

American University

IRB Application for Approval to Use Human Participants in Research

Appendix A – Research Description

Research Description

The research procedures will include: (a) a pre-interview questionnaire – completed by key informant, (b) interview with pastor/head of staff, (c) observation of a staff/organization meeting, and (d) an observation of worship service and organizational meeting. In conversation with the key informant, researchers will also collect relevant documents, including, but not limited to, budgets, capital campaign literature, position descriptions, official communications, and newsletters.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

The pre-interview questionnaire is an online survey instrument that covers background information (e.g., demographic information about the pastor and the congregation, congregational financial data, and distribution of basic ministry activities). This procedure only involves a key informant (typically a pastor). The questionnaire will be emailed to the key informant after the congregation has agreed to participate in the study. If the key informant has not completed the questionnaire by the time of the interview, time will be allocated at that time for its completion. This data will be analyzed quantitatively.

The questionnaire instrument can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/rwp2020>

Interview with Key Informants

The interview with the pastor/head of staff will be a 1.0-1.5 hour face-to-face interview using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interview probes the history of the congregation and its current activities. It also explores the pastor's career and their experiences of the work of the congregation. Informed consent will be acquired at the beginning of the interview, and the interview will be audio recorded, and professionally transcribed by a third-party subscription service that adheres to protocols of confidentiality. All identifying data will be removed before the qualitative analysis.

Interview Protocol

Religious Worker – Life Narrative

Q1: I'd like to start by asking you to tell me the story of your life – not everything, of course, but think about the major “chapters” and for each, tell me about the important things that were happening then, where you were living, what you were doing, who was important to you in that chapter of your life. But mostly I just want you to tell me about who you are.

Did going to church have a major impact on you growing up?

Sunday School

Adults

Story you sometimes tell

Major Rituals

Q2: Tell me the story of how you came to ministry/leadership?

Education/formation

Significant relationships/voices

Other congregations

This congregation / Congregation-denomination polity.

Is this usually how it happens

Current networks, groups that offer support

Websites, magazines, conferences part of leadership development

Q3: I know there is probably no such thing as a “typical day,” but walk me through a day in your life as a pastor/minister/volunteer.

Where?

Significant relationships

What's the activity

What skill is required

Q4: Can you tell me about a time you found your work particularly satisfying?

Frustrating

Q5: How has your work changed (or has it) over the years?

Q6: Would you describe your work as more of a calling, more of a profession, or both?

Q7: What is the most important thing you do on a weekly basis?

How else do you spend your time?

Is this how you would like to spend your time? More of? Less of?

Q8: What do you wish others within the congregation knew about your work?

What about others who aren't members of the congregation? Society more generally.

Q9: If you could change one thing about your work, what would it be?

Q10: How often would you say you talk to others about the possibility of becoming a minister/pastor/religious leader?

Why do you tell them they should consider it?

Why shouldn't someone consider it?

Congregation – Life Narrative

Q11: If I were to introduce your congregation to someone who has never visited, how would you describe it? What are the most important activities of the congregation? Why do people attend this congregation? Why do they stay?

Size/participation?

Style of worship?

Youth? Kids?

Staff? Volunteers?

Education/Spiritual growth?

Outreach?

Q12: Can you tell me the story of how this congregation got to this point? What it always (as they describe)? What have been some of the events or chapters or moments that have shaped this congregation?

What about the most recent 10 years? Participation? Staff? Financials?

Q13: How would you describe the congregation's relationship to the surrounding neighborhood/community? What does neighborhood/community need most?

Q14: Over the next few years, what do you think will be the biggest challenges for this congregation?

Is the congregation ready for that? Why? Why not?

What changes are coming that are in your control?

Are there changes coming that are out of your control?

If you could just snap your fingers and it would be so – what would you change about this congregation?

What role do you play in determining the future of this congregation? Other leaders?

Congregation members?

Q15: Imagine I was to write you a blank check to hire additional staff...

What kind of position would you hire? Why?

Where might you look for that position?

How would that decision get made?

Religious Worker – Organizational & Personal Well Begin

Q16: Are there responsibilities or expectations of you that you were never trained for?

Was this always the case?

What do you do about that? Training? Credentials? Outsource?

