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Exploring Practices Pastoral Leaders Use to Retain Millennial Parishioners

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Walden University

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2020

Abstract

Exploring Leadership Practices to Retain Millennials in the Christian Church

by

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MA, Southern Adventist University, 2011

BA, Oakwood University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Leadership and Organizational Management

Walden University

September 2020

Abstract

The number of millennials attending church appears to be decreasing dramatically with each successive generation. The problem is that 60% of young Christians are leaving the church either permanently or for an extended period once they reach 15 years of age. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to examine practices pastoral leaders rely on to retain millennial parishioners. Burns' transformational leadership theory and Bandura's social cognitive learning theory served as the conceptual framework for this inquiry. The key research question centered on the leadership practices pastoral leaders use to retain millennial parishioners after age 15. Additionally, this research examined (a) whether millennials believe that pastors are able to support their spiritual needs, (b) the expressed reasons for millennials leaving the church (c) whether pastoral leaders involve millennials in the routine operation of their respective churches (d) practices that could be used by pastoral leaders to retain millennials (e) whether pastoral leaders believe they need additional training to collaborate effectively with millennials and (f) challenges pastoral leaders face when attempting to engage with the millennial population. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews from 15 pastoral leaders and 15 millennials and were analyzed through transcription of and reviewing data, data analysis, and synthesizing and reporting what was found from the data. Additionally, three themes emerged: Pastoral leaders and millennials who actively attend church, agreed that intentional relationships, relevant topics that aided in spiritual growth, and leadership opportunities in the church, were instrumental in retaining millennials and made it possible for positive social change to be effectual.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my family, especially my girlfriend (wife) of 29 years Tara, who has listened to my tears, my fears, who never let me give up, I love you. To my children, Tiffany, Patricia, and Patrick, Jr., who all wondered, why was I doing a doctorate? It is to encourage in them, through a living example, that learning is a life-long journey, and the destination is where your imagination may lead you. To my deceased mother, Doris, who inspired my curiosity through laughter and persistent insistence on expanding my mind. I can only hope that I have achieved some of her dreams for my life.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Overview.....	1
Background.....	3
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Question (RQ) for this Study	6
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Nature of the Study.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations	10
Limitations	11
Summary.....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	12
Introduction and Overview	12
Literature Search Strategy.....	12
Theoretical Foundation	13
Transformational Leadership Theory	14
Social Cognitive Learning Theory.....	15
Previous Application of Theoretical Frameworks	16

Key Concepts	20
Millennial Characteristics	20
Millennials and Faith	21
Millennials and Organizational Differences	22
Millennials in the Christian Church	23
Millennials and Family Matters	23
How to Communicate with Millennials	24
Millennial Work Values	24
Retention Practices Used by Church Leaders	25
Reverse Mentoring of Millennials	26
Pastoral Leadership and Millennials	27
Summary and Conclusions	27
Chapter 3: Research Method	29
Overview of Methodology	29
Qualitative Case Study Design	29
Role of the Researcher	30
Ethical Considerations and Bias Reduction	31
Methodology	32
Target Population and Sampling Strategy	32
Recruitment, Sample Size, and Saturation	34
Data Collection and Instrumentation	35

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	
Recruitment.....	36
Data Collection	36
Data Analysis Plan.....	37
Issues of Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	37
Transferability.....	38
Dependability	38
Confirmability and Intra- and Inter-coder Reliability.....	39
Ethical Procedures	39
Summary.....	40
Chapter 4: Results	42
Introduction.....	42
Research Setting.....	42
Demographics	43
Data Collection	43
Results of Millennial Interviews.....	44
Leadership Opportunities.....	45
Pastoral Interviews.....	49
Results of Pastoral Interviews.....	50
Pastoral Remarks	55
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	55
Credibility	55

Dependability	55
Confirmability.....	56
Summary	56
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	59
Introduction.....	59
Limitations of the Study.....	60
Interpretation of Findings	60
Recommendations.....	63
Theme 1: Millennials Desire Inclusive Leadership	63
Theme 2: Millennials and Pastoral Leaders See Relevancy as Important	64
Theme 3: Millennials Desire Authentic Expressions of Faith and Belief	64
Theme 4: Millennials Want to Use Their Talents.....	65
Theme 5: Millennials Want Leadership Opportunities in Ministry	65
Methodological Implications	65
Empirical Implications.....	66
Theoretical Implications	67
Implications for Positive Social Change.....	67
Recommendations for Further Research.....	68
Conclusion	68
References.....	71
Appendix A: Interview Questions for Pastoral Leaders	80
Appendix B: Interview Questions for Millennials.....	82

Appendix C: Permission from Dr. Dent to use a version of his questionnaire and interview guide.....	83
Appendix D: Interview Protocol.....	84
Appendix E: Permission to use Interview Protocol	85

List of Figures

Figure 1. Methodological process used in the study.....	33
Figure 2. Millennial response to church attendance	45
Figure 3. Leadership opportunities	46
Figure 4. Pastoral leadership necessary for your spiritual growth?	47
Figure 5. Relevancy of topics	48
Figure 6. Relationships and millennials.....	49
Figure 7. Ministry opportunities	50
Figure 8. Pastor years of ministerial experience	51
Figure 9. Ministerial training	52
Figure 10. Millennial attendance	53
Figure 11. What practices do you use to retain millennials in your church?.....	54
Figure 12. What challenges do you face when trying to engage millennials in your church?.....	55
Figure 13. Pastoral ministry to millennials.....	62

