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THE EFFECTS OF USING ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES IN SERMONS

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THE EFFECTS OF USING ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES IN SERMONS

By

DAVID PIERRE

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education
in Organizational Leadership

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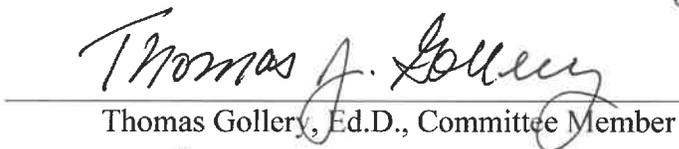
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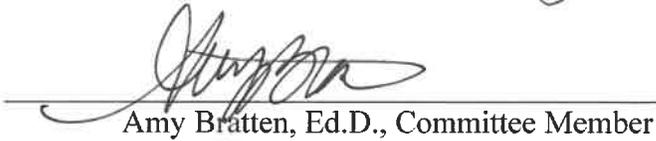
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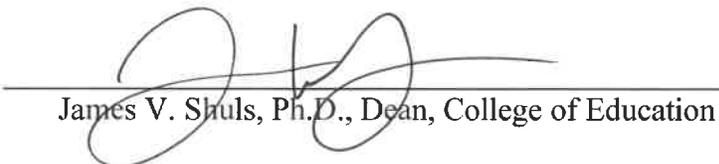
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DEDICATION

I want to honor, first and foremost, my heavenly Father for His steadfast love and guidance throughout my life. I genuinely believe that I can do nothing without God (John 15:5); I attribute this work and its completion to Him. I dedicate this dissertation to my loving and supportive wife of 34 years, Marie R. Pierre, who has proofread most of my doctoral assignments. To my beautiful children, two daughters-in-love, and two grandchildren, David A. Pierre Jr., Dwight E. Pierre, Keshia D. Pierre, Dorna Pierre, Tiffany S. Pierre, Amarah R. Pierre, and Dwight E. Pierre II, I dedicate this work. I dedicate this work to my mother, Marie Odette Pierre, who has been a constant source of love. I dedicate this work also to my late father, Darius A. Pierre, who had been an inspiration and an exemplary role-model to my siblings and me. To my brothers, sisters, brothers-in-love, sisters-in-love, nephews, nieces, grand-nephews, grand-nieces, uncles, aunts, and cousins, I dedicate this work. You have helped mold me into the person that I am today. Finally, I dedicate this work to my On Fire Life church family, Apostle David Allen (my spiritual father), the Cluster International Ministries' pastors, and all my friends who have prayed and supported me through this phase of my life and impacted my life along the way. I am forever grateful.

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to assess the effects of adult learning principles (ALP) in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth. Sermons have been central to the spread of Christianity. Given the significant role sermons play in parishioners' spiritual formation and growth, examining sermons' effectiveness is crucial. One-hundred-and-twenty participants responded to the researcher-created research instrument. An initial screening was first conducted with the study's data; as a result, 13 participants were removed from the data set for complete non-response to the 15 survey items. Three research questions and hypotheses were formally stated to address the study's topic. Over 95% of study participants agreed with the statement that their pastor's sermons contribute positively to their spiritual formation. No significant difference in perception was found between university students and church members that their pastor's use of adult learning principles had contributed positively to their spiritual growth. All 15 learning principles represented in the survey items reflected statistically significant mathematical relationships. Three principles (content, language, and scenarios) surfaced that reflected very strong to huge relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual formation.

Keywords: Adult learning principles, andragogy, transformative preaching, spiritual growth, adult education, adult learners, and Christian education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sermons have been an integral part of religious gatherings for as long as there have been religions (Joseph & Thompson, 2004). Sermons have also been central to the spread of Christianity. Preachers use sermons to educate, encourage, inform, or build up the faith of congregants (Stuart, 2011). Additionally, clergymen and clergywomen deliver their sermons to persuade and inspire change in the listeners' attitudes and behaviors (Joseph & Thompson, 2004). Sermons are inarguably the primary tool used to propagate religions and Christianity as well as transform church congregants. Holland (2006) stated that throughout church history, the pulpit, through the use of sermons, has been the "rudder for the church" (p. 207). Given the significant role sermons play in the spiritual growth of church attendees, this study will assess the effects of using adult learning principles (ALP) in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth.

Most pastors use the lecture format for sermon deliveries. The problem with this format is that listeners tend to remain inactive and uninterested during lecture-sermons (DeVille, 2012). A remedy to lecture-sermons is the recent shift in many fields in education, including biblical education, to a more learner-centered approach and the use of ALP (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). The philosophy at the core of the learner-centered approach is andragogy, which focuses primarily on adult learners. This recent shift could be beneficial to Christian educators, such as pastors, Sunday-school teachers, and lay-ministers. However, most pastors and lay-ministers lack

the necessary knowledge to facilitate adult learning in a way that would engage and motivate the listeners as well as foster transformation in the listeners' day-to-day lives (DeVille, 2012).

Background of the Study

Stuart (2011) examined sermon design and delivery through the prism of adult education. Stuart argued that sermons have minimal influence on congregants unless pastors use a different paradigm to educate congregants—a paradigm that incorporates adult learning theories. Stuart maintained that Bible colleges and seminaries must teach their students how to incorporate adult education theories in sermon design and delivery. Once pastors understand that congregants are adult learners, pastors should integrate ALP to drastically impact sermon design and delivery (Stuart, 2011).

DeVille (2012) focused on some key characteristics of adult education that enhance sermons and congregants' learning. DeVille (2012) conducted a qualitative study, in which he interviewed five pastors and members of five focus groups. Each focus group had nine congregants, ranging from 25 to 60 years of age. The researcher also observed the worship services at five churches. Several key themes emerged out of DeVille's study (2012). Sermons must be applicable, informative, realistic, challenging, and comprehensible, and preachers must be authentic. DeVille (2012) agreed with Stuart (2011) concerning the need for Bible colleges and seminaries to train students to incorporate ALP in sermon preparation and delivery. DeVille (2012) and Stuart (2011) targeted areas of this current study but did not delve into this study's main thrust: whether using ALP would lead to a greater likelihood that parishioners' lives would be spiritually transformed.

Defining Adult Education

The term adult education has different meanings to different people. At least three meanings surfaced from the literature reviewed. The first meaning of adult education focused on any learning activity that an individual undertakes after primary and secondary school (Javed, 2017). Using Javed's (2017) definition, classes taken at colleges, universities, and technical schools count as adult education. Attending an apprenticeship program also counts as adult education.

Adult education is also seen as a field (Clardy, 2005). For example, a university dean or a college professor works in the field of adult education, and one could say the same for pastors as well (Stuart, 2011). The third meaning of adult education, which is the focus of this study, is the process educational institutions, organizations, or churches go through when designing training classes for adult learners to achieve determined learning outcomes or objectives (Clardy, 2005). The purpose of learning outcomes is to gauge whether students have met the goals of a course.

Brief History of Adult Education

Education has been a part of humans' experience from the beginning (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). The ancient Greeks were the first to utilize the term *pedagogy* to describe children's education (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). However, education theorists did not devise a term to define adult education until the middle of the 19th century (Clardy, 2005). Alexander Kapp was the first to theorize that children and adults learned differently; therefore, Kapp coined the term *andragogy* to describe adult education (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). A worldwide shift started to transpire in how educational theorists viewed adult education, which was becoming learner-centered (Javed, 2017). Several early education theorists, such as Mezirow, Freire, and

Knowles, built on Kapp's work and released several seminal articles on adult education (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Javed, 2017).

Jack Mezirow was best known for his transformational learning theory, emphasizing the "cognitive process of learning" (Javed, 2017, p. 53). Critical reflections play an essential role in the transformative process of learners (Javed, 2017). The following key factors are also essential in an adult learner's transformative process: examining, questioning, validating, and revising the adult learner's perspectives (Javed, 2017). Other factors, such as the learner, the educator's role and professional development, and the affective learning decisions, have to be considered in transformative learning (Javed, 2017). The learners' development was at the core of the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). Several Christian researchers advocated for transformative learning to increase the effectiveness of preaching and enhance spiritual growth (Carrell, 2009; Javed, 2017; Wickett, 2005).

Much of Paulo Freire's work in adult education was grounded in the social concept of "conscientization" (Stuart, 2011, p. 124). Freire's (1972) primary objective with adult education was to fight social injustices and oppression. Freire's (1972) vision of adult education was for adult educators to identify with adult learners. Essentially, in Freire's (1972) mind, educators would work alongside learners or in the same condition as learners. The educators would not be over the students but amongst the students (Stuart, 2011).

Malcolm Knowles built on Mezirow and Freire's foundations (Clardy, 2005; Javed, 2017; Stuart, 2011). Knowles (1975) argued that adult educators should adjust the way they teach, and so should adult learners also adjust the way they learn. Although Knowles did not coin the term andragogy, he brought it to the forefront (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016).

Lecture Presentation

The lecture presentation is the teaching format adopted by most adult educators over the past few centuries (Stuart, 2011). The speaker, in a lecture presentation, does most, if not all, of the speaking (Stuart, 2011). Knowledge flows in one direction, from educators to learners (Varao-Sousa & Kingstone, 2015). Students have minimal interaction in a lecture presentation, and the interaction of church congregants during a lecture-sermon is also minimal.

Denominations tend to determine the level of interactions church congregants have during sermons, which may be limited to “Praise the Lord” or “Amen” (Jenkins & Kavan, 2009; Stuart, 2011). Unfortunately, the lack of interaction in lecture presentations creates passivity in learners (Stuart, 2011).

Lai (1995) argued that the lecture presentation is oppressive due to its failure to use self-direction. Educators who utilize the lecture format fail to take advantage of adult learners’ capacity for self-direction (Lai, 1995). Lai (1995) asserted that repeated lecture presentations eventually train adult learners to become less self-directed and teach people to become passive and dependent on the educator. Some prior studies have shown that students’ attentiveness tends to suffer during lecture presentations (Jenkins & Kavan, 2009; Stuart, 2011; Varao-Sousa & Kingstone, 2015).

Recently, most higher learning institutions have turned to a learner-centered environment in the classroom (Stuart, 2011). Colleges and universities have incorporated several tactics, such as group discussions and role-play, to garner the students’ participation in the learning experience (Hagen & Park, 2016; Wickett, 2005). Holland (2006) noted that the lecture presentation was “no longer in the ascendant” (p. 210). The lecture presentation quickly became a dying breed in higher learning institutions (Holland, 2006).

Notwithstanding the decline of lecture presentation use in higher education, lecture-sermons remain the most prevalent method of communicating the gospel to church congregants (Stuart, 2011). Stuart (2011) asserted that it might be challenging to move away from the lecture-sermon since most church congregants have become accustomed to this teaching format. New believers who have not yet been encultured with the traditional way preachers deliver sermons may be more apt to embrace a shift from the traditional format (Stuart, 2011). Stuart (2011) warned that any adjustments to the current sermon delivery format must receive congregants' buy-in.

Varoa-Sousa and Kingstone's (2015) assessed the impact of lecture presentation on memory, mind drifting, interest, and motivation. The researchers asked each participant to attend a live lecture presentation and watch a video presentation (Varao-Sousa & Kingstone, 2015). The researchers tested students during the lectures for mind wandering, and at a later time, the students completed a memory test (Varao-Sousa & Kingstone, 2015). The findings indicated that students' memory increased in the live lecture presentation, but the lecture format had no impact on mind wandering (Varao-Sousa & Kingstone, 2015). Furthermore, students' motivation and interest improved in the live lecture presentation than in the video presentation (Varao-Sousa & Kingstone, 2015). Varoa-Sousa and Kingstone's (2015) study showed that the professor's presence increased students' memory, interest, and motivation. One cannot adequately determine the reliability and validity of Varoa-Sousa and Kingstone's (2015) results since it was the only reviewed literature focused on the lecture presentation. Other researchers, such as Sousa (2017), noted that lecture presentations have a negative impact on memory and motivation in the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Andragogy, one of the most prevalent adult learning theories, will be the theoretical framework for this study. Andragogy assumes that the adult learner is the leading player in the classroom (Javed, 2017). Forrest III and Peterson (2006) noted that andragogy is not a teaching technique; andragogy is instead a philosophy that serves as a guide to adult educators.

Andragogy is established on the following six basic principles: self-direction, prior experiences, readiness to learn, orientated learning, problem solving, and motivation to learn (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017).

Learners are Self-Directed

The first andragogical principle is that adult learners can self-direct their educations in ways that children cannot (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017).

Unlike children, adult learners choose to go to school; therefore, they learn best when the concept of self-direction is maintained in the classroom (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Adult students are viewed as “partners in the educational process” (Hagen & Park, 2016, p. 175). The andragogical classroom does not differ from the real world, where students can make moral and ethical choices that impact their lives (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Recent research has corroborated self-directed learning effectiveness in adult education (Hagen & Park, 2016).