Technology? Positive? Negative?
Continuing education?

Q17: When you face difficult decision or situations, who do you turn to? What resources would you put on your short list?

Q18: Would you describe your compensation as fair?

Adequate? *If "no," spend addition time probing for this.*

Good?

Something else?

Q19: How is your compensation decided?

How is it structured?

Housing?

Medical benefits?

Other benefits

Expenses?

Debt?

Q20: How would you describe your work-life balance?

Other significant vocations?

Other significant hobbies?

Demands on family?

Behavioral Observations

The observation of the staff/organization meeting will be negotiated with the pastor/head of staff. Once permission to observe has been secured, and the observation scheduled, a member of the research team will observe the meeting and take notes on the following sensitizing concepts: mission/vision/purpose language, centralized/decentralized decision making, routines of work, leadership/patterns of authority, congregational culture, congregational ecology, range of resources, ordinary theology, formal/informal networks. The observation will include all members of the staff attending the meeting observed. Only minimal interaction between researchers and staff members will occur. Notes will be typed and included in the qualitative analysis.

The observation of the worship service will be scheduled in coordination with the pastor/head of staff. The research team will recommend that the observer be announced at the beginning of the service; however, the final decision to make the congregation aware of the observer's presence will be left up to the pastor/head of staff. A member of the research team will observe

and participate in the worship service and will take notes on the following sensitizing concepts: mission/vision/purpose language, centralized/decentralized decision making, routines of work, leadership/patterns of authority, congregational culture, congregational ecology, range of resources, ordinary theology, formal/informal networks. The research team member will interact with participants in worship only in ways typical of any worship participant.

Documents

In conversation with the key informant, the research team will provide a sample list of documents that would be useful to the research. Other than publicly available documents or those provided to participant observers in the course of the worship service, all documents shared with the research team will be provided by the key informant. Documents will be treated with whatever level of confidentiality informants request,

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Appendix B – Research Description: Division of Responsibilities

Principal Investigator – The PI will be involved in all research activities and is responsible for the oversight of all data collection, analysis, and reporting. In most cases, all research procedures at a single site will be conducted by a single member of the research team—either the PI or a co-investigator. Site assignments are made by the PI. In order to meet the expected timeline of the funding agency, some recruiting activities, participant observations, and analysis may be assigned to research assistants (graduate students).

The Co-Principal Investigator – The co-PI serves as the Director of the center overseeing the research grant. The co-PI has been involved in research design and will be involved in analysis of the data, but not in direct data collection.

Co-Investigator(s) – The CIs will be involved in all research activities at a small number of research sites as assigned by the PI.

Research Assistants – The RAs will be involved in select research activities including recruitment procedures and worship observations.

Research Team

Timothy Snyder, Principal Investigator

Training: CITI

Date Completed: 12/20/2019

F. Douglas Powe, co-Principal Investigator

Training: CITI

Date Completed: 12/18/2019

Amy Kubichek, Co-Investigator

Training: CITI

Date Completed: 11/1/2019

Lovett Weems, Co-Investigator

Training: CITI

Date Completed: 10/14/2019

Rachel Koehler, Research Assistant

Training: CITI

Date Completed: 01/15/2020

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Appendix C – Research Setting: Recruitment & Permission to Conduct Research

Recruitment Procedures

It is important for this study to include a diverse cohort of Christian congregations with diversity in terms of denominational tradition, size of worshipping community, and geographic location.

To achieve a diverse cohort, and because there is no complete published listing or complete database of religious congregations, our research staff has conducted systematic observations of select Census tracts throughout the Metro-Washington, DC region and compiled a pool of possible research sites and contact information using publicly available information. There are over 150 congregations in the current database of possible sites.

Recruitment will proceed following these steps:

1. Possible sites will be stratified by size and religious tradition using a database of DMV congregations. All data in the database is publicly available.

The research team hopes to recruit 15 congregations with 50 or less participating in weekly worship, 15 congregations with weekly worship participation between 51-300, and 15 congregations with over 300 in weekly worship participation

The research team hopes to recruit no less than 10 congregations within the Evangelical Protestant tradition, no less than 10 congregations within the Mainline Protestant tradition, no less than 10 congregations self-identifying as Historically Black Protestant, and no less than 10 congregations within the Roman Catholic tradition.