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Overview

Millennials are a group of people born between 1980 and 1995 who are often referred to as Generation Y (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016). According to Ranier and Ranier (2011), millennials are the largest generation in the history of the United States, representing nearly 78 million people. Further, they are the first people born into the digital world of technology (Bencsik et al., 2016). It is predicted that in 10 years, millennials will represent 75% of those employed in the workforce (Moore, Everly, and Bauer, 2016). The Pew Research Group is deemed a primary source of data for religious demographics in the United States (Burke, 2015). A study conducted by this group found that people have been leaving the Christian church, and over the years, fewer have been identifying themselves as Christians. Alarming, the study found that millennials are the primary reason for the exodus from the church (Burke, 2015).

For some millennials, a disconnect from organized religion is based on a point of view that organized religion is intolerant of doubt, elitist with relationships, has beliefs that are anti-science, is excessively protective of its patrons, has shallow teachings, and is too controlling of differences (Jenkin and Martin, 2014). Other millennials view organized religion as controlling and evasive and have expressed that it does not deal with real-life issues. As a result, they feel the Christian church does not meet their needs (Kramer, 2012).

It is well documented that millennials are a unique cohort. For instance, Raymo and Raymo (2014) reported that millennials were more racially and ethnically diverse and

more 'tech savvy' than older generations and more likely to identify themselves as being unaffiliated or holding nontraditional beliefs. Businesses and organizations alike are actively seeking solutions to better interact with this group (Jenkin and Martin, 2014). The Church is among those organizations and have demonstrated an interest in discovering ways to promote attendance in this cohort. Generally, millennials desire to be part of organizations that value openness and approachability (Raymo and Raymo, 2014). Millennials place a premium on being mentored by Christian leaders and have a need to know they can contribute to the overall success of a Christian organization (Raymo and Raymo, 2014). Christian organizations that wish to be successful, or those already experiencing success on some level, may benefit from incorporating millennials into the overall decision- making fabric to enhance the formal structure of the Christian church. Nevertheless, millennials continue to leave the Christian church and, to date, it is unknown if pastoral leaders can retain them (Burke, 2015).

In general, millennials are moving away from traditional Christian churches (Kramer, 2012) and several churches have reported difficulty in finding effective ways to engage this generation, citing that many young Christians seem bored with the church and consider religious leaders to be ineffective at piquing their intellectual interests (Burke, 2015). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore factors relating to why millennials are leaving the Christian church, as well as to determine whether pastoral leaders feel equipped with the knowledge to retain millennials in their churches. This study was relevant because it explored practices that pastoral leaders use to retain millennials in the church and helped to fill the gap in research scholarship on this topic.

The potential social implication of this study are to better understand the reasons millennials are leaving the Christian church; discover ways to halt their exodus; and identify ways in which millennials may contribute to the overall good of society via a church organization. Chapter 1 presents a background on millennials and a brief discussion of the problem, the gap in the research, as well as a list of the research questions. The chapter concludes with the interview questions for the millennials and pastoral leaders, the theoretical framework, nature of the study, unique definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance of the study, and summary of the chapter.

Background

Individuals born between 1980 and 2000 are known as millennials or Generation Y, since they chronologically follow Generation Xers (Lloyd et al, 2013). Findings from studies revealed that almost every denomination of the Christian church in the U.S. has lost a significant number of members primarily due to millennials leaving the church (Burke, 2015). Today, approximately 21% of millennials are likely to consider themselves religiously unaffiliated (Taylor, 2014). Various scholars have addressed this exodus of congregants, citing a lack of leadership, vision, communication, as well as failure in reaching the younger demographic in Christian churches (Bruce, 2011).

As pastors seek to reach and retain millennial parishioners, they must look for new ways to engage this demographic with methods that are different from the management practices currently used (Deitsch, 2012). Much research has focused on millennials in the workplace; however, few studies have explored what practices pastoral

leaders rely on to retain millennials. The researcher sought to fill this gap by identifying factors that retain millennials in the Christian Church and explored millennials' perception of why they are leaving the church, and how pastoral leaders might stabilize or increase retention.

Problem Statement

The specific problem is that 60% of young Christians 15 years of age, are leaving the church either permanently or for an extended period (Barna Research Group, 2011) and pastoral leadership is concerned that if this trend continues, the church will lose its ability to impact future generations of young adults and society in general. Fortune 500 companies, media firms, major faith communities, along with other organizations, have become increasingly interested in finding ways to successfully interact with the millennial generation (Jenkin and Martin, 2014). The National Census in the United States does not query religious affiliation hence, a primary source of such data is found with the Pew Research Group (Burke, 2015). In 2015, Pew conducted a study on 35,000 adults in the United States and found that 78.4% identified with being a Christian; but 8 years later, that percentage fell to 70.6% (Burke, 2015). Although people are leaving most major branches of the Christian church in the United States, Pew found that millennials are the primary reason for this decline (Pew Research Center, 2016). Thirty-three percent of millennials deny being affiliated with any faith, which represents a 10% increase in millennials' denying any religious affiliation (Burke, 2015). As a result, there is an impetus to comprehend how pastoral leaders are meeting the expectations of millennials to stop or reduce their departure from their churches (Dent, 2016; Pew