The Learners’ Prior Experiences

The second andragogical principle entails the idea that adult learners can lean on their past experiences (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017). Prior experiences should be the foundation for adult education since adult learners build upon what they already know (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). For example, a carpenter may have little reason to learn about space rockets, whereas an astronaut would be very eager to learn about

space rockets. However, a carpenter would most likely want to learn about doors or kitchen cabinets installation. Hagen and Park (2016) asserted that the purpose of adult education is to build on prior knowledge and experiences. An adult learner also learns to value his experience and see it as an essential and foundational resource (Javed, 2017).

Readiness to Learn

The third andragogical principle is that adult learners focus more on learning simply because they are ready to learn (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017). Unlike children who do not choose to go to school, adult learners choose to enhance their understandings of particular topics or subjects. Adult students will be motivated and exert the necessary effort with the presence of a need to learn, regardless of the subject matter (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Teachers can encourage readiness to learn in adult students by making the lesson relevant (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Students are less engaged in learning when the lesson is irrelevant. One's readiness to learn positively impacts learning and retention (Hagen & Park, 2016).

Orientation to Learning

The fourth andragogical principle is that adult learners are oriented to learning (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017). Adults learn because they want to address specific problems; as a result, adult learners enter the learning process with a mindset centered on performance or problem-solving (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). This principle is predicated on the idea that adults view learning as a means to improve their abilities to deal with ongoing practical problems (Hagen & Park, 2016). A child learns to acquire knowledge, whereas an adult learns for a specific application (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Adult learning becomes

effective when knowledge is presented in the context of real-life applications (Hagen & Park, 2016).

Two Additional Andragogical Principles

While many educators embraced the first four principles of andragogy, some critics also emerged (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017). The critics' main point of contention was Knowles' assertion that teachers can either be andragogical or pedagogical (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Some critics disproved Knowles' assertion by showing that andragogy was also influential among pre-adult populations (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Javed, 2017). As a result, Knowles revised the relationship between the terms pedagogy and andragogy to be "a spectrum ranging from the subject-centered pedagogy to the learner-centered andragogy" (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006, p. 115). Consequently, Knowles also added two more principles to andragogy in 1984 and 1989 (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; Hagen & Park, 2016; Javed, 2017). The fifth and sixth andragogical principles are adults need to know why they learn something and "adults are driven by intrinsic motivation to learn" (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006, p. 116).

Problem Statement

Over the past millennia, sermons have taken many forms. For example, Jesus' favorite form of preaching was the "sermon dialogue" (Stuart, 2011, p. 118). Most preachers have adopted the sermon lecture over the past century as the main sermon format, also known as expository preaching (Stuart, 2011). The preacher, in expository preaching, assumes congregants are greatly concerned about the meaning of a biblical passage; therefore, the preacher offers a historical exposition of the text and ends with some "appended practical application" (Holland, 2006, p. 210). Church congregants have minimal participation during an expository sermon. The

preacher develops the sermon topic, writes the sermon's central themes—some preachers prefer to write-out the sermon word-for-word, and delivers the sermon. Any interactions between a pastor and congregants are denominationally based and may be limited to “Praise the Lord” or “Amen” (Stuart, 2011). The lack of interaction between the speaker and congregants hinders the effectiveness of a sermon (Stuart, 2011).

Several other factors affect the effectiveness of a sermon. Boredom during a sermon is one of those factors. Bored congregants lack the motivation to follow a sermon (Hermans & Mooij, 2010). Boredom tends to heighten when a sermon is not catered to the congregants' needs. According to Stuart (2011), parishioners give more value to a sermon when their needs, issues, and questions are considered during the sermon's development and preparation. A sermon that fails to relate to the audience's needs negatively impacts its effectiveness. Pastors would be wise to take their congregants' needs into account during sermon developments, preparations, and deliveries to increase sermons' effectiveness. Previous studies failed to provide clarity on how much congregants' needs factor in sermon developments. This quantitative study aims to assess the effects using ALP in sermons has on parishioners' spiritual growth.

Previous studies have examined some key factors that pertain to sermon effectiveness. Stuart (2011) explored sermon development and preparation through the lens of ALP, such as andragogy. Stuart (2011) also noted that adult learners are self-directed and should, therefore, be engaged. Along the same line, DeVille (2012) explored sermon effectiveness through the prism of adult learning. The researcher sought to understand sermons characteristics that enhance learning in believers. DeVille (2012) concluded that sermons should be comprehensible, challenging, and applicable, and the preacher must be seen as authentic. Joseph and Thompson (2004) focused on whether increased sermon “vividness would lead to increased memorability”

(p. 217) and found a relation between vivid language in a sermon and memorability. Vivid information provoked passion and emotion (Joseph & Thompson, 2004). Lai's (1995) work is influential, as he was one of the first scholars to have connected Knowles's concept of andragogy to preaching techniques used by clergymen and clergywomen. Lai (1995) noted that most churches used teacher-centered and lecture-sermons to educate church congregants. Lai (1995) contended limiting church teachings of theological concepts to a teacher-centered and lecture-oriented format only serves to "perpetuate spiritual immaturity and oppress" the awareness of church congregants (p. 4). The researcher offered a more participative approach, which he called a "praxis cycle" (Lai, 1995, p. 24). Pastors or church educators should use dialogue to help believers grow and mature in faith.

Several studies explored sermon effectiveness (DeVile, 2012; Jenkins & Kavan, 2009; Joseph & Thompson, 2004; Stuart, 2011). Other studies noted that church attendees' needs should be at the forefront of the pastors' minds (Jenkins & Kavan, 2009; Stuart, 2011). No published study has directly explored the effects the use of ALP has on the spiritual growth of the parishioners. This study will be unique in exploring whether using ALP would lead to a greater likelihood that parishioners' lives would grow spiritually.

The results of this study will benefit first and foremost the parishioners, as well as pastors, Bible colleges, and seminaries. Assuming ALP improve parishioners' spiritual maturity, pastors will learn to place a greater emphasis on employing these principles in sermon preparations and deliveries. This study's results may lead Bible colleges and seminaries to realize that their graduating students are not fully prepared to be effective preachers. Bible colleges and seminaries may need to develop courses accentuating using the principles of andragogy in sermons. Pastors are adult educators, and as such, must use ALP in sermon development and

deliveries. Congregants will, arguably, be the greatest beneficiaries of this study. Sermons geared toward congregants' needs translate into less boredom and more edification, retention, and spiritual growth.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study will be to assess the effects of ALP in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth. Spiritual growth will be generally defined as a congregant's increased biblical knowledge and understanding coupled with the ability to steadily apply the Word of God. Spiritual growth will be evaluated from the perspective of each participant.

Overview of Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

The proposed study will elicit the perceptions of study participants regarding pastors' use of ALP. The proposed study is quantitative and non-experimental design. The methodology incorporates a survey research approach using a Likert scale. The benefits of researcher detachment along with the potential for generalization of finding and replicability promote the quantitative approach to research as a very desirable, meaningful option (Lichtman, 2013). Moreover, Denscombe (2010) noted, the selection of a survey research methodological approach offers the benefits of flexibility and generalizability as well as the potential to generate a considerable amount of data on the topic or the construct in question.

Sample/Sample Selection

Data, for this proposed study, will be obtained from a convenience sampling of between 85-120 participants, aged 18 and older, all members of four denominational and non-denominational churches and chapel-attending students at a faith-based university in Central

Florida. All participants will be consistent, church-attending adults. Participants will respond to the survey on a voluntary basis.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting this study, the researcher will seek approval from the institutional review board (IRB). The researcher will also acquire the necessary approval from participants. After receiving the appropriate approvals, the researcher will email participants a link to the survey, disclose the study's purpose, assure the voluntary nature of participation, and obtain informed consent. Additionally, the researcher will assure participants' anonymity and confidentiality by assigning numbers to participants. Records will remain secured on a password-protected computer that will be stored in a locked office. The researcher will also take precautions regarding the participants' mental and emotional safety. Survey questions will be formulated in such a way to minimize risk and mental or emotional discomfort to the participants.

Research Instrumentation

The study will feature a researcher-created instrument that will incorporate a 5-point, Likert-type survey. The use of a 5-point scale has been validated by Dillman et al. (2014). These researchers proposed items ranging from "*strongly agree*," "*agree*," "*uncertain*," "*disagree*," and "*strongly disagree*" (p.159). This format of scaling was part of Rensis Likert's original vision for scaling and continues to be used in most researcher circles (Willits et al., 2016).

The instrument's validation will be addressed through a three-step process. In the first step of the validation process, the data anticipated to be produced through the use of the study's research instrument will be addressed through a subjective, content validity judgment process presented by Burns and Grove (2005). The process of using subject matter experts (SMEs) in the

area of the study's construct will provide the themes that will represent the foundation of the survey items on the study's research instrument.

The second stage of the validation process of the research instrument will be conducted through the administration of a pilot study version of the survey to 15 to 25 study participants. The Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique will be used to evaluate the internal reliability of pilot study participant response to items on the survey and an alpha level of $\alpha = .70$ to $.80$ will be sought for validation purposes in the pilot study stage. In the event the desired internal reliability level is not achieved in the second phase of the validation process, item analysis will be conducted in an effort to refine or even remove items that do not contribute to the validation of the study's research instrument.

In the third stage of research instrument validation, the Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique will be used to assess the internal reliability of participant response to survey items once study data are collected and formally recorded. An alpha level of $\alpha \geq .80$ will be desired for internal reliability and final instrument validation purposes.

Study Procedures

The online survey platform Qualtrics will be used to host the survey, create the survey links, and capture the survey data. Pastors of the four participating churches will announce and distribute, in their respective church, the survey link; the university chapel leaders will do likewise. Once data collection is complete, results will be downloaded into a file and analyzed by SPSS software.

Research Questions

The following represents the research questions for this study:

1. To what degree will study participants perceive their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth?
2. To what degree will study participants differ in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by participant category?
3. Which adult learning principle used by pastors is most predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study will be as follows:

1. To what degree will study participants perceive their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth?

H_0 : Null hypothesis. There will be no statistically significant effect for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

H_a : Alternative hypothesis. There will be a statistically significant effect for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

2. To what degree will study participants differ in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by participant category?

H_0 : Null hypothesis. There will be no statistically significant difference for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by category of participant.

H_a : Alternative hypothesis. There will be a statistically significant difference for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by category of participant.

3. Which adult learning principle used by pastors is most predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants?

H_0 : Null hypothesis. None of the adult learning principles used by pastors will be predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants.

H_a : Alternative hypothesis. One or more of the adult learning principles used by pastors will be predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants.

Statistical Power Analysis

Statistical power analysis using the G*Power software (3.1.9.2, Universität Düsseldorf, Germany) was conducted for sample size estimates needed for statistical significance testing purposes in advance of the proposed study. The study's statistical power analysis was delimited to large and medium anticipated effects, a power $(1 - \beta)$ index of .80, and a probability level of .05.

In research questions one, a one-sample t test will be used for statistical significance testing purposes. An anticipated medium effect ($d = .50$) would require 27 participants and 12 for a large effect ($d = .80$) to detect a statistically significant finding. In research question two, a t test of independent means will be used for statistical significance testing purposes. An anticipated medium effect ($d = .50$) would require 102 participants and 42 for a large effect ($d = .80$) to detect a statistically significant finding

In research question three, a multiple linear regression statistical technique will be used for associative and predictive purposes. An anticipated medium effect ($f^2 = .15$) would require 85 participants and 40 for a large effect ($f^2 = .35$) to detect a statistically significant finding.

Overview of Analyses

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques will be used to address the foundational analyses and the findings associated with the study's three research questions and hypotheses. The probability level of $p \leq .05$ will be adopted as the threshold level for findings considered statistically significant and the magnitude of effect for study findings will be evaluated and interpreted using the effect size conventions offered by Sawilowsky (2009). Study data will be analyzed and reported using the 28th version of IBM's *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)*.

Preliminary Analysis

The study's missing data will be assessed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n) and percentages (%) will represent the primary descriptive statistical techniques to be used to evaluate the extent of the study's missing data. The randomness of missing data will be addressed using the Little's MCAR statistical technique and MCAR values of $p > .05$ will be considered indicative of sufficient randomness of missing data.

Internal reliability will be addressed using the Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. Foundational descriptive analyses will be conducted using frequency counts (n), percentages (%), mean scores (M), standard deviations (SD) and Cohen's d values. The foundational analyses will be conducted in a preliminary, segue fashion for illustrative and comparative purposes.

Data Analysis by Research Questions

In research question one, the one-sample t test will be used to address the statistical significance of finding for study participant response within the respective research questions. The magnitude of effect (effect size) will be tackled using the Cohen's statistical technique. The qualitative interpretation of numeric effect size values will be addressed using Sawilowsky's (2009) specific conventions of interpretation (small, medium, large, very large, and huge) of interpretation.