2. Initial contact will be made using publicly available information. Copies of sample phone scripts and official letters of invitation are enclosed.
3. In some cases, research assistants may visit unresponsive congregations to make face-to-face contact and provide pastors with information about the opportunity to participate in the research.

Initial Contact

Using publicly available information, researchers will reach out using phone and email. An official letter of invitation details participation in the study and provides additional information about the research team.

Initial Contact – Phone Prompt & Email

Phone Prompt:

Hello, my name is [name of researcher] and I am calling from Wesley Theological Seminary. Is the pastor available?

If pastor is available, continue...

Hi, my name is [name of researcher] and I am calling from Wesley Theological Seminary. We are conducting a research study of the religious workforce and I was wondering if you had a few minutes to explore the possibility of [name of congregation] participating in our study.

If no, send email / follow up. If yes, continue...

The Religious Workforce project is a major research study here in the DMV, and we are trying to better understand Christian congregations in the area. We know that religious participation and involvement is changing, and we would like to learn more about what congregations are doing these days, and what kind of staff/volunteer leadership they require to fulfill their missions.

Participating in the study is pretty simple. We have a brief questionnaire that takes about 20 minutes to complete. That provides some background information on the congregation. We would definitely want to interview you, as the pastor of the church, and if you give us permission, we would love to come and observe a worship service and some kind of organizational meeting. Congregations can also choose to participate in some, but not all, of the research activities.

If you have questions, I would be happy to answer them. I can also send you more information and follow up with you in the next few days.

Email Contact

Dear Pastor _____,

I hope this finds you well. My name is Tim Snyder. I am a researcher and faculty member at Wesley Theological Seminary here in Washington, DC. The seminary has a grant to study on the religious workforce of Christian congregations in the United States through the Seminary's Lewis Center for Church Leadership. I am writing to invite you and [*name of congregation*] to be a part of the study.

Attached you will find a more formal letter of invitation with additional details. If you would like to talk more about this opportunity or if you have any questions, my contact information is below.

Blessings,

Tim Snyder
[email signature]

Letter of Invitation

Dear Pastor _____,

This past spring, Wesley Theological Seminary and its Lewis Center for Church Leadership were awarded a grant to study the religious workforce of Christian congregations in the United States. On behalf of the research team, I am writing to invite you and your congregation to be a part of the project: "Religious Workforce in the DMV."

The purpose of the Religious Workforce Project is to understand better how congregations employ and deploy persons to fulfill their missions. If you and your congregation agree to join the study, here is what your participation would entail. First, the research team will send an online questionnaire that asks some basic information about you, as "head of staff," and your congregation. This questionnaire should take no longer than 20 minutes and can be completed by anyone with thorough knowledge of the congregation and its operations. Second, the research team will set up a one-hour interview with you or another pastor/staff member of your choosing. This interview will include some autobiographical questions, but also some questions about the life of your congregation. We also would hope to visit a worship service and a business/team meeting. During these visits, a member of the research team would observe and take notes but would otherwise be a respectful presence in your space.

Below is additional information about the research team that is conducting this study. If you have any questions or what to have further conversation, please feel free to contact us.

About the Research Team

Please note, we continue to add staff to our team. If you decide to participate, new members will be introduced first by our senior researcher.

***Tim Snyder** is senior researcher at The Lewis Center for Church Leadership and Visiting Instructor of Practical Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary. Trained as a theologian and scholar of American religion, his ministry and scholarly work is focused on the changing religious landscape in the United States.*

***Amy Kubichek** is research associate at The Lewis Center for Church Leadership. Trained as a sociologist, she specializes in data management and statistical analysis. Her past research has focused on gender and international development.*

***F. Douglas Powe** is director of The Lewis Center for Church Leadership and C. Logan Professor of Evangelism at Wesley Theological Seminary. An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, he is committed to helping congregations flourish through community partnering.*

***Lovett H. Weems, Jr.**, is distinguished professor of church leadership and senior consultant of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Weems was the founding director of the Lewis Center in 2003, coming to the position after 18 years as president of Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. He became senior consultant in 2017.*

Permission to Conduct Research

Acquiring permission to conduct research in Christian congregations is a complicated task due to the variety of organizational structures and patterns of authority that exist in U.S. religious communities.