Research Center, 2016; Rainier & Rainier, 2011). Waters and Bortree (2012) noted that providing millennials with dedicated attention and reaching out to them would most likely result in a more satisfying relationship for both parties. In religious institutions, such as churches, the pursuit of mutually beneficial results, helps millennials by providing opportunities for inclusion, spiritual growth, and reflection. They aimed to uncover possible pastoral leadership practices that nurture millennial relationships, help the religious institutions with more opportunities to secure millennial involvement through tithing, and promote volunteering or engaging in religious programs for fostering social change (Waters and Bortree, 2012). According to Iyer (2012), there is a perception among Americans that America is in a leadership crisis. Therefore, a need may exist for change in leadership styles and praxis. In a study by Barna Group (2013), it was found that 82% of Christian adults feel that a leadership crisis exists in America. This study filled a gap in the literature concerning organizational leadership practices within Christian churches by identifying the extent to which pastor' past and current church leadership experience (i.e., how many churches the pastor has served, and in what areas the pastor may have served), and the pastors' tenure in the church affect the leadership practices of the church's leaders. This literature gap in pastor experience and leadership practices provides the rationale for this study.

Purpose of the Study

Research has shown that once millennials reach 15 years of age, almost 60% are leaving the church either permanently or for an extended period (Barna Research Group, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore identified

factors relating to why millennials are leaving the Christian church by age 15, and to create a set of responses that are critical for maintaining or strengthening pastoral leadership with the knowledge to retain millennials beyond age 15. These challenges are broad, and each may relate to how pastoral leaders and millennials view the purpose and function of the Christian church. Data were collected from 15 pastoral leaders and 15 millennials to address problems relating to millennial departure from the church, as well as identify measures to retain millennials.

Research Question (RQ) for this Study

The following research question is foundational to this study which will provide necessary leadership principles to assist current and future pastoral leaders with viable methods to retain and increase millennial involvement, as well as identify what millennials may contribute to the Christian church. The central and supporting research question for this study was based on the conceptual framework and literature review for this study: The central question for this research:

Research Question 1: What leadership practices do pastors employ to retain millennial parishioners after age 15?

Conceptual Framework

This research utilized the findings of Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory which focuses on traits and qualities of leaders and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive learning theory, which focuses on how followers learn from leaders. Burns concluded that transformational leaders are often found to model select values and use charismatic methods to attract people to those values and to themselves (Yahaya &

Ebrahim, 2016). Burns defined transformational leadership as a practice whereby leaders and followers engage in a mutual system of helping each other to reach a level of spirit that is inspirational and transformative for the entire group of followers. Bandura's theory posits that learning can occur by simply observing the actions of others, and referred to this as observational learning (Nabavi, 2014). Further, Bandura's theory identified three concepts through controlled studies. First, people can learn through observation; second, mental states are important to learning; and third, learning does not necessarily lead to a change in behavior (Nabavi, 2014). Understanding how individuals learn through social interactions and how transformational leaders use this unique ability to positively influence followers was foundational to this research and in promoting social change, first through the person, then to society in general.

Nature of the Study

I applied a qualitative exploratory case study design approach using semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews depend on how effectively the interviewer is communicating the questions along with being able to listen attentively, pausing, probing, or appropriately encouraging the interviewee to talk freely (Newton, 2009). In the current study, I interviewed active pastors and millennial parishioners. Each of the interviews was conducted via audiotape. The interviews were then transcribed to ensure all responses were accurately recorded. Participants, who had given consent, had their transcriptions analyzed for emerging themes and results conveyed through description of occurrences (see Creswell, 2009). The strategy of using a qualitative case study was appropriate for this research because I explored the leadership practices of

pastoral leaders. According to (Yin, 2013), a qualitative exploratory case-study approach is appropriate for investigating how individuals and groups respond to a social problem, for instance, millennials leaving the Christian church. Further, in an exploratory case study design, a researcher cannot determine the causal inference because of limited abilities to exclude or rule out alternative explanations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). As such, case study research methodologies are based on behaviors of a person, group, or an organization, and these behaviors fluctuate from person to person and organization to organization. Thus, their dependability for the study is not always clearly defined (Yin, 2013). Therefore, a quantitative approach, which quantifies responses into numerical values, would have not been the most suitable option for this study. Additionally, there was a limitation of time to gather data from the participants; hence multiple procedures were used to collect data from the various participants (Creswell, 2009). Components that prevent millennials from attending church, as well as factors that may influence/prevent pastoral leaders from retaining millennials in the Christian church were investigated in this study.

Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clark, 2011). A purposeful sample of participants was drawn from semistructured interviews of 15 pastoral leaders and 15 millennials from Christian Churches in the Southern United States. Because I anticipated difficulty getting more

than one chance to interview the candidates, semistructured interviews were appropriate for this research. Semistructured interviews provide clear instructions that are reliable and comparable (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008). Data were analyzed using the statistical software NVivo.