Research question two is comparative in nature, focusing upon mean score perceptions of the two categories of study participants represented in the study's sample. The statistical significance of mean score differences in the comparison featured in research question three will be addressed using the t test of independent means. The assumptions associated with the t test of independent means will be assessed through statistical means. The assumption of homogeneity of variances will be addressed using the Levene F statistic. The assumption of normality will be addressed through the interpretation of skew and kurtosis values.

Research question three is associative and predictive in nature utilizing four independent predictor variables. A multiple linear regression model will be used to assess predictive viability of the eight independent variables in research question four. Predictive model fitness will be assessed through the interpretation of the ANOVA Table F value and an F value of $p \leq .05$ will be considered indicative of a viable predictive model. Variable slope (unstandardized β) values will represent the means by which the statistical significance of independent variables will be interpreted. Values of $p \leq .05$ will be considered statistically significant for variable slope values. Standardized β values will be utilized as the basis for effect size measurement and for comparative purposes. All assumptions associated with the use of multiple linear regression will

be assessed either by statistical means (independence of error, multicollinearity, normality of residuals, and significant outliers) or visual inspection (linearity and homoscedasticity).

Limitations

The following four points are this study's limitations. First, study participants will be limited to members of four denominational and non-denominational churches, located in the southeast region of the United States of America, and chapel attending students at a faith-based university. All participants will be consistent, at least one year, church-attending adults. Next, the meaning of spiritual growth will be limited to biblical knowledge and understanding acquired in sermons and ensuing application of said knowledge. Third, spiritual growth will be subjective as participants will evaluate their own spiritual growths. Fourth, since this study will gather data from a convenience sampling, its results may not be "generalizable to the entire population" (Mills & Gay, 2016, p. 148).

Definition of Key Terms

The following words and phrases are key terms for the study.

- **lecture-sermons:** The most prevalent method of communicating the gospel to church congregants where the speaker does most, if not all, of the speaking (Stuart, 2011).
- **adult learning principles:** Theories that have been associated with adult learning (Stuart, 2011).
- **andragogy:** Six philosophical principles that serve as a guide to adult educators (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006).
- **adult education:** The process of designing training courses for adult learners to achieve determined learning outcomes or objectives (Clardy, 2005).

- **transformative learning:** Critical reflections: learners examine, question, validate, and revise their perceptions (Javed, 2017).
- **self-directed learning:** The learner is a partner in the learning process; learners plan, set goals, and evaluate their learning experiences without others' help (Hagen & Park, 2016).

Significance of the Study

Lai (1995) argued that lecture-sermons, the most predominant method of communicating the gospel, are ineffective and oppressive. Given the critical role of sermons, this study is significant for several reasons. Bible colleges and seminaries may come to realize that their graduating students are not fully prepared to be effective preachers; therefore, these institutions may have to develop courses accentuating the need to use ALP in sermons. Preachers will benefit by understanding that they are adult educators, and, therefore, they must learn to incorporate ALP in their sermon preparations and deliveries. Self-directed congregants will become more active and edified during sermons, which will translate into increased spiritual growth. Finally, this study will fill a gap in the scholarly literature on the effects the use of ALP in sermons has on parishioners' spiritual growth.

Summary

The background section focused on sermon design and delivery through the prism of adult education and the lecture-sermons, the most prevalent method of communicating the gospel to church congregants (Stuart, 2011). Lai (1995) noted that repeated lecture-sermons eventually train adult learners to become less self-directed. Andragogy, the theoretical framework that guided this study, is based on the following six principles.

Adult learners:

- are self-directed
- learn based on past experiences
- are ready to learn
- are oriented to learning
- need to know why they learn
- are motivated to learn

The problem statement section covered the ineffectiveness of lecture-sermons and the need to explore whether using ALP in sermons would lead to more spiritual growth in parishioners. The following topics were discussed in the methodology section: research design, study sample, ethical considerations, statistical power analysis, research instrumentation, study procedures, and research questions and hypotheses. Finally, the introduction covered limitations, key terms, and the significance of this research.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to assess the effects of using ALP in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is generally defined as a congregant's increased biblical knowledge and understanding coupled with a churchgoer's ability to apply the Word of God steadily. Spiritual growth was evaluated from each participant's perspective.

DeVille (2012) assessed whether ALP could make preaching more productive by conducting a qualitative study in which he interviewed five pastors individually and five focus groups comprising of nine churchgoers in each focus group. DeVille also observed praise and worship services at the churches where the five interviewed pastors served. DeVille used a constant comparative method to identify the following themes about sermons' effectiveness. The results of the data indicated that sermons must be applicable, challenging, convicting, inspiring, comprehensible, entertaining, interesting, informative, compelling, and scriptural, and that preachers must be seen as authentic. DeVille suggested that these results should lead to improvements in sermon qualities and deliveries as well as have positive effects on listeners.

Stuart (2011) examined the impact that applying adult educational principles in sermons had on sermon design and delivery. Stuart's goal was to provide an alternative way of looking at sermon design and delivery. Stuart analyzed the theory and practice of homiletics as well as the transformative learning theory and andragogy. Three paradigmatic shifts surfaced from Stuart's

analysis. First, preachers are adult educators. As such, preachers should engage the parishioners before, during, and after a sermon. Second, parishioners are adult learners and should be the starting point of a sermon development. And third, as adult learners, parishioners must be active learners. Stuart suggested that active parishioners' involvement in sermons would revolutionize the traditional sermon format.

Although similar to the current study, neither DeVille nor Stuart addressed the focus of this study—the transformative aspect of sermons resulting from the use of ALP. Knowing the impact of sermons on parishioners is critical because sermons are used to propagate the gospel churchwide. Therefore, sermons play a crucial role in the congregant's spiritual transformation.

This literature review contains three main divisions: a historical background of andragogy as well as the practical aspect of andragogy, including its use in academia, business and industry, and professional or continuing education; the adult learner and educator, setting a proper learning climate, and preachers as adult educators; and, finally, the transformative qualities of sermons and sermons' memorability and retention.

Andragogy in Action

Andragogy is a philosophical guide to adult educators, not a teaching method. Malcolm Knowles and the early supporters of andragogy, such as Kapp, Mezirow, and Freire, did not offer a practical step-by-step guide of implementing andragogy but, rather, key theoretical frameworks of andragogy (Henschke et al., 2013). Andragogy is widely accepted, and different settings may require a different application of andragogy. This section offers a historical background of andragogy, a summary of the critics of this approach, and a review of some educators' attempts at practicing andragogy.

Historical Background of Andragogy

Alexander Kapp (1833) was the first to coin the term andragogy. Kapp, a German high school teacher, did not clearly explain the term andragogy but theorized that adult learning transpires through life experiences and self-reflection, not just through teachers' presentations (Henschke et al., 2013). Kapp argued that adult and children learn differently, hence the need for andragogy over pedagogy. After Kapp coined the term andragogy, the theory remained dormant for the next century until several German scholars revived the term in the 1920s and added some structures to andragogy (Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2013). Even with more structure to andragogy, the idea of it becoming an adult education discipline was still in the distant future.

The resurgence of andragogy came with the first writing of Malcolm Knowles on this subject in 1968 entitled *Andragogy, Not Pedagogy*. Unlike pedagogy, known as the art and science of helping children learn, Knowles (1980) defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. Knowles' (1968) concept of andragogy was initially based on the following two main principles: adult learners are autonomous and self-directed, and a teacher is seen as a learning facilitator and not just a content presenter. Knowles coined the term andragogue to describe teachers/facilitators and the andragogue emphasizes the choice of the learner over the control of the expert teacher (Henschke, 2011).

Knowles (1975) published a guidebook for learners, in which he argued the way to implement andragogy is through self-directed learning. In the guidebook, Knowles (1975) offered nine self-directed learning competencies, two of which stated that the adult learner is non-dependent and self-directed and possesses the capacity to relate to "teachers as facilitators, helpers, or consultants." Noting that learning is for adults and schooling for children, Knowles

(1980) argued that adult learners tend to resist pedagogical strategies, such as quizzes, exams, assigned readings, and lectures.

Andragogy has six main assumptions (see Figure 1). Knowles published the first four andragogical assumptions in 1980 in the revised edition of *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*. The following are Knowles' first four andragogical assumptions:

- a. Self-Concept: Adult learners are self-directed, autonomous, and independent.
- b. Prior Experiences: Adults tend to learn based on their past experiences.
Knowles argued a person's past experience could be a deep resource for learning.
- c. Readiness to Learn: Adults are ready to learn the things they need to know.
- d. Orientation to Learning: Adults have a propensity to learn for immediate applications instead of future uses. Adult learning tends to be life-focused, task-oriented, and problem-centered.

Using Knowles' first four andragogical assumptions as a foundation, Mezirow (1981) developed the following twelve concepts to enhance the adult learner's self-directed capabilities:

- Gradually reduce the adult learner's dependency on educators.
- Know how to use all available learning resources, including other people's experiences.
- Help adult learners determine their learning needs.
- Help adult learners establish the learning outcomes.
- Choose and organize learning based on current problems and understanding.
- Nurture the adult learners' decision-making abilities.

- Improve the adult learner’s judgment and awareness through the use of criteria.
- Nurture a “self-corrective reflexive approach to learning” (Henschke et al., 2013, p. 8).
- Improve the adult learner’s problem-posing and problem-solving ability.
- Strengthen the adult learner’s self-concept ability.
- Accentuate the adult learners’ “experiential, participative, and projective instructional” (Henschke et al., 2013, p. 9).
- Making the moral distinction between helping adult learners improve their decision-making versus encouraging them in making specific decisions.

Figure 1

Knowles' Six Assumptions of Andragogy



Knowles and other scholars continued to develop andragogy; for example, Knowles added a fifth andragogical assumption in 1984. This fifth assumption is associated with reasons for learning and states that adult learners do not focus on content alone but on practical uses (Knowles, 1984). Knowles published the fourth edition of *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* in 1990, and in this edition, Knowles added the last andragogical assumption, which is related to the learner’s intrinsic motivation to learn and states that an adult’s motivation to learn is internal rather than external.

Table 1

Learning Process Design Elements for Adult Learners

Preparing the Learners	Before the learning experience ever begins, offer the learners all appropriate information about the learning content.
Climate Setting	Establish a climate, both physical and psychological, that is conducive to learning. Among other things, the physical climate must be comfortable. The psychological climate incorporates several aspects, such as trust, mutual respect, collaboration, and support.
Mutual Planning	Learners should be involved in the learning activities planning with facilitators.
Diagnosis of Learning Needs	Learning needs are identified through mutual evaluation.
Formulation of Learning Objectives	Learning objectives are determined through joint negotiation between learners and facilitators.
Learning Experience Design	The learning experience is also determined through a collaborative work between learners and facilitators.
Learning Plan Execution	Learning plans are most effective when the following activities are included—experiential techniques, independent study, and inquiry projects.
Evaluation	Educators must assess how much learning is taking place and whether learners are performing differently in life.

Besides the six andragogical assumptions, Knowles (1995) also formulated eight design elements of andragogy, including a wide range of activities that transpire before, during, and

after the learning experience. Table 1 represents a summary of Knowles' eight andragogical design elements. These eight elements were the closest that Knowles has gotten to offering a practical guide to implementing andragogy.

Additionally, Knowles (1987) formulated the following four questions to help structure every learning experience:

1. What content should be covered?
2. How should the content be organized?
3. What order should be followed in presenting the content?
4. What is the most effective method to convey the content?

Under the andragogical approach, adult learners and facilitators work together to answer these four questions, as this approach is a partnership between learners and facilitators. However, under the pedagogical approach, teachers are solely responsible for answering these questions.

Andragogy Critics

Although andragogy is widely embraced, andragogy does, however, have some critics. As presented earlier, a core foundational concept of andragogy is that adults learn differently than children. Some critics in the field of education do not believe adults and children learn differently. According to Henschke et al. (2013), many educators view both adults' and children's learning as a continuum and not a dichotomy. Furthermore, Mohring (1989) claimed that Knowles's definition of pedagogy as the art and science of the way children learn is etymologically inaccurate. Mohring contended that although the term pedagogy originates from the Greek word *paid*, which means child, pedagogy was always intended, from its inception, to represent education in general. The term pedagogy was never designed to be used exclusively for learners of specific ages. Additionally, Mohring argued that the term andragogy is sexist since it

derives from the Greek term *aner*, which means adult male. According to Mohring, andragogy fails to incorporate female learners. Mohring suggested a different term, *teleiagogy*, as a replacement for andragogy since the meaning of teleiagogy incorporates adults of both genders. Mohring further stated that the current effort of eliminating sexist terms from the English language should also include the term andragogy.