In some cases, all that will be required is the approval of the pastor, who in this study is also serving as a key informant. In other cases, a governing board or committee may need to approve of congregation's participation in the research study. In all cases, the invitation to participate in this research study includes a conversation between the PI and pastor/head of staff. The PI will ask the pastor/key informant:

“It is important for our research team to have permission to study this congregation before we start collecting data. Who needs to be consulted with and who can provide that permission in a way that participants in your congregation will have confidence that these research activities are mutually-beneficial?”

The process for acquiring permission will then take the lead of the pastor/head of staff's response to this prompt.

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: "The Religious Workforce in the U-Street/Logan Circle Neighborhood
Principal Investigator: Tim Snyder, *Senior Researcher*, The Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary

Study Background

This research study includes approximately 50 congregations in the metro Washington, DC area. The study includes congregations that are small, medium, and large, and it also includes congregations across religious traditions.

The principle investigator of this study is Tim Snyder, Senior Researcher at The Lewis Center for Church Leadership and Visiting Instructor of Practical Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary. In addition to his scholarly training as a researcher, he brings a decade of experience in congregational ministry to this project.

Participants in the study will be asked to complete a questionnaire, participate in an interview, and allow a member of the research team and observe either a worship service or a business meeting

Purpose

The research team is interested in learning more about how these congregations staff the mission of their churches, and how their pastor/ministry staff (paid and unpaid) understand the nature of ministry today.

Procedures

If you choose to participate, participants in the study will be asked to complete:

1. Congregational Questionnaire – completed by anyone who has thorough knowledge of the church, it's ministries, and its operations.
2. Interview with Researcher – ideally the interview would be with the head of staff or another pastoral leader.
3. Access to Observe Congregation – a member of the research team will come and observe either a worship service or a business/organizational meeting.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. You may also choose not to participate in certain ways or choose not to allow use of certain research procedures. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide will be destroyed and no identifiable materials will be included in study findings.

Benefits and Risk

Benefits to participation include the opportunity to contribute to theological research intended to better resource Christian congregations. Many participants will find the interviews to be personally enlightening and they may benefit from such reflection.

Some autobiographical questions may yield sensitive information or uncomfortable memories. While every effort will be made to secure research notes, transcripts and recordings, there is a very slight risk that these could be compromised. In such a case, any personal information shared could lead to negative social implications within the congregation or beyond.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to keep any identifiable information obtained through this research study confidential. All research data will be handled with care. Research notes will remain under lock and key at the private office of the principal investigator and electronic files will be stored on a password protected computer and encrypted cloud storage. The identities of all participants will be protected by pseudonyms and will never be intentionally disclosed without the written permission of the participant or as required by law.

Members of the research team will have access to all data for this project. No other individuals will have access to this data, including those affiliated with the Lilly Endowment, Inc. which has provided the funding for this research.

Contact Information

If at any time you have any further questions about the study, you may contact any member of the research team.

Tim Snyder

Senior Researcher

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership
Wesley Theological Seminary
202-664-5707
tsnyder@wesleyseminary.edu

F. Douglas Powe

Project Director

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership
Wesley Theological Seminary
202-664-5706
dpowe@wesleyseminary.edu

Agreement to Participate

By signing below, you are indicating that you have read this form, been given an opportunity to have questions answered, and are voluntarily giving your informed consent to participate in

this study in the ways identified above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep if you wish.

Printed Name - Research Participant

Signature - Research Participant

Date

TIMOTHY K. SNYDER

Printed Name – Research Team Member

Signature – Research Team Member

Date

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Appendix D – Participant Population

Participants in Observations

It is impossible to know how many participants will be observed in the worship services and organizational meetings. The vast majority of these participants will have no meaningful contact with our observers.

Participants in Interviews

Our goal is to interview up to 50 key informants (e.g., pastors; all adults). While we hope to include gender diversity among our key informants, some religious traditions do not permit women to serve as pastors, therefore, 75 percent (or more) of our informants may be male.