Definition of Terms

Generation X: The Generation X population is a relatively small generation of 44 million which comprises just 20% of the U.S. population. Generation X individuals have often been viewed to be freedom-minded, individualistic, and self-absorbed (Robertson, 2013).

Millennials: Born between 1980 and 2000. Millennials are entering the workforce as the most optimistic and educated generational cohort group in modern history. Millennials are dedicated workers hence, millennials have become accustomed to stepping up to various leadership positions, and now enter the workforce with high expectations and a desire to make a difference (Fore, 2013).

Pastor: The leader of a church who is responsible for spiritual development, guidance, and encouragement of the parishioners (Puls, Ludden, and Freemyer, 2014). The word “pastor” derives from the Latin noun pastor which means “shepherd” and relates to the Latin verb *pascere*-to lead to pasture, set to grazing, cause to eat. *Pascere* is a word that is usually found in Christianity, so it has been a unique Christian terminology (Kim, 2014).

Nones: People who do not identify themselves as being affiliated with a religious group (Russell, Brett, and Liu, 2015).

Parishioners: People who attend church and follow the teachings of Christ (Dobocan, 2015).

Pastoral leadership: A pastor's behavior as a leader who has a direct bearing on church growth, sustainment of church members, and any community outreach endeavors he or she aspires to accomplish (Royster, 2016).

Assumptions

Social research usually begins with addressing an issue, solving a problem, or answering a question and as such, philosophical assumptions are unavoidable (Cunningham, 2014). There were four assumptions of this study: (a) the pilot testing of the interview instrument has been conducted and permissions have been received for use of instrument (Appendix G and F); (b) data saturation may be attained after interviewing 15 millennials and 15 pastoral leaders; (c) millennials and other pastoral leaders will be assumed to answer the interview questions truthfully; and (d) I will adhere to accepted practices of research and will perform the interviews as consistently as possible for all participants. The assumptions were necessary as various sources generally place millennial disengagement from the church on the Christian church, rather than on specific leadership or the millennials themselves.

Scope and Delimitations

I focused on the leadership principles that pastoral leaders may or may not be using to retain millennial parishioners. The delimitation was the geographical location of the pastoral leaders and millennials. The participants were limited to attendees of Christian churches in the Southern U.S.

Limitations

Only pastors who were actively engaged in ministry in the Southeastern U.S. and millennials who regularly attend church were interviewed. The geographic location did not permit generalizations to other populations based on culture, ethnicity, and religious doctrines.

Summary

I investigated the leadership practices of pastoral leaders and how reverse mentoring of millennials was significant because no such study prior to this had analyzed the extent to which this may aid in retaining millennial parishioners. This qualitative case study explored factors pertaining to leadership praxis pastors use to retain millennial parishioners. This study may provide needed guidance to help churches and nonprofit organizations identify necessary areas of reassessment concerning ways to maintain millennial parishioners. This study may aid in assisting organizations in identifying key areas in which additional education and training may be essential. As church leaders strive to develop tomorrow's leaders, they may find it helpful to understand personal leadership practices and traits that are effective for organizational growth and prosperity (Bartholomew, 2006). The results of this study may help to guide overall leadership development with a potential for far-reaching implications for social change in communities. Chapter 1 contained an overview of the study, including the background, problem statement, research questions, theoretical framework, scope and limitations, and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Overview

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature on the millennial generation, specifically regarding the religiosity of millennials, millennial involvement in churches, and pastoral perspectives regarding millennials. The focus of this chapter is on the literature related to the characteristics and values of millennials and gaps in the literature. The theoretical frameworks for this study will be discussed.

There is limited published information regarding the current focus of this study. Most of the published work reviews millennials in the work force and not millennials in the church. The following topics will be explored in this review: characteristics of the millennial, motivating influences of leadership, millennial organizational outlook, millennial work values, reverse mentoring of millennials, and the theoretical foundation that grounds this study.

Literature Search Strategy

All literature was ascertained using Google, Google Scholar, and electronic databases including Proquest and books. The key terms entered in Proquest, Google and Google Scholar were *pastoral leadership* and *millennials*, *millennials* and *Christian church*, *non-profits* and *millennials*, *millennials* and *religion*, and *millennials* and *retention*. Eighty- seven journal articles were reviewed on millennials. Of those, 50 were peer-reviewed and pertinent to this topic. Likewise, 53 references are included in this study, of which 87% are within 5 years. Because little research was available on this

topic, literature that focused on millennials in the workplace and current dissertations were included.

Theoretical Foundation

This literature review analyzed how pastoral leadership could be instrumental in retaining millennial parishioners beyond age 15. Further, the review should help to determine how pastoral leaders can be more effective in retaining millennial parishioners. The overall study was based on the principles of transformational leadership and social cognitive learning theories. The theories, by Burns (1978) and Bandura (1977) respectively, can give pastors a different understanding of their role as leader and mentor, and how effective they can be in influencing millennials. Additionally, other models have been developed on Bandura's social cognitive learning theory. In 1995, the general aggression model (GAM) was introduced by Craig Anderson, William Deuser, and Kristina DeNeve. This theory has been used primarily to understand the effects of media violence on aggression, including such effects among children and adolescents. The GAM incorporates arousal, affect (such as attitudes or aggressive feelings), and cognition (such as beliefs about aggression or aggressive thoughts) into a complex theory of aggression (Roskos-Ewolden, 2007). Further, George Gerbner, in the 60's and 70's, introduced what is known as the cultivation theory. Cultivation theory looks at the long-term effects of television on viewers. Cultivation theory suggested the danger of television lies in its ability to shape not a specific viewpoint about an issue, but its ability to shape people's moral values and general beliefs about the world (Mosharafa, 2015). Although these are recent and parallel researched theories based in part on Bandura's