Kenyon and Hase (2001) asserted that although andragogy helps improve adult educational practice, it failed to deliver a real self-determined learning. Kenyon and Hase noted that andragogy, as it was practiced, remained a teacher-centered approach. The rapid change in society and the explosion in information require the adoption of an educational practice that is fully learner centered. Kenyon and Hase suggested a move to heutagogy, which, in their view, is conceptually authentic self-determined learning. According to Kenyon and Hase, heutagogy meets the needs of workplace learners in the 21st century.

Other critics argued that the theory of andragogy was uncritically embraced; therefore, its use is not in the best interest of adult learners and educators (Henschke et al., 2013). One of the critics' primary concerns with andragogy is its lack of clear and viably defined outcome variables (Clardy, 2005). In his 1975 publication, Knowles implied that one possible outcome of andragogy is that self-directed students absorb more things and learn better than non-self-directed learners. Even if one were to agree with Knowles' inference that andragogy leads to more and better learning, the critics' concern remains valid. Knowles failed to define better learning and, therefore, better learning remains unachievable or unattainable. Knowles should have specified some key metrics of achieving better learning.

Andragogy in Practice

Knowles always intended for andragogy to be more than a set of assumptions. Right after Knowles published his first article on andragogy in 1968, he started applying its principles in Girl Scouts leadership training (Henschke et al., 2013). Although it was a new concept, the Girl Scouts organization enthusiastically embraced andragogy (Knowles, 1968). Knowles encouraged Girl Scouts leadership to become more engaged in their own learning. Since Knowles' first attempt at applying andragogy with the Girl Scouts, countless people in academia—researchers, scholars, and educators—and businesses have researched and attempted to practice andragogy in diverse settings and applications.

Knowles (1969) implemented andragogy in a Boston University graduate class. Using the self-directed learning approach, Knowles divided the class into groups and charged the students to take responsibility for learning the subject matter as much as possible. Each group actively engaged in learning the various course sections. The students managed to learn all of the course content through self-directed group learning. Knowles successfully implemented andragogy in that graduate class.

Suanmali (1981), a doctoral student under the tutelage of Mezirow, conducted an exploratory study examining the relationship agreement of 10 of Mezirow's 12 core concepts (see pages 5-6) and self-directed learning. Suanmali excluded Mezirow's core concepts eight and 12 from the study. Suanmali sent the Andragogy in Practice Inventory (API), which was developed by Mezirow, to study participants, 174 professors and educators. Respondents allocated 100 points between the study's 10 concepts. Mean scores were used to determine each concept degree of importance.

Participants agreed that all 10 included concepts were related to self-directed learning. Additionally, the following themes surfaced from Suanmali's study: reduce dependency, help use learning resources, help define learning needs, take responsibility for learning, organize relevant learning, foster decision-making, facilitate problem-posing and problem-solving, and offer a supportive learning climate. Educators could use these themes to help enhance self-direction in adult learners. These themes are aligned with andragogy's primary goal of self-directed learning. Suanmali's study validated the relationship between Mezirow's core concepts and self-directed learning.

Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby (2013) conducted a study in a graduate class in social work to evaluate whether andragogy helped enhance the learners' capacity to obtain and retain knowledge. The graduate class consisted of 24 females; ages ranged from 27 to 63. Students were given a quantitative/qualitative instrument to evaluate the course. The instructor also cooperated with the students in formulating the learning climate and activities and the instructional strategies. One of the learning activities implemented in the course was the Oprah Awards, a weekly ceremony recognizing students who presented additional material to enrich the class experience. Though it was optional, 90% of the students gave additional material to the class beyond their assignments. The Oprah Awards demonstrated two main andragogical factors: each learner is a resource for learning and self-direction. The results demonstrated that andragogy helped learners acquire information in an ideal way and also helped with retention.

Knowles (1985) noted that discovery learning is the "essence of andragogy," which stands in stark difference to the information-based approach, which is pedagogical (p. 47). Prasetya and Harjanto (2020) examined whether using discovery learning helped improve learning activities and outcomes. Teachers do not deliver learning in discovery learning; instead,

students discover learning through problem-solving in the learning process. Thirty-two students participated in the study. Data were collected through the use of interview, observation, and multiple-choice achievement test. Prasetya and Harjanto used the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle had four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This approach required students to perform activities, identify a problem, gather and process data, and arrive at a conclusion.

In the first cycle, the results showed that 63% of the students were in the active category and 69% achieved the learning outcomes. Neither percentages met the 80% target goal. In the second cycle, 97% of the students were in the active category and 87% achieved the learning outcomes, exceeding the 80% target goal. Prasetya and Harjanto concluded that knowledge obtained through discovery learning was deeply personal and memorable.

Stephen (2012) conducted a qualitative study on how educators applied the six andragogical principles (Knowles, 1980, 1984, 1990) in a correctional educational GED program. Stephen interviewed nine participants for his research: a principal, four adult learners, and four adult educators. The researcher interviewed study participants and observed teacher practices in Intermediate, Pre-GED, and GED classrooms. Triangulation was used to verify findings credibility. Key themes emerged during the interview process, which resulted in the development of a descriptive and an observation matrix. Data results indicated that the six andragogical principles played a significant role in inmates' learning. Stephen found that inmates' self-directedness and maturity substantially improved learning in correctional adult learners. Many inmates, regardless of age, tend to be ill-prepared mentally to handle pedagogical-like instruction. Using andragogical strategies helped increase the inmates' learning desires and achieve the best learning outcomes.

Pastoral Role and Seminary Education

One must distinguish teaching from learning. Teaching is teacher-centered where information flows from the teacher to students; learning, on the other hand, is learner-centered and the emphasis in learning shifts from the teacher's work to the learners' assimilation of the material. Changes are expected in the learner as learning occurs. Simply stated, learning leads to change.

This distinction between teaching and learning is essential because teaching does not always lead to learning. Much teaching has taken place in the church; one wonders whether learning is occurring at the same pace. This division focuses on the preachers' role, adult educators, and the effectiveness of seminaries at preparing pastoral students.

Preachers' Role

Leach (2016) examined how senior pastors could effectively increase biblical knowledge in a local church. The study idea surfaced when Leach, a senior pastor at that time, quizzed a few congregational members that he believed to be spiritually mature. The quiz questions consisted of more commonly known biblical stories. Surprisingly, only one or two church members correctly answered the majority of the questions. As a result, Leach surmised that although the Bible is central to Christianity and congregants' faith, few have a proper working knowledge of the Bible.

Leach (2016) employed a mixed methods research methodology for his study. Data were collected from senior pastors and eight focus groups, with each focus group consisting of four to five members. Eight senior pastors were interviewed, and a survey was sent to focus group members. Twenty-nine additional lead pastors were surveyed online through Survey Monkey. Both surveyed and interviewed pastors listed teaching and preaching as critical to improving

biblical knowledge. Alternatively, the focus group members believed children's ministry, small groups, and preaching were critical to biblical literacy.

The following six main findings surfaced from Leach's study:

1. Small groups are essential to increase biblical knowledge.
2. Children's ministry is an essential factor in improving biblical literacy.
3. Most focus group members have a basic understanding of these three biblical truths: the reality of sin, the need for salvation, and that congregants are saved through Jesus' death and resurrection.
4. Pastors are instrumental in fostering and supporting biblical literacy.
5. Pastoral accessibility is a significant factor in improving biblical literacy.
6. Improving biblical literacy is not the direct focus of most pastors.

Jentile (2021) explored the role of pastoral leadership in a case study of the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA). The study focused on creating a pastoral leadership theoretical model of BCSA local pastors. Jentile utilized a theoretical research methods and reviewed literature and relevant articles and books on pastoral and biblical leadership. Jentile concluded that the biblical pastoral model suggests that a congregational pastor be, first and foremost, a leader who is a visionary, an excellent steward, and a spiritual warrior. Second, the biblical pastoral model indicated that a local church pastor must be an excellent teacher. Jentile suggested that BCSA pastors shift from controlling to empowering. Jentile believed that one reason a pastor fails to empower congregants is that empowering leads to "yielding one's own power" (p. 8). Finally, the biblical pastoral model suggested that a pastor must also be a follower. Jentile argued that leaders must lead and follow, which implies that pastors should be teachable.

Grusendorf (2017) examined pastors' role in leading large churches. Grusendorf first defined the meaning of a large church. According to Grusendorf, the number of congregants for a large church has shifted over the years from 200 to over 400, with a megachurch having at least 2,000 congregants. Grusendorf concluded, through relevant literature examination, that the role of large church pastors requires that they lead through vision casting, relationships with other leaders, and effective communication. Large church pastors must also establish an excellent connection with the community and represent the church within the community. Grusendorf identified two challenges and one opportunity of leading a large church. First, large church pastors must guard against creating psychic prisons, which entails constructing a "version of reality that competes with actual reality" (Grusendorf, 2016, p. 111). Second, pastors must guard against allowing the church to become a domination tool, which transpires when the church places its needs and goals above the people's needs and goals. Finally, managing complexities helped large church pastors create organizational growth.

Adult Educators

Javed (2017) focused on three key concepts that help meet the adult learners' educational needs and goals. The first concept highlighted was the transformative learning theory, which Javed argued helps adult learners bring meaning to their lives. Andragogy was the second concept, and Javed noted that andragogy engaged adult learners with the learning process structure and experience. The third concept that Javed (2017) noted was professional development, which "helps adult educators transform their theory and practice of teaching and learning through reflecting on their assumptions and expectations and by revising them" (p. 51).

Javed argued that adult educators must learn to develop and grow professionally: adult educators cannot maintain the same teaching practices when changing theories in adult learning

dictate otherwise. Effective adult educators learn to examine and question the effectiveness of their teaching techniques. Part of this examination requires adult educators to stay current with changing theories.

Javed also highlighted a third key concept: transformative learning, which indicates ways adult learners can find meaning in their lives. Adult learning becomes transformative when learners examine, question, validate, and revise their perceptions. Although learning leads to change, not all change leads to transformation. Furthermore, critical thinking is an essential characteristic to translate learning into transformation. Although transformative learning is a secular theory, its use in church, with a biblical perspective, can further the transformative process in congregants' lives.

Seminary Effectiveness at Preparing Pastoral Students

According to Mafico (2017), the primary purpose of seminaries is to train and equip pastors for ministry in the church. The purpose of seminaries is different from that of theological or divinity schools, which focus on theological matters rather than practical issues. Mafico asserted that seminaries have deviated from their core focus: seminaries spend more time on theoretical, theological issues, which leave pastoral students ill-prepared after graduation. Seminaries have not adequately train pastoral candidates to teach and impart practical biblical knowledge to parishioners. Equipping pastors to lead and teach their parishioners is critical; therefore, seminaries must train students to preach engaging and nurturing sermons. Mafico suggested that the schism between the church and seminaries is due mainly to a lack of involvement of seminaries' leaders in the church. Mafico believed that seminary professors must serve as mentors and seminaries must offer practical classes. Biblical knowledge, which Mafico

defines for congregants as the ability to know God in such a way that they feel like God is tangibly speaking to them as they read the Scripture, should be practical and implementable.

Jeynes (2012) examined the functioning of America's Christian seminaries and argued that most seminaries focus on theological accuracy and intellectual development while departing from historical practices. Jeynes contended that the seminaries' shift in focus is not aligned with future ministers' main objectives or their congregations. Furthermore, Jeynes noted that seminaries' emphasis on theological education is detrimental to the effectiveness of the gospel ministry. Through a literature review, Jeynes concluded that the graduating seminarians are ill-prepared and lack the spiritual depth to provide adequate guidance to congregants. Seminary education differs from other higher institutions because seminarians are called to be Christ-like. Spirituality should be at the roots of seminary education. Jeynes offered six practical teaching suggestions; one of which is that seminary professors should teach seminarians how to have a prayer and worship life.

Boyle and Dosen (2017) sought to determine whether the seminary curriculum provided adequate preparation to graduating pastors on their role as parish leaders. According to the researchers, the parish priest's role is to "lead, sanctify, and teach in the name of the diocesan bishop" (Boyle and Dosen, 2017, p. 109). Proclaiming the Word of God is foundational to the sacramental ministry and the church community. Therefore, as faith educators, the priests should endeavor to develop spiritual growth in congregants. A Catholic school is instrumental in achieving congregants' spiritual development.

Boyle and Dosen contacted 46 Roman Catholic seminaries, as potential study participants, to review the institutions' course syllabi. Eighteen seminaries responded and participated in the study, and 39 syllabi were reviewed. Examples of course titles selected were

Church History, Theology of Teaching and Ministry, Principles of Catechesis, Parish Administration, Youth Ministry, and Ministry of Teaching. Identifying data from the institutions and instructors were removed. The researchers reviewed each syllabus separately using a shared observation protocol. The syllabi were analyzed for the explicit reference, inference, or no reference to Catholic schools, catechesis, and teaching and learning. A majority of the syllabi (86.8%) did not explicitly refer to Catholic schools in the course description. Similarly, 76.3% of the syllabi did not explicitly refer to catechesis in the course description. Likewise, a large percentage (81.5%) of syllabi did not refer to teaching and learning in the course description. Boyle and Dosen believed that these results suggested that, despite the priests' duties of developing parishioners' spiritual growth, Catholic seminaries had offered little content toward preparing priests to achieve their duties.

