religion?

Do you think that other religions are missing anything that yours isn't?

What are your long term goals?

- Why?

Why is this goal important to you?

How do you plan on getting there?

How are you planning to face the challenges that come with achieving this goal?

Does your religious practice influence the goals you set for yourself?

Do you believe that people who practice your religion will be more successful in their life?

Do you think your goals would be different if you didn't practice the religion that you do?

Is there anything that you would pursue if you weren't in the church?

Do your religious views keep you from doing anything that you might otherwise explore if you weren't religious?

Are there any ministry requirements in your religious practice?

- If so, what are they?

Do you think your current religious practice will stay the same, increase, decrease as you get older?

- Why is that?

Is your religious practice important to you or do you participate because it is a family requirement?

Interview questions for non-religious children:

Are you religious?

Why aren't you religious?

Are/is your parent(s) religious?

Is anyone in your family religious?

Did you grow up religious?

Have you ever considered joining a religion?

How would you describe your faith?

What do you think about christianity?

What are your long term goals?

- Why?

Why is this goal important to you?

How do you plan on getting there?

How are you planning to face the challenges that come with achieving this goal?

Do you think your goals would be different if you practiced christianity?

Do your views keep you from doing anything that you might otherwise explore if you were religious?

Do you think your current view on religious practice will stay the same, increase, decrease as you get older?

- Why is that

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