SCLT, they were not used for this study, as these theories deal primarily with observed aggressive behaviors and media consumption. Therefore, they did not address this study with their respective interests.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) has attracted the attention of several scholars and has the distinction of being the most influential theory of leadership for over 20 years (Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). This theory was created by Burns in 1978 and was based on his studies on political leaders. Additionally, TLT is based on the process that leaders and followers influence each other to result in an innovative degree of morality and inspiration. According to Burns, the relationship between the leader and follower is unusually symbiotic, as it may often stem from a deep level of morality, commitment, and performance. Moreover, Judge, Woolf, Hurst, and Livingston (2008) explained that Bass' transformational leadership is accomplished through the four I's: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Judge et al., (2008) state that, idealized influence is demonstrated when the transformational leader serves as a charismatic role model to followers. By articulating an inspiring vision to their followers, transformational leaders are said to foster inspirational motivation. Finally, attending to individual needs of followers allows transformational leaders to promote individualized consideration. Bass (1985) applied this theory to industrial and military settings by incorporating organizational psychology to its foundation of political science. Bass concluded that the theory influences people to go the extra mile or above what is expected of them. Based on these components, if

transformative pastoral leaders are intellectually stimulating the millennial population in the church, millennials will, in turn, be inspired. This could result in this population's needs being met, and their likelihood to stay in the church (Judge et al., 2008).

Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Albert Bandura is known for being an eminent psychologist and for creating the social cognitive learning theory (SCLT; Nabavi, 2014). The SCLT is arguably the most persuasive concept of development and learning. The basic premise of this theory is that humans learn from interacting with others in a social manner. After observing a behavior, people tend to follow the actions of what was observed, especially if the behavior is positive in nature (Nabavi, 2014). SCLT has a basis that seeks to provide a comprehensive approach on how organizational leadership impacts individuals (Nabavi, 2014). A fundamental aspect of Bandura's theory presumes a relationship that is focused on the passing of values and culture of an organization to others for the organization to be successful (McKenzie, Neiger, & Thackeray, 2009).

Bandura believed that behavior occurs directly, vicariously or via self-reinforcement (McKenzie et al., 2009). It is understood that modeled behavior impacts various levels of humanity. For instance, Bandura, in his famous Bobo doll experiment conducted in 1961 and 1963, showed that children often learn and imitate behaviors observed in adults (Cherry, 2016). Bandura identified three fundamental representations of observational knowledge: (a) a live model, which involves an actual individual demonstrating or acting out a behavior; (b) a verbal instructional model, which involves descriptions and explanations of a behavior; and (c) a symbolic model, which involves

real or fictional characters displaying behaviors in books, films, television programs, or online media (Cherry, 2016). Since the SCLT is based on the premise of observation, imitation, and modeling (Nabavi, 2014), millennials who maintain a connection to the Christian church may do so out of a positive experience from interaction with pastoral leaders and influential mentorship. The SCLT has often been called a bridge between behaviorist learning theories and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation (Nabavi, 2014). Hence, SCLT or as it is referred to in current literature *Social Learning Theory* (SLT) and now *Social Cognitive Theory* (Nabavi, 2014), has become perhaps the most influential theory of learning and development, as it is rooted in many of the basic concepts of traditional learning theories used by social scientists.

Previous Application of Theoretical Frameworks

In a similar study, Dent (2016) used Lewin's change theory to explore the connections between attendance of churchgoers and the needs of the various generations, and whether leadership styles varied based on the generation being served. Grundman (2016) used the theories of Bandura, Bowlby, and Bronfenbrenner as the conceptual framework to discover how mothers formed decisions as well as the lived experiences of their childcare duties. In a study that explored the strategies used by business managers to address the generational gaps in the workplace, Riley (2015) used the transformational leadership theory.

Pan, Wu, Zhou, & Lou (2015) utilized concept of SCLT and focused on the influence of a leader's creativity on employees in an organizational settings and further

incorporated Leader-Member Exchange Relationship (LMX) and authoritarian leadership as situational factors to track their interaction effect on employees' creativity. The researchers used two studies with two different samples of leader-subordinate dyads in China to test their assumptions. The findings of the study showed (a) the presence of the leader's creativity had a positive association with the employees' creativity; (b) authoritarian leadership can positively moderate the relationship; and (c) LMX interacted with the joint condition to affect employees' creativity. Moreover, the effect of the leader's creativity on the employees was shown to be stronger when LMX and authoritarian leadership was high compared to when LMX and authoritarian leadership was low.