Effective and Transformative Sermons

Has preaching been unimpactful? Has preaching achieved change in congregants? This third and final division focuses on communicating for change and sermons' memorability and retention.

Communicating for Change

Carrell (2009), in an explorative study, assessed the effectiveness of communication training for pastors. Carrel stated that spiritual change or transformation should be the primary outcome of sermon communication. Although seminaries include homiletics courses in their curriculum, these courses are not the primary emphasis of pastoral education. Lack of sermon preparation in seminary leads to pastors delivering sermons that do not lead to congregants' spiritual growth or transformation. Participants were 46 lead pastors and adult congregants from the participating pastors' churches. The pastors were enrolled in a two-and-a-half-year extensive

communication training program with the determined outcome of teaching the pastors how to preach effectively. A survey was used to measure the transformative quality of sermons' communication. Congregants completed the 20-item survey for pre-testing ($N = 4,541$) and post-testing ($N = 3,023$). Pre-testing occurred four months before the training program and post-testing four months after the training program. The researcher utilized a prepost test design to assess training outcomes, and a transformative quality (TQ) rubric to discern sermons' transformative quality. Sermons were assessed using the TQ rubric six categories: subject; response; content: implementation; content: supporting materials; organization; and delivery. Additionally, each sermon was evaluated through a time-consuming, detailed written analysis by a communication expert. Results indicated that communication instruction positively impacted sermons' transformative quality. Sixty-three percent of congregants perceived that the transformative quality of sermon communication had improved. Additionally, a large percentage of participants responded that they would spend time reflecting on the sermon meaning during the week.

Witherup (2014) conducted a study on preachers' effectiveness to communicate the gospel in the 21st century. The researcher focused, in the first section, on the devaluing of preaching and the steadfast reliance on an outdated homiletical methodology that pastors utilize to communicate the gospel. According to Witherup, the devaluing of the pulpit is due to an emphasis in today's church on leadership, social justice, and missional ministry. Although these characteristics and ministries are desired in the church, they have unintentionally shifted the focus from pastoral preaching. Witherup contended that today's church leaders must prioritize the preaching of the Word just as the early church leaders did.

Additionally, Witherup dealt with the church reliance on the propositional model, a 2,500-year-old homiletical methodology. Witherup noted that the propositional model is a summary of the three-point sermon. A preacher chooses a biblical text, “exegetes the text, comes up with a main point or central doctrine, and, through a series of logical points, attempts to argue that point to be true” (Witherup, 2014, p. 15). One of Witherup’s proposed solutions to remedy the propositional preaching issue is the adoption of the New Homiletic, which is described as an inductive, narrative, and experiential approach. The New Homiletic breathes energy into a sick or ineffective pulpit, shifts focus from *logos* to *pathos*, and is conducive to the hearer.

Gatzke (2006) explored, through a review of literature, preaching in the Emerging Church. Gatzke noted that defining the Emerging Church had been difficult for a number of reasons, one of which was that the Church was still emerging. Gatzke (2006), however, defined the Emerging Church as “a complex and diverse group of people,” from diverse theological perspectives, who mainly agree with missional living (p. 68). Gatzke noted that some emerging churches still use some forms of preaching in their services while others sporadically use preaching. Gatzke advocated for the use of progressional dialogue as the best form of communicating the Word of God. During a progressional dialogue, every church attendee has the opportunity to offer their interpretation of a biblical text. Progressional dialogue is a give-and-take conversation; everyone’s opinion is accepted. The message authority, with progressional dialogue, “rests within the collective of the people, not with the pastor and ... the individuals” (Gatzke, 2006, p. 72). The progressional dialogue entails having an open flow of ideas where the role of the pastor or educator is to primarily steer the conversation.

Holland (2006), a critique of progressional dialogue, believed that the changes in preaching that Gatzke advocated were too radical. Instead, Holland argued for the cessation of

progressional dialogue, which he noted is not preaching as defined historically and biblically. According to Holland (2006), “preaching is public hermeneutics” (p. 207). Only the preacher can duly interpret the meaning of the Word; therefore, only the preacher can communicate the interpretation (Holland, 2006). Holland primarily presented a biblical argument against progressional dialogue but failed to address Gatzke’s view that preaching tends to be boring. Additionally, Holland did not provide better ways to engage the audience or ensure that learning is occurring.

Storytelling

Exploring storytelling’s usefulness in higher education classrooms was the aim of Ehrlich et al. (2020). The researchers claimed that storytelling had been used for entertainment and educational purposes through generations and disciplines. Ehrlich et al. noted that the professors, in previous studies, were the ones telling the stories to enhance students’ learning, but this study focused on the impact of students learning to tell stories. This study used a phenomenological qualitative methodical approach. The researchers recruited the participants, ages 18-24, from two sections of a first-year seminar course. Twenty-four students were enrolled in the first section. Half of the students in the first section completed an online survey. Seventeen students were enrolled in the second section. These students were part of a focus group whose purpose was to help the researchers acquire comprehensive data as well as for data triangulation. Participants were asked to tell a story; however, half of the participants were given a how-to-tell-a-story guide. Survey results indicated that storytelling helps produce knowledge and understanding. Additionally, findings showed that storytelling was a positive experience and facilitated topic engagement. Lastly, results indicated that participants did not need nor want assistance in learning how to tell a story.

Caminotti and Gray (2012) examined the effectiveness of storytelling for adult learners. Caminotti and Gray (2012) remarked that storytelling has “the potential to create longevity of thought, compassion, and even learning” (p. 430). The researchers noted that college and university professors have recently begun incorporating storytelling in their classroom presentations since it helps communicate complex concepts. This study design approach was a review of literature written on storytelling and adult learning. Results from the literature review indicated that storytelling was effective in adult education, which validated the researchers’ view.

D’Abate and Alpert (2017) assessed the effectiveness of storytelling in mentoring. D’Abate and Alpert noted that personal and professional mentors, who help proteges navigate challenging situations, develop skills, or overcome challenges, are all around. The social learning theory was used as this study’s theoretical framework. As part of the qualitative study, D’Abate and Alpert interviewed 39 professionals working in a wide range of industries. The face-to-face interviews resulted in 48 work-related mentoring stories. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Key mentoring functions were identified through a form of hermeneutics using textual analysis. Results indicated that storytelling served multiple mentoring functions, such as teaching, problem-solving, role modeling, encouraging, and motivating. Furthermore, data examination demonstrated that mentors used storytelling more frequently to teach and as role models. D’Abate and Alpert concluded that storytelling was an effective and powerful tool in mentoring adults.

Reimer (2019) explored the effectiveness of storytelling in frangelism. FRAN is the acronym for friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors, and frangelism is defined as evangelizing one’s friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. Sharing the story of Jesus is the essential meaning of evangelism. Reimer (2019) determined that “evangelism is storytelling” (p.

264). Through Scripture and literature examination, Reimer shared three steps for effective frangelism:

1. Pastors need to equip congregants for mission and evangelism.
2. Pastors must encourage parishioners to have a social life, facilitating fellowship.
3. Pastors ought to teach parishioners to share the gospel at the right time, using the right words.

Memorability and Retention

Buchko et al. (2013) examined whether PowerPoint presentations in sermons enhance retention. A slight shift in sermon delivery has led to multimedia technology use in the worship experience. The 342 participants were from a sizeable Protestant church of over 2,500 members, which had been using multimedia technology for 10 years. The survey measurement had 20 questions covering different aspects of the worship experience. Four of the 20 survey questions were explicitly related to PowerPoint effectiveness in sermons. The associate pastor delivered eight sermons over the course of three months. Besides the survey instrument, participants answered questions from a questionnaire after each sermon to test for sermon's retention. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for analysis. The findings demonstrated that PowerPoint slides used in sermons positively affect sermon comprehension, quality, and retention.

Hermans and Mooij (2010) also examined sermon retention. The researchers noted that for a sermon to be transformative, church congregants must retain the message. The setting was a Catholic parish in the Netherlands. Participants listened to two sermons on separate Sundays: one an inductive sermon and the other a deductive sermon, with both sermons lasting about eight minutes. Sermon listeners were then given a questionnaire: 77 of the congregants who listened to the deductive sermon returned the questionnaire while 64 of the parishioners who listened to the

inductive sermon did likewise. The researchers received, in total, 141 questionnaires. According to Mooij and Hermans, data analysis was performed using the six elements of argumentative scheme of Murphy: ground, warrant, backing, qualifier, rebuttal, and claim. Results indicated that church congregants tend to forget the sermon content, although frequent church attendees and those with solid beliefs retained slightly more of the sermon content. The researchers used distinctive methods to measure retention and arrived at the same results: parishioners tend to forget the content of sermons soon after sermon deliveries. Incorporating ALP may help increase sermon retention.

Summary

This literature review covered three main divisions. The first division offered a historical background of andragogy, which was coined by Alexander Kapp and resurfaced through the works of Malcolm Knowles, who developed the six andragogical assumptions. Knowles intended for andragogy to be more than a set of assumptions; therefore, this review included a section on andragogy in action—how andragogy is used in academia, business, and industry, and professional or continuing education. The second division contained literature on preachers' role, adult educators. A handful of the reviewed literature focused on the ineffectiveness of seminaries at equipping pastoral students (Boyle and Dosen, 2017; Jeynes, 2012; Mafico, 2017). The primary purpose of seminaries is to train and equip pastors for ministry in the church, and seminaries must train pastoral students to preach engaging and nurturing sermons. The final division included literature on communicating for change, storytelling, and sermon memorability and retention. Storytelling has received attention for its applications in adult learning, engaging presentations, and mentoring—and is crucial in sermon effectiveness as its power lies in the ability to connect with the listeners' similar or relatable experiences.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to assess the effects of using adult learning principles in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth. Within the context of this study, spiritual growth is defined as a congregant's increased biblical knowledge and understanding coupled with a believer's ability to steadily apply the Word of God. Furthermore, in this study, spiritual growth was evaluated from the perspective of each participant. This chapter contains a report of the essential elements of the study's research methodology.

Description of Methodology

The focus of the study was to elicit study participants' perceptions regarding pastors' use of adult learning principles. A quantitative and non-experimental design was used to address the study's topic and the specific methodology used was a survey research approach. The benefits of researcher detachment, as well as the potential for generalization of findings and replicability, promoted the quantitative approach to research as a very desirable, meaningful option (Lichtman, 2013). Moreover, Denscombe (2010) noted that selecting a survey research methodological approach offered the benefits of flexibility and generalizability as well as the potential to generate a considerable amount of data on the topic or the construct in question.

Research Context

Since this study depended on the honest assessment of study participants, the survey design offered an excellent platform for participants to honestly assess their pastors' use of

andragogy in sermons. The survey design also provided anonymity to participants that personal interviews or observations would not have provided. Additionally, the use of a survey instrument made room for collecting actual data needed for statistical analysis that could be acquired quickly and be generalizable (Mills & Gay, 2016).

Participants

Study participants were accessed from two distinct groups: members of four denominational and non-denominational churches located in the southeastern region of the United States and chapel-attending students at a faith-based university in Central Florida. All participants were at least 18 years old, regular church-attending adults, and had responded to the survey voluntarily.

Research Instrument

The study's research instrument was designed to provide study participants the opportunity to assess their pastors' use of andragogy in sermons. The survey design also ensured a level anonymity for study participants that personal interviews or observations would not have provided. Additionally, the use of a closed-structure survey instrument allowed for collecting a considerable amount of data necessary for robust statistical analyses (Mills & Gay, 2019).

The research instrument featured in the study was the Andragogy Use in Sermons Assessment (AUSA), a researcher-created instrument. The AUSA was comprised of three sections, for a total of 21 questions survey. Included in the first section was the informed consent form, which all participants had to agree with before proceeding to the next section. The demographic questions, a total of five questions, comprised the second section. The remaining 15 questions comprised the third section, which measured different elements of parishioners' perception of their pastors' use of andragogy in sermons.

The AUSA utilized a 5-point Likert scale. The use of a 5-point scale has been validated by Dillman et al. (2014). These researchers proposed items ranging from “*strongly agree*,” “*agree*,” “*uncertain*,” “*disagree*,” and “*strongly disagree*” (Dillman et al., 2014, p.159). This scaling format was part of Rensis Likert’s original vision for scaling and continues to be used in most researcher circles (Willits et al., 2016).

Validity and Reliability of Andragogy Use in Sermons Assessment (AUSA)

The study’s research instrument’s validation was addressed through a three-step process. In the first step of the validation process, the data anticipated to be produced through the use of the study’s research instrument were addressed through a subjective, content validity judgment process noted by Boateng et. al. (2018). The process of using subject matter experts (SMEs) in the area of the study’s construct provided the themes that represented the foundation of the survey items that were foreseen to be represented on the study’s research instrument.

The second stage of the validation process of the research instrument was conducted by administering a pilot study version of the survey to 25 study participants. The Cronbach’s alpha (α) statistical technique was used to evaluate the internal reliability of the pilot study participants’ response to items on the survey. An alpha level of $\alpha = .70$ to $.80$ was sought for validation purposes in the pilot study stage of the research instrument validation process. The Cronbach’s alpha level achieved in the pilot study phase far-exceeded the threshold for acceptability (Field, 2018).

In the third stage of research instrument validation, the Cronbach’s alpha (α) statistical technique was used to assess the internal reliability of participant response to survey items once study data were collected and formally recorded. An alpha level of $\alpha \geq .80$ was desired for internal reliability and final instrument validation purposes.

Study Procedures

The online survey platform *Qualtrics* was used to host the survey, create the survey link, and capture the subsequent survey data. Pastors of the four participating churches announced and distributed the survey link within their respective churches. Chapel leaders at the participating university likewise distributed the link to students who attended chapel services on a regular basis. The survey window of participation opportunity was a two-week timeframe. At the conclusion of the participation window of opportunity, data were collected and downloaded into a *.sav* file format. Study data were then migrated for formal analysis in the study's preferred analytic program (IBM SPSS v. 28).

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques addressed the foundational analyses and the findings associated with the study's three research questions and hypotheses. The probability level of $p \leq .05$ was adopted as the threshold level for findings considered statistically significant. The magnitude of effect for study findings was evaluated and interpreted using the effect size conventions offered by Sawilowsky (2009). Study data were analyzed and reported using the 28th version of IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Preliminary Analysis

The study's extent of missing data was assessed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n) and percentages (%) represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques used to evaluate the extent of the study's missing data. The internal reliability of study participant response to survey items was addressed using the Cronbach's alpha (α)

statistical technique. The conventions of alpha interpretation proposed by George and Mallery (2020) were used for study purposes. Foundational descriptive analyses were conducted using frequency counts (n), percentages (%), mean scores (M), standard deviations (SD), and Cohen's d values. The foundational analyses were conducted in a preliminary, segue fashion for illustrative and comparative purposes in advance of the formal analysis of the study's three research questions and hypotheses.

Sample Size Projections Statistical Power Analysis

Statistical power analysis using the G*Power software (3.1.9.2, Universität Düsseldorf, Germany) was conducted for sample size estimates for statistical significance testing purposes in advance of the study. The study's statistical power analysis was delimited to large and medium anticipated effects, a power ($1 - \beta$) index of .80, and a probability level of .05.

A one-sample t -test was projected for use for statistical significance testing purposes in research question one. A medium effect ($d = .50$) required 27 participants and 12 for a large effect ($d = .80$) to detect a statistically significant finding. A t -test of Independent Means was projected for use for statistical significance testing purposes in research question two. A medium effect ($d = .50$) required 102 participants and 42 for a large effect ($d = .80$) to detect a statistically significant finding. In research question three, a multiple linear regression statistical technique was projected for use for associative and predictive purposes. A medium effect ($f^2 = .15$) required 85 participants and 40 for a large effect ($f^2 = .35$) to detect a statistically significant finding.

Data Analysis Research Question 1

To what degree will study participants perceive their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth?

In research question one, the one-sample t -test was used to address the statistical significance of finding for study participant mean score response. The magnitude of effect (effect size) of study participant response in research question one was addressed using the Cohen's d statistical technique. The assumption of data normality associated with the one sample t test was addressed through an evaluation of the skew and kurtosis values of the dependent variable. The conventions of data normality proposed by George and Mallery (2020) were applied to the evaluation of data normality in research question one. The interpretation of the numeric effect size value achieved in research question one was addressed using Sawilowsky's (2009) conventions of interpretation (small, medium, large, very large, and huge).

Data Analysis Research Question 2

To what degree will study participants differ in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by participant category?

Research question two, between-subjects and comparative in nature, was focused on mean score perceptions of the two categories of study participants represented in the study's sample. The statistical significance of mean score differences in the comparison was addressed using the t -test of Independent Means. The assumptions associated with the t -test of independent means was assessed through statistical means. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was addressed using the Levene F statistic. The assumption of normality was addressed by interpreting skew and kurtosis values and using the conventions of data normality interpretation offered by George and Mallery (2020) to determine the normality of the dependent variable arrays.

Data Analysis Research Question 3

Which adult learning principle used by pastors is most predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants?

Research question three was associative and predictive in nature utilizing four independent predictor variables. A multiple linear regression statistical technique was used to assess the predictive viability of the multiple independent variables in research question three. Predictive model fitness was assessed by interpreting the ANOVA Table F value, where an F value of $p \leq .05$ was considered indicative of a viable predictive model. Predictive effect associated with the model was established through the interpretation of the R^2 value. All assumptions associated with the use of multiple linear regression were assessed either by statistical means (independence of error, multicollinearity, normality of residuals, and significant outliers) or visual inspection of scatter plots (linearity and homoscedasticity).

Hypothesis for Research Question 1

H_0 : Null hypothesis. There will be no statistically significant effect for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

H_a : Alternative hypothesis. There will be a statistically significant effect for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

Hypothesis for Research Question 2

H_0 : Null hypothesis. There will be no statistically significant difference for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by category of participant.

H_a : Alternative hypothesis. There will be a statistically significant difference for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by category of participant.

Hypothesis for Research Question 3

H_0 : Null hypothesis. None of the adult learning principles used by pastors will be predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants.

H_a : Alternative hypothesis. One or more of the adult learning principles used by pastors will be predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants.

Summary

A quantitative and non-experimental design was used in this study. The methodology incorporated a survey research approach using a Likert scale. Data were obtained from a convenience sampling. Study participants were members of four denominational and non-denominational churches and chapel-attending students at a faith-based university. The online survey platform Qualtrics hosted and captured the survey data which were then downloaded into SPSS for analysis. The Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique was used to evaluate the instrument internal reliability and validity and the Cronbach's alpha level achieved in the study exceeded the threshold for acceptability (George & Mallery, 2020). Incorporated in the overview of analyses section are the following two main sub-sections: preliminary analysis and data analysis by research questions. Results obtained from the data are forthcoming in Chapter IV.

IV. RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of adult learning principles in sermons upon parishioners' spiritual growth. A quantitative, non-experimental research design addressed the study's topic. In this research, spiritual growth refers to a congregant's increased biblical knowledge and understanding coupled with their ability to steadily apply the Word of God. Spiritual growth was evaluated from the perspective of each participant using the methodology presented in the previous chapter. This study's results are presented below.

Methods of Data Collection

This study's sample size was 120 participants who were either chapel-attending students at a faith-based university in Central Florida or congregational members from four churches in the southeast region of the United States of America. One church was identified as Adventist (affiliated with the Seven-Day Adventist), another as Methodist (affiliated with the United Methodist Church), and the other two as non-denominational 1 and non-denominational 2 (no affiliation).

The study's sample was accessed in a non-probability, convenient, and purposive fashion. The study's research instrument was researcher created and validated through a three-phase validation process. Three research questions and hypotheses were formally stated. The study's data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The following

represents the formal reporting of study findings at the preliminary, foundational level as well as for research questions stated.

Preliminary Descriptive Statistical Findings

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to evaluate the study’s demographic identifying information for illustrative purposes. Frequencies (*n*) and percentages (%) represented the specific descriptive statistical techniques used to evaluate the study’s demographic identifying information.

Table 2 contains a summary of findings for the descriptive statistical evaluation of the study’s demographic identifying information.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Summary Table: Demographic Identifier Variables

Demographic Variable	<i>n</i>	%	Cumulative %
Gender			
Male	44	41.12	41.12
Female	61	57.01	98.13
Missing	2	1.87	100.00
Ethnicity			
White / Caucasian	36	33.64	33.64
Black / African American	56	52.34	85.98
Hispanic	10	9.35	95.33
Other	2	1.87	97.20
Missing	3	2.80	100.00
University Student Status			
Yes	24	22.43	22.43
No	82	76.64	99.07
Missing	1	0.93	100.00
Church Affiliation			
Adventist	20	18.69	18.69
Non-denominational 1	18	16.82	35.51
Non-denominational 2	18	16.82	52.34
Methodist	23	21.50	73.83
Missing	28	26.17	100.00

Missing Data

The study's extent of missing data was assessed using descriptive statistical techniques. An initial screening was first conducted with the study's data set of 120 participants. As a result, 13 participants were removed from the data set for complete non-response to the 15 survey items on the study's research instrument. The final actionable sample of study participants was 107. The extent of missing data in the wake of the initial screening process was considered minimal at 0.19% ($n = 3$) for the study's response set across the 15 survey items on the research instrument.

Internal Reliability

The internal reliability of study participant response to survey items on the study's research instrument was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. Using the conventions of interpretation for alpha offered by George and Mallory (2020), the internal reliability achieved across all 15 survey items on the study's research instrument was considered excellent ($\alpha = .91$).

Table 3 contains a summary of findings for evaluating internal reliability across all 15 survey items on the study's research instrument.

Table 3

Internal Reliability Summary Table: All Survey Items

Scale	No. of Items	α	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
All Survey Items	15	.91	.90	.93

Note. The lower and upper bounds of Cronbach's α were calculated using a 95.00% confidence interval.

Data Analysis by Research Question

Three research questions and hypotheses were stated in the study. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the research questions. The probability level of $p \leq .05$ represented the threshold value for study findings described as statistically significant. The conventions of effect size interpretation proposed by Sawilowsky (2009) were

applied to numeric effect sizes achieved in the analyses associated with the study's research questions.

The following represents the formal reporting of finding by research question stated in the study.

Research Question 1

To what degree will study participants perceive their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth?

Hypothesis

H_a: There will be a statistically significant effect for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

Analysis

A one-sample *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of study participant mean perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. The assumption of data normality was assessed through the skew and kurtosis values of the dependent variable; the resulting values for the data array in research question one were beyond the parameters of normality for skew (-/+2.0) and kurtosis (-/+7.0) proposed by George and Mallory (2020). Considering the robustness of the *t*-test against violations of the assumption of normality for sample sizes beyond 30 (Field, 2018; Posten, 1984), the one-sample *t*-test was used to assess the statistical significance of study participant mean perceptions of the notion that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

Findings

Slightly over 95% of study participants (95.4%; $n = 102$) agreed with the statement that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. The mean score response of 4.69 ($SD = 0.78$) was statistically significant ($t_{(106)} = 22.38, p < .001$). The magnitude of effect for study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth was considered huge ($d = 2.16$).

Table 4 summarizes finding for study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

Table 4

Summary Table: Study Participant Perceptions Their Pastors' Sermons Contributed Positively to Their Spiritual growth.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	μ	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Overall Perceptions	4.69	0.78	3	22.38	< .001	2.16

Note. Degrees of freedom for the *t*-statistic = 106. *d* represents Cohen's *d*.

Considering the statistically significant finding in research question one, the alternative hypothesis was retained.

Research Question 2

To what degree will study participants differ in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by participant category?

Hypothesis

H_0 : There will be no statistically significant difference for study participant response in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by participant category.

Analysis

A between-subjects test of statistical significance was used to evaluate the comparison mean score perceptions of study participants that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth by grouping variables used in the research question (i.e., university student, church congregant).

The assumption of data normality was assessed using the skew and kurtosis values for each group represented in the comparison. As a result, the skew and kurtosis values for data associated with the category of university student satisfied the assumption of normality. However, the skew and kurtosis values for data associated with the category of church congregant did not. Considering the robustness of the *t*-test against violations of the assumption of normality for sample sizes beyond 30 (Field, 2018; Posten, 1984), the *t*-test of independent means was used to assess the statistical significance of study participants' mean perceptions of the notion that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth by the category of study participant.

The assumption of homogeneity of variances in the comparison was assessed using Levene's test. The result of Levene's test comparing perceptions of university students and congregants of participating churches was statistically significant ($F(1, 104) = 5.15, p = .03$). As a result, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated. Welch's *t*-test was then used in the place of the *t*-test of independent means, which is more reliable when the two samples have unequal variances and unequal sample sizes, according to Ruxton (2006).

Findings

The mean score difference of 0.40 favoring the perception of church congregants in the comparative analysis was non-statistically significant ($t_{(27.26)} = -1.68, p = .11$). The magnitude of

effect for the comparison of study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth was considered approaching a medium effect ($d = .44$).

Table 5 contains a summary of findings comparing study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth by group.