In a study conducted by Lenir (2016) the use of SCLT for management development was suggested. The study introduced views on ways managers can learn to be better managers in organizations. What is more, the researcher introduced Mintzberg's approach to management education and discussed how it was applied to management and development in the workplace. Mintzberg's approach to management education, when used in the context of management development directly in the workplace, led to an approach which allowed for self-directed learning in small groups. Other implications were that leadership and development practitioners need to experiment and pilot truly novel pedagogical approaches to management development in their organizations. Furthermore, the researcher noted that social learning for management development emerged from the SCLT, which is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of

motor reproduction or direct reinforcement. In other words, people observe the people around them behaving in various ways and think about the relationship between their behavior and the consequences. This supports the outcome of Bandura's Bobo doll experiment (1961). Over time, identification occurs in that observers internalize or adopt another person's behavior. However, with the addition of reflection through the lens of external conceptual ideas, Mintzberg's approach resulted in managers learning new behaviors rather than simply adopting the behaviors of their peers (Lenir, 2016). Moreover, in the area of education, Lineros & Hinojosa (2012) extrapolated from DeBell (1992) regarding conditioning in student learning development based on Pavlov's conditioned responses in dogs that "educators do not worry about the internal mental processes that lead to desirable cognitive outcomes; instead the focus is on what conditioned response can be molded" (p.2). Additionally, Ormrod (1990) posited that people can learn by observing the behavior of others, as well as consequences of those behaviors; people can learn behaviors at the time they observe them; and reinforcement plays a role in learning. Crain (2000) theorized that when a new behavior is acquired through observation alone, the learning appears to be cognitive. Hence, pastoral leaders may be positioned to retain millennials and influence future generations through their transformational and inspirational leadership with this information.

Pongpearchan (2016) studied the effects of TLT and high-performance work systems on job motivation, and task performance at the business schools of Thai universities and found that transformational leadership and high-performance work systems are important in creating job motivation for the improved performance of a

lecturer. Results revealed that transformational leadership and high-performance work system had a significant positive effect on job motivation. Surprisingly, power distance had no significant positive moderating effect on the relationship of transformational leadership, a high-performance work system and the job motivation of lecturers in the business schools of government Universities in Thailand. Similarly, Nikolic, Terek, Glusac, Gligorovic, & Tasic (2016) presented the results of their research on the effects of leadership on job satisfaction in a sample of 362 teachers which revealed that TLT had a strong and positive impact on job satisfaction of teachers in Primary Schools in Serbia. Simmons (2016) used Bass's TLT in addition to von Bertalanffy's systems theory to explore retention strategies used by small business leaders to retain millennial employees in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Simmons noted that to retain millennials, leaders maintained open lines of communication, provided specific training sessions, and attempted to retain a positive working relationship with the management. Based on pastoral leadership roles, these two theories could provide guidance to leaders regarding reasons millennials leave the Christian church and identifying the leadership qualities and roles pastoral leaders use to aid in retaining millennials in their congregations. The practice of leaders and followers motivating each other and the tenets of the TLT could enable pastoral leaders and millennials to learn from each other. For example, pastoral leaders could teach millennials the stories of the Bible, while millennials share their knowledge of technology and possible ways in which the Church could advance more into the age of technology. Overall, since the SCLT is based on behaviorism, pastoral leaders may benefit from modeling behaviors they wish for the millennials to follow.

Key Concepts

This section includes a synthesis of each theme found in the literature review.

Themes centered around attributes of millennials and how church leaders have previously studied parishioner retention. I close with a section of pastoral leadership and millennials.

Millennial Characteristics

Millennials (18-35 years old) represent a cohort of 83.1 million people or 25% of the U.S. population (Crappell, 2016); and are the largest living group in the history of the world (Dorsainvil, 2015). Millennial is their moniker because of the juxtaposition to the millennium and growing up in the digital age (Smith & Nichols, 2015). It is postulated that this generation is a direct result of the self-esteem campaigns of the sixties and seventies (Hammer, 2015). According to Hammer (2015), characteristics of millennials include being entitled, narcissistic, and restless in their jobs which; they often quit before 18 months. By the age of 25 years, they tend to change jobs at least 6.3 times (Hammer, 2015). Although this generation has been mired in some negative stereotypes, millennials tend to seek out new opportunities, yearn for challenging work, and evaluate success based on the quality of life (Hammer, 2015). In general, millennials are more educated than their predecessor generations, have complex knowledge with computer-based technologies and excel in the use of digital technology and interactions on social media (Pyoria, Ojala, Saari, & Jarvinan, 2017). They are quick to accept change and live in the moment; are focused on enjoying their lives; and their friends are often in virtual spaces. Additionally, millennials are motivated by competition, the independence to make decisions, and the freedom to move about (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016).

Millennials demand to be involved in the process, desire to influence practices and culture, and want to feel they are making a difference and a contribution to society (Pyoria et al., 2017).

Millennials and Faith

The Pew Research Center conducted a nationwide survey using landlines and mobile telephones ($n = 2,975$ adults) and found that a fifth of Whites (non-Hispanics) describe themselves as unaffiliated with religion (referred to as “nones”), which is a 5% increase from 2007 (Pew Research Center, 2017). Conversely, Blacks and Hispanics, who identify as religiously unaffiliated, remained the same in recent years (Pew Research Center, 2017). In this same study, 15% of Baby Boomers recognized themselves as “nones,” 30% of millennials born 1981-1989 and 34% of millennials born 1990-1994 identified themselves as having no religious affiliation, which demonstrates an occurring shift with religious affiliations (White, Entwistle, & Eck, 2016).