Table 5

Summary Table: Study Participant Perceptions Their Pastor's Sermons Contributed Positively to Their Spiritual Growth by Group

Variable	Students		Parishioners		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Overall Perceptions	4.38	1.13	4.78	0.63	-1.68	.11	0.44

Note. $N = 106$. Degrees of freedom for the *t*-statistic = 27.26. *d* represents Cohen's *d*.

The null hypothesis was retained because of the non-statistically significant finding for the comparison featured in research question two.

Research Question 3

Which adult learning principle used by pastors is most predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants?

Hypothesis

H_a : One or more of the adult learning principles used by pastors will be predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants.

Analysis

Research question three was addressed through a two-phase process. In the first phase of the analytic process, the mathematical relationship between each learning principle represented in the 15 survey items on the research instrument was assessed for study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. Although all 15 learning principles represented in the survey items reflected statistically significant mathematical relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed

positively to their spiritual growth, three specific elements reflected very strong or approximate very strong relationships ($r \geq .80$).

In the second phase of the analytic process, a multiple linear regression (MLR) statistical technique was used to determine which specific learning principle was most predictive of study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. Prior to the analysis, the assumptions of MLR were addressed and satisfied by statistical means (independence of error; multicollinearity, normality of residuals, and influential outliers) and visual inspection (linearity and homoscedasticity).

Findings

The predictive model was statistically significant ($F(3,103) = 149.61, p < .001, R^2 = .81$), indicating that approximately 81.33% of the variance in study participant perceptions that their pastor's sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth is explainable by the learning principles as follows: "The content of my pastor's sermons is meaningful and relevant," "My pastor uses language in sermons that I am familiar with," and "My pastor provides scenarios and examples in sermons I can relate to." The model's predictive effect was considered huge ($r^2 = .81$).

"The content of my pastor's sermons is meaningful and relevant" statistically significantly predicted study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth ($B = 0.26, t_{(103)} = 4.15, p < .001$), indicating that, on average, a one-unit increase of "The content of my pastor's sermons is meaningful and relevant" will increase the value of study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contribute positively to their spiritual growth by 0.26 units.

“My pastor uses language in sermons that I am familiar with” statistically significantly predicted study participant perceptions that their pastors’ sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth ($B = 0.21, t_{(103)} = 3.48, p < .001$), indicating that, on average, a one-unit increase of “My pastor uses language in sermons that I am familiar with study participant perceptions that their pastor’s sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth will increase the value of my 0.21 units.”

“My pastor provides scenarios and examples in sermons I can relate to” statistically significantly predicted study participants’ perceptions that their pastors’ sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth ($B = 0.48, t_{(103)} = 8.24, p < .001$), indicating that, on average, a one-unit increase of “My pastor provides scenarios and examples in sermons I can relate to” will increase the value of study participant perceptions that their pastor’s sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth by 0.48 units.

Table 6 summarizes the model's findings used to predict study participant perceptions of their pastor's use of learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual transformation.

Table 6

Predicting Study Participant Perceptions of Their Pastors’ Use of Learning Principles as having Contributed Positively to their Spiritual Growth

Model	B	SE	95.00% CI	β	t	p
(Intercept)	0.28	0.21	[-0.14, 0.70]	0.00	1.32	.190
Content	0.26	0.06	[0.14, 0.39]	0.27	4.15	< .001
Language	0.21	0.06	[0.09, 0.32]	0.22	3.48	< .001
Scenarios	0.48	0.06	[0.36, 0.59]	0.51	8.24	< .001

Considering the finding for all three learning principles reflecting statistically significant predictive relationships with study participant perceptions that their pastors’ sermons contributed positively to their spiritual transformation, the alternative hypothesis was retained.

Summary

The study's research instrument represents an exceptional level of participant completion rate for survey items. The internal reliability of study participant response across all survey items represented on the research instrument was considered excellent. Study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth were manifested at a statistically significant level with a concomitant huge degree of response effect. Study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual transformation favored participants who as church congregants over those identified as university students, but to a non-statistically significant degree. The learning principle embedded in the survey item "My pastor provides scenarios and examples in sermons I can relate to" represented the most robust predictor of study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. A thorough discussion of the study's findings is presented in Chapter V.

V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to assess the effects of using adult learning principles (ALP) in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth. For the purposes of the current study, spiritual growth was generally defined as a congregant's increased biblical knowledge and understanding coupled with a believer's ability to apply the Word of God steadily and spiritual growth was evaluated from the perspective of each participant. In this chapter, the results of Chapter IV are discussed.

Review of Methodology

This study's research design was non-probability, convenient, and quantitative, featuring a researcher-created survey validated through a three-phase validation process. Three research questions and hypotheses were formally stated. Participants ($n = 120$) were either chapel-attending students at a faith-based university in Central Florida or congregational members from four churches in the southeast region of the United States of America. Participants of two churches were affiliated with the Seven-Day Adventist Church ($n = 20$) and the United Methodist Church ($n = 23$), and two churches had no denominational affiliation. Each non-affiliated church had 18 participants. The data were initially screened, which resulted in the exclusion of 13 participants for complete non-response to the 16 survey items on the study's research instrument. The final actionable sample of study participants was 107.

Discussion of Preliminary Findings

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The gender representation of study participants was as follows: male ($n = 44$), female ($n = 61$), and missing ($n = 2$). Ethnically, most study participants identified as Black or African American (52.34%), 33.64% as White or Caucasian, 9.35% as Hispanic, 1.87% as other, and 2.80% were missing. This study's Black or African American participant majority is not reflective of the overall population of the United States of America and may affect the generalizability of this study's findings. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, the percentage of Blacks or African Americans in the U. S. was only 13.4% in 2021. This study's sample of an actionable number of participants ($n = 107$) who responded to the research instrument was robust and sufficiently powered for the analyses to be used in addressing the study's research questions.

A high level of missing data may lead to faulty conclusions (Richardson & Simmering, 2020). After the initial data screening process, the missing data level was 0.19% ($n = 3$). This level is considered minimal and inconsequential (Shafer & Graham, 2002). The exceptional completion rate (99.81%) for the study's response set across the research instrument's 15 survey items reinforces this study's findings credibility.

This study's internal reliability of the research instrument's 15 survey items was considered excellent ($\alpha = .91$). This result is noteworthy for two reasons. First, this result appears to validate the evaluation of the study's construct through the internal consistency of data produced by the study's research instrument. And second, the high internal reliability level of the research instrument reinforces the credibility and trustworthiness of subsequent analyses associated with the study's research questions.

Summary of Results

Study data were also analyzed using inferential statistical techniques. Statistically significant findings were evident in analyses associated with in all three research questions. The study's primary focus was to assess the effects of using adult learning principles in sermons, and as such, over 95% of study participants agreed with the statement that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. Additionally, the magnitude of effect for study participant perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth was considered huge ($d = 2.16$).

When comparing participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth by group (university student and church congregant), the findings suggested no statistically significant difference between the two groups in those perceptions.

Finally, all 15 learning principles represented in the research instrument reflected statistically significant mathematical relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual growth. However, these three specific elements—content, language, and scenarios—reflected very strong or approximate very strong relationships ($r \geq .80$) with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

Discussion by Research Question

Research Question 1

To what degree will study participants perceive their pastor's use of adult learning principles positively contributed to their spiritual growth?

A one-sample *t*-test was used to evaluate the statistical significance of study participants' mean perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual growth. The mean score response ($M = 4.69$) was statistically significant with over 95% of participants perceiving that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth.

Research question one's finding suggests that using adult learning principles in sermons positively contributed to participants' spiritual growth. Although DeVille (2012) and Stuart (2011) examined the impact of adult learning principles on sermon design, delivery, and productivity, neither study focused on the effects of adult learning principles on spiritual growth. Moreover, neither study provided results similar to the study's findings in research question one and no similar findings were found in the literature. The finding achieved in research question one of the current study would, therefore, appear to be novel and additive to the professional literature on the topic. Additionally, the finding achieved appears supportive of the notion that andragogy and other adult learning principles can be as effective in spiritual formation as in adult classrooms and other settings.

The finding in research question one appears significant as well for pastors who, as Stuart (2011) noted, are adult educators. Church services involve more than praise and worship; teaching and learning occur in these services as well. Pastors should, therefore, view church services as an "educational experience," with learning taking place in various ways (Stuart, 2011, p. 117). Most pastors employ sermons to teach God's Word to their parishioners. Sermons are often presented in lecture format and tend to be teacher-centered (Stuart, 2011). Lai (1995) asserted that teacher-centered learning is oppressive. Adult learners, who make up the majority of parishioners, tend to resist pedagogical strategies (Chan, 2010). Employing validated adult teaching principles, such as andragogy, in spiritual formation is of utmost importance. Similar to

the way andragogical principles guide adults' educators, these principles should also guide pastors in spiritual formation and, based on this study's findings, should lead to parishioners' spiritual growth.

Many pastors are either unaware of these practical adult learning principles or reluctant to integrate these principles into their sermons. This problem could be resolved during pastoral preparation; however, several studies in the literature (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Jeynes, 2012; Mafico, 2017) contained evidence highlighting the ineffectiveness of seminaries at preparing pastoral students for church ministry. Much emphasis is placed on research and little emphasis on the seminarian's practical role as a pastor. Dearborn (1995) stated, "Church leadership formation is un-harnessed from its missional context" (p. 8). Craddock (2001) also noted that seminaries' problem is their lack of emphasis on preaching, a failure to develop preachers, and that preaching had been reduced to that of a "marginal annoyance" (p. 5). Seminaries' primary purpose is to train and equip pastors for church ministry and as such, seminaries must, therefore, train pastoral students to preach engaging and nurturing sermons, which will help lead parishioners to spiritual maturity. Seminaries would serve pastoral students well by integrating courses on the pastor's role as an adult educator and the use of adult learning principles in sermons preparations and deliveries.

Research Question 2

To what degree will study participants differ in their perceptions of their pastor's use of adult learning principles as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth by participant category?

A between-subjects test of statistical significance was used to evaluate the comparison mean score perceptions of study participants by grouping variables (university student and

church congregant) that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual growth. The mean score difference of 0.40 favoring the perception of church congregants in the comparative analysis was non-statistically significant indicating that no significant difference in perception from both groups' participants that their pastor's use of adult learning principles had contributed positively to their spiritual growth. This finding confirms research question two's hypothesis.

The researcher did not find any study specific to this topic in the professional literature about research question two, and as such, the finding achieved in research question two of the current study would appear novel and contributory to the study's topic. The finding achieved in research question two is perhaps indicative of the fact that when adult learning principles are incorporated in sermons, the settings for spiritual formation (a university chapel or a church) may not affect the outcome—spiritual growth. The mean score difference favoring church members in the comparative analysis in research question two may, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that study participants identified as church congregants attend more weekly church services.

Research Question 3

Which adult learning principle used by pastors is most predictive of promoting spiritual growth in study participants?

A two-phase process was used for research question three. The first phase entailed the evaluation of the mathematical relationship between each learning principle represented in the 15 survey items on the research instrument and study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. All 15 learning principles reflected statistically significant mathematical relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual growth. Additionally, these three specific elements—content, language, and scenarios—reflected very strong relationships with study

participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively contributed to their spiritual growth.

DeVille (2012) examined the effectiveness of sermons using adult learning principles and found that effective sermons must be applicable, challenging, convicting, inspiring, comprehensible, entertaining, interesting, informative, compelling, and scriptural. DeVille's findings are, to a degree, similar to the findings achieved in research question three of the current study. However, considering the context of research question three in the current study, the findings appear to be unique and contributory on the study's topic in the professional literature.

Interestingly, all 15 learning principles reflected statistically significant mathematical relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual growth. The first learning principle in the survey instrument was regarding self-directedness—whether the participants' pastors' sermons recognize the notion that they are autonomous and self-directed. Self-directed learning is the first principle of andragogy. According to Hagen and Park (2016), self-directed learners choose their education and partner in the educational process. Parishioners choose to attend church to enrich their spiritual lives. Crafting sermons to a self-directed audience would appear to be a noteworthy step in elevating sermon effectiveness. Remarkably, over 82% of this study's respondents strongly and somewhat agreed with the notion that their pastors' sermons recognize that they are autonomous and self-directing.

The three principles of "content," "language," and "scenarios" reflected very strong to huge relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. The first principle to emerge was sermons' content. Questioning a sermon's meaningfulness or relevance is important. According to Knowles' (1980)

fourth andragogical principle, adult learners tend to be life-focused, task-oriented, and problem-solvers. As a result, adult learners are inclined to learn for immediate applications. Parishioners must perceive sermons' content as applicable and relevant. Sermons' content that is not geared to the parishioners' present situation may be perceived as irrelevant, resulting in the information being discarded.

One issue presented earlier in the discussion that affects sermons' content is the pastors' lack of preparation in seminaries for church ministry. With seminaries' focus on theoretical and theological education, less instructional time is available for practical and implementable biblical knowledge. Mafico (2017) noted that seminaries have not adequately trained pastoral candidates to teach and impart practical biblical knowledge to parishioners. Since graduating seminarians have learned to focus on theoretical issues in seminaries, the content of their sermons, once becoming pastors, tend to also focus on theoretical issues. Many parishioners may perceive theoretical-focused sermons as uninteresting or boring. A shift in seminary education will help improve sermons' content.

The second principle to emerge from these findings was the sermons' language. The question that arises specific to the second principle is the degree to which participants may be familiar with the language their pastors used in sermons. Using familiar language leads to effective communication and reinforces comprehension of what is being taught in the sermon. According to Marume et al. (2016), effective communication transpires when the audience understands the message. Jureddi and Brahmaiah (2016) noted that effective communication entails using language that is suitable to others' level of understanding. Unfortunately, parishioners are not as biblically or theologically fluent as their pastors (Vásquez-Levy, 2014). Biblical terms such as justification, predestination, or even faith may be well understood by

pastors; yet, few churchgoers have a good understanding of these terms. Familiar language or effective communication is necessary to foster biblical and spiritual formation among churchgoers. Additionally, Joseph and Thompson's (2004) findings indicated a link between vivid language in a sermon and memorability.

The third and final principle to emerge from research question three's findings was the use of scenarios and examples in sermons. The question arises as the degree to which pastors provide relatable scenarios and examples in sermons. Participants in the current study perceived the use of illustrations and storytelling in sermons as a huge positive contributor to their spiritual growth. Karia (2015) noted that the power of storytelling lies in its ability to connect with the listeners' similar or relatable experiences. The brain processes information naturally through storytelling (Karia, 2015). Schultze (2020) argued that a story is a powerful tool to engage an audience emotionally and added that stories "move our hearts, making us sympathetic and empathetic with the characters" (p. 124). Master communicators use storytelling as an effective tool to impart knowledge and understanding. Storytelling also makes a presentation less sermonic and the message more acceptable. Zigarelli (2008) claimed that besides prayer, storytelling is most influential in getting people to act or change their behavior, hence the reason Jesus primarily used stories to communicate the gospel. Stories help people convince themselves, hence the effectiveness of storytelling (Zigarelli, 2008).

Pastors also use illustrations and analogies as effective tools in spiritual formation. Lectures, the traditional sermons' delivery method, are perceived as ineffective, dull, and boring (Henschke, 2011). Therefore, pastors incorporate visual enhancements, metaphors, anecdotes, current events, pop culture, sports, and arts in sermons to foster attentiveness. Jesus, frequently

and masterfully, used both storytelling and illustrations as effective communication tools. Pastors are encouraged to follow his example in sermons delivery.

Study Limitations

Several factors limited the study's commission. First, this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as a result, the majority of churches had adopted lockdown measures and shifted their services to online services. The four participating churches, as well as the participating university, curtailed their operations during the pandemic. As a result, access and outreach to potential participants were limited. These factors may have impacted this study's sample size, and the scope of its findings may have been broader without the pandemic.

Second, this study was limited to two groups: members of four denominational and non-denominational churches located in the southeast region of the United States of America and chapel attending students at a faith-based university. Additionally, data gathering was limited to convenience sampling. According to Mills and Gay (2019), results from convenience sampling may not be "generalizable to the entire population" (p. 148). These limitations may have affected this study's generalizability.

Third, respondents evaluated their own spiritual growths; therefore, participants' perceptions of spiritual growth were subjective. Additionally, tens of millions of people had contracted COVID-19, and over a million people died due to the pandemic. Some of the respondents may have personally been affected by COVID-19. This combination of factors may have influenced the respondents' perceptions of spiritual growth. However, for the purposes of the current study, spiritual growth was defined as and limited to biblical knowledge and understanding acquired in sermons and the ensuing application of said knowledge. The definition of spiritual growth was emphasized with study participants at the outset of the study.

Finally, this study was limited to a quantitative and non-experimental design. This approach offers some benefits, such as a larger sample size, researcher detachment, and the potential for generalization of finding and replicability. However, this approach limited responses to a closed structure, 5-point, Likert-type survey. A qualitative or mixed-methods approach may have provided a broader assessment of participants' perspectives.

Implications for Future Practice

This study's overarching purpose was to assess the effects of ALP in sermons upon parishioners' spiritual growth. The commission of the study and its subsequent findings bear relevance for professionals. First and foremost, pastors should understand that they are educators of largely adult congregations and as such commit to incorporating ALP in sermon preparations and deliveries. The primary purpose of sermons is to equip, edify, and transform the listener. Pastors should, therefore, utilize tools that will help achieve this important goal. The current study's findings have reinforced the notion that ALP in sermons represents an effective means of promoting the spiritual growth and transformation of church congregants.

Second, Bible colleges and seminaries should benefit from this study's findings. These institutions could use this study's findings to fully prepare their graduating students to be effective preachers. Few seminaries' leaders are involved in the church (Mafico, 2017) and many seminary professors perform their duties while cloistered within the seminary walls, well beyond the local church walls (West, 2003). These seminary leaders and professors are unaware of the Church's needs and the growing schism between what is being taught from the lecterns and how it is received in the pews (Dearborn, 1995). Employing ALP in sermons should narrow or, perhaps, eliminate the schism. These findings suggest that Bible colleges and seminaries should develop courses that accentuate andragogical principles in sermons.

Third, congregants are arguably the greatest beneficiaries of this study's findings. Parishioners attend church services for several reasons. However, the primary responsibility of the Church is the parishioners' spiritual formation and growth (Wilhoit, 2008). This study's findings appear to be supportive of ALP's ability to facilitate and achieve parishioners' spiritual formation and growth. Adult learning principles in sermons translates into spiritual growth.

Fourth, this study's findings reflected a high degree of relationship between the use of ALP in sermons and perceptions of spiritual growth for study participants. Additionally, the three principles of "content," "language," and "scenarios" emerged in the study as reflecting very strong relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons contributed positively to their spiritual growth. Although pastors are encouraged to incorporate all 15 of the ALP in sermon preparations and deliveries, at the very least, pastors must focus on these three principles and incorporate them in sermon preparations and deliveries for optimal impact upon congregants' spiritual formation and growth.

Lastly, preachers should focus the contents of their sermons on parishioners' needs and issues. Stuart (2011) stated that parishioners are more likely to value a sermon when pastors consider the parishioners' issues, needs, and questions. This idea is aligned with Knowles' concept that the learning process should be issues-centered (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Interweaving biblical principles, such as salvation or forgiveness, with parishioners' needs should fortify learning and biblical formation. Additionally, based on this study's results, storytelling and illustrations in sermons appear to contribute to parishioners' spiritual formation significantly. Pastors should integrate both storytelling and illustrations in their sermons. Stories have pathos, the power to evoke feelings; stories touch on people's emotions (Zigarelli, 2008). Storytelling is so compelling that 75 percent of the Bible is in story format (Walsh, 2003). A

great story... “shakes people from their comfort zones and gets them asking questions they’ve never considered asking” (Zigarelli, 2008, p. 74). Storytelling is an effective tool in learning. Failing to use storytelling in sermons is failing to use one of the most potent tools in audience engagement and the centerpiece of Jesus’ communication.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have impacted this study’s sample size and the scope of its findings. Replicating this study in a non-pandemic period would allow for such a study to be conducting without the limiting effects that the pandemic might have caused to this study’s findings. Additionally, any impact that the pandemic may have exerted upon the respondents’ perceptions of spiritual growth would be negated if this study were replicated in a non-pandemic time period.

Research question two was focused upon an evaluation of the degree to which participants identified in two distinct groups differed in their perceptions of their pastors’ use of ALP as having contributed positively to their spiritual growth. As a result, there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of spiritual growth between the two groups. Future researchers would be encouraged to stratify participants of future studies of a similar nature and construct by religious affiliations. Examining whether participants, from different religious affiliations, differ in their perspectives of their pastors’ use of ALP as it contributed positively to their spiritual growth would be informative. For example, using the three religious affiliations (Adventist, Methodist, and non-denominational) reflected in the current study, it would be informative to know which of three groups would perceive that their pastors’ use of ALP contributed positively to their spiritual growth. This information would

appear to offer a more precise perspective on ALP's impact in sermons across denominations that reflect differences in seminary training and organizational vision.

Finally, this study utilized a quantitative and non-experimental research design. Future research endeavors on the topic addressed in the current study should, perhaps, be conducted through a qualitative or mixed-methods research design approach. Interviewing the participating pastors, for example, to explore their educational background or observing the pastors' sermons would have provided deeper and richer information, and even insight on the study's topic, perhaps, resulting in more comprehensive depiction of the topic.

Conclusion

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to assess the effects of ALP in sermons on parishioners' spiritual growth. Sermons have been a vital part of religious gatherings and central to the spread of Christianity (Joseph & Thompson, 2004). Preachers use sermons to educate, encourage, inform, or increase parishioners' faith (Stuart, 2011). Given the significant role sermons play in parishioners' spiritual formation and growth, examining sermons' effectiveness is crucial.

Three research questions and hypotheses were formally stated to address the study's topic. The following represents a summary of this study's findings: Over 95% of study participants agreed with the statement that their pastor's sermons contributed positively to their spiritual formation. No significant difference in perception was found between university students and church members that their pastor's use of adult learning principles had contributed positively to their spiritual growth. All 15 learning principles represented in the survey items reflected statistically significant mathematical relationships. Three principles (content, language,

and scenarios) surfaced reflected very strong to huge relationships with study participants' perceptions that their pastors' sermons positively impacted their spiritual growth.

For the past 30 years, adult educators have effectively used ALP to teach adult learners. The findings achieved in the current study appear validating of the use ALP in church or biblical formation. Preaching in the church has been largely preacher-centered for too long. A shift, in biblical formation, to a learner-centered approach is in order and would be beneficial to everyone involved in biblical education, including pastors and lay ministers, as well as parishioners. The need for a broad implementation of ALP in biblical formation is at hand.

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Appendix A

Andragogical Assumptions Usage in Sermons Assessment (AAUSA)

SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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For the purpose of this survey, "pastor" may be defined as your church pastor or pastoral team, or your campus/chapel pastor/professor.

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this online survey on the effects using adult learning principles in sermons has on parishioners' spiritual growth. This research project is being conducted by David Pierre, a doctoral candidate at 3 Southeastern University (SEU). It should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete

Participation

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

Benefits

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about whether using adult learning principles in sermons leads to parishioners' spiritual growth.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Confidentiality

Your survey answers will be sent to Qualtrics, where collected data will be stored in a password-protected electronic format. Qualtrics does not collect identifying information such as your name or email address. Qualtrics may temporarily store your IP address to prohibit respondents from taking the survey more than once. Your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether you participated in the study.

By clicking Agree, you acknowledge that you are over 18 years old and have provided consent to this form.

1. Age
2. Gender
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
 - iii. Non-binary / Third gender
 - iv. Prefer not to say
3. Race / Ethnicity

- i. White / Caucasian
 - ii. Black / African American
 - iii. Hispanic
 - iv. Other
 - v. Prefer not to say
- 4. SEU Student
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
- 5. If you are not a SEU student, select your church name
 - i. Adventist
 - ii. Methodist
 - iii. Non-denominational 1
 - iv. Non-denominational 2
- 6. My pastor's sermons recognize the notion that I am autonomous and self-directing.
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
- 7. My pastor's sermons are respectful of the fact that I need to know the benefits, values, and purposes of the sermons.
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree

- iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
8. The concept of learning through direct experience is evident in my pastor's sermons.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
9. Active and practical participation are emphasized in my pastor's sermons.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
10. Implementable techniques and methodologies are evident in my pastor's sermons.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
11. The content of my pastor's sermons is meaningful and relevant.
- i. Strongly agree

- ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
12. My pastor emphasizes the immediate application of sermon principles.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
13. My pastor's sermons allow me to draw upon my past experiences to better aid my learning.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
14. My pastor uses language in sermons that I am familiar with.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

15. My pastor provides scenarios and examples in sermons I can relate to.
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

16. My pastor's sermons reflect sensitivity to the importance of a variety of learning and teaching methods.
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

17. My pastor's sermons reflect sensitivity to the importance of my individual learning preferences.
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

18. My pastor encourages me to practice principles taught in sermons in preparing me to act autonomously outside of the church environment.
 - i. Strongly agree

- ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
19. My intrinsic, personal desires and ambitions are considered and reflected in my pastor's sermons.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
20. My pastor's sermons reflect a sensitivity to the feedback I provide.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
21. Overall, my pastor's sermons contribute positively to my spiritual formation.
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Somewhat agree
 - iii. Neither agree nor disagree
 - iv. Somewhat disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

Appendix B

Knowles' Six Assumptions of Andragogy

Figure 2

Knowles' Six Assumptions of Andragogy