According to Jenkin & Martin (2014), the Barna Group is the leading authority for research performed in the United States on Christians. This group conducted a study on U.S. Christian millennials who were attending or attended an Adventist congregation and compared them to Adventist cohorts. Jenkin & Martin (2014) suggested that Adventist millennials feel the Church was repressive of differences 37% of Adventists versus 25% Millennials. Further, Jenkin & Martin (2014) suggested that Adventist millennials perceive the Church to be like an exclusive club (34% vs 22%) and almost twice as many Adventist millennials feel the church is antiscience (47% vs 25%). Moreover, Adventist millennials scored higher in their beliefs that the Church is

intolerant of doubt and overprotective (Jenkin & Martin, 2014).

Millennials and Organizational Differences

National studies have reported marked reduction in religious faith, with millennials possibly being the least religious cohort when compared to their predecessor generations. The authors study observed that millennials spend the least amount of time pondering matters of religion (Eck, White, & Entwistle, 2016; Ranier & Ranier, 2011). Some millennials have difficulty identifying their beliefs; are less likely to relate to a set of doctrines that are affiliated with a denomination of a church; have more religious freedom where they choose; mix their beliefs with other cultures and religions, and do not automatically affiliate themselves with religious institutions (Eck et al., 2016). Millennials who identified as born-again Christians reported the church to be hypocritical, sheltered, judgmental, politically focused, antigay, and old fashioned. Nearly 33% expressed wanting their faith to have a connection with their world, believed that God is involved in the world outside of the Church, and desired to be more actively involved in their community (Eck et al., 2016). Using Eck et al., (2016) as a foundation, Williams, Irby, and Warner (2016) studied how young adults' involvement in organizations impact their religious identities and explored their ideas about commitment to religion. The researchers studied youths aged 13 to 17 years and young adults aged 18 to 24 years, in an urban Midwestern area. A difference was detected between how White and Black students spoke about their religious involvement with God and how they interacted or assimilated into the activities of institution of worship. White youth had an individualized approach and thought about God as someone who makes them happy and

helps with their issues. Conversely, Black youth thought of God as an authority figure to whom they should listen and who demands something from them. They were shown to be more committed to their extended families and more integrated into the church community across all generations (Williams, Irby, & Warner, 2016).

Millennials in the Christian Church

Kumro (2016) explored the phenomenon of the increasing trend of millennials becoming more attracted to public, religious, Christian worshiping over the past 20 years. Although there has been a substantial decline in religiosity, it has been found that 85% of Baby Boomers felt that the act of going to church is unnecessary to be a good Christian (Kumro, 2016). Kumro (2016) found that millennials were not hesitant to criticize religious leaders who they felt were unorthodox. The researchers observed the following traits from millennials in the study that they (a) do not need to belong to a closely-knit community, (b) seek to find doctrines that have persisted over time, and (c) have diverse points of view (Kumro, 2016).

Millennials and Family Matters

According to Chappell (2016), millennials were raised by “helicopter” parents who hovered over them and while they assume habits from their parents, they equally rebel against their parents’ habits as well. Further, some millennials grew up watching their parents suffer through economic hardships, divorces, and as a result, their focus has been geared more towards family more so than their careers (Smith & Nichols, 2015). A study conducted by Ranier & Ranier (2011) posited that six out of 10 millennials look to their parents for advice and guidance. If this is the case, pastoral leaders would need to

focus on utilizing parental influence to aid in retaining millennial parishioners in their respective parishes. Essentially, developing a partnership between and among parents, millennials, and pastoral leaders may be vital in retaining young adults in churches.

How to Communicate with Millennials

Millennials are natives of the digital age who are not used to operating in a world without computers. Hence, a change in basic assumptions is needed when communicating with them (Chappell, 2016). Since millennials are comfortable posting messages online and feel that technology makes their lives easier, it may be beneficial to use emails, text messages and the social media tools such as Twitter or Facebook as modes of communication (Bencsik et al., 2016; Chappell, 2016).

Millennial Work Values

Current research literature suggests that millennials have defining work style characteristics. The style that identifies this generation of young adults suggests they are goal oriented and are excellent time managers, with a desire to achieve (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Similarly, millennials can be able followers. When millennials perceive their ideas and contributions are receptive to leadership, it can lead to better job performance and work attitudes (Chou, 2012). Bencsik et al. (2016) studied generational characteristics of knowledge sharing and teamwork and found that millennials believe effort by a group results in success. Moreover, the researchers found that millennials share knowledge only if forced or for self-interest; their point of view is egotistical and short term; their relationships tend to primarily be online; they aim to compete to be the leader of the group; they want instant gratification and flexibility; and they lack respect for tradition,

which is perceived as negative by older generations (Bencsik et al., 2016).

Bencsik et al. (2016) further suggests organizations to use satellite workspaces, mobile centers, or activity-based working to retain millennials (Bencsik et al., 2016). However, literature that supports practices to retain millennials in the church is lacking. Hence, this current study attempted to fill this gap.

Retention Practices Used by Church Leaders

Although research on millennials in the church exists, research on factors that retain the millennials in the Christian Church is limited. Employers are learning that to effectively communicate with millennials, communication practices need to be enhanced (White, Entwistle, & Eck, 2016). Similarly, it may be beneficial to pastoral leaders to educate themselves on ways to retain this cohort. To establish millennial retention practices in the Christian church, pastors should understand the fundamental motivations that drive this group. As retirement age increases, up to four generations must work together in many companies; and fundamental problems may arise from their diverse attitudes, value system, ways of thinking and technical knowledge (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016; Moore, Everly, & Bauer, 2016). Instead of making one generation a priority over the other, institutions could benefit from promoting the strengths of each generation and should celebrate their differences (Moore et al., 2016). A study by Moore et al. (2016) on the nursing workforce which encompasses four generations of workers, explored, and outlined team building activities that help with retention. Some of the observed strategies include communicating effectively, not stereotyping millennials, and acknowledging their strengths. Similarly, Marc (2016)

studied how the behavior of pastoral leaders influences the growth of the church, membership retention and community outreach and noted that personal engagement, discipleship or evangelism, and inclusivity or transparency were the three themes that pastoral leaders shared.

Reverse Mentoring of Millennials

Another important aspect that pastoral leaders may employ is that of reverse mentoring (Murphy, 2012). This method, acknowledged by executive leaders, recognizes that knowledge is about sharing rather than hoarding. Reverse mentoring is a cost-effective, innovative development tool, that is intentional about building bridges between generations (Murphy, 2012). Reverse mentoring is a tool that offers pastoral leaders and senior organizational members an opportunity to acquire technical knowledge, understand what is trending socially, and gain a cross-cultural global perspective. Reverse mentoring helps meet the standard of inclusion for millennials and gives them the ability to have an immediate impact on leadership goals, while developing a strong work relationship with organizational leaders (Murphy, 2012). In comparison to previous forms of mentoring such as pairing an older, more seasoned senior member of an organization with a younger mentee, reverse mentoring has unique difference. Murphy (2012) further asserts that reverse mentoring, places the younger or junior employee in place as the mentor, and the older, senior employee in place as the mentee. The purpose is to encourage a cross-cultural, cross-generational learning, so that the organization could benefit by the intelligence and expertise that both mentor and mentee can provide. This may be helpful for pastoral leaders as they look to encourage participation from

millennials in the churches and parishes. Applying reverse mentoring may allow pastoral leaders to empathize with mentees from the vantage point and develop stronger personal relationships.

Pastoral Leadership and Millennials

Frederick (2016) described some of the challenges of pastors namely difficulty emerging as leaders, ineffective business management, and poor church growth or operating in silos or with other small churches. In addition to those identified issues, the expectations of pastoral leaders and millennial engagement are sometimes conflicted due to the aforementioned factor, and lack of social relations, the pastoral and millennial relationship could result in (a) conflict, (b) decreased satisfaction, (c) uncertainty, and (d) lack of commitment (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2013; Loi, Chan, & Lam, 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

Major themes in the literature review include millennial religious practices, organizational behavior, the importance of family and work values. Extant literature has substantiated that millennials are a unique cohort. It is evident from research that businesses and organizations are actively seeking solutions to better interact with this group. Millennials often look to peers to determine the merit of a product or service. In general, they consider the opinions of their peers or fellow consumers to be more credible than those of traditional media or company sources of information (Katherine, 2012). Further, millennials are increasingly less religious in comparison to when they were in high school, and the church is increasingly less effective at reaching them (Pew Research

Center, 2015). Moreover, millennials are leading the church exodus, and are the least religiously affiliated group (Pew Research Center 2015). The Church is among organizations trying to find solutions to keep this cohort engaged. Nevertheless, millennials continue to leave the Christian church and, to date, it is unknown if pastoral leaders can take steps to retain them. This research explored leadership practices used to retain millennials in the Christian church. Chapter three will discuss the research methodology of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Overview of Methodology

This chapter will describe the research design, research questions, as well as provide a rationale for using the selected research methodology. This chapter will discuss the procedures, data collection, analysis, ethical considerations, and possible threats to validity. In an exploratory qualitative case study, a researcher collects, interprets, and analyzes the data (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1999; Yin, 2013). Further, a qualitative approach is an efficient and appropriate research method that offers the researcher a probative tactic to thoroughly investigate the existing problem (Richards & Morse, 2012). The case study method is appropriate when the researcher seeks to explain a current situation or social circumstance, has limited or no control over the events, and is exploring a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2013). Collecting data for a case study is different from most research processes because the interviewer must cater to the interviewee's availability, limiting the interviewer's ability to control the environment (Yin, 2014).

Qualitative Case Study Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design using semistructured interviews. The interview strategy is somewhat open-ended in the case study data collection process and requires flexibility (Yin, 2014). A qualitative case study was appropriate for this study because it allowed for an examination and exploration of complex issues. Specifically, this case study was instrumental in providing insight into the specific matter (Murphy & Casey, 2015). The purpose of this research was to explore

the leadership practices of pastoral leaders seeking to retain millennials parishioners beyond age 15. There was a limitation regarding time to gather data from the participants, because the interviews occurred after church services. Multiple procedures were used to collect data from the various participants (see Creswell, 2009). Other qualitative designs such as ethnography, which involves an inquiry of the participants in their natural setting over a prolonged period; phenomenological studies, which focuses on the lived experiences of the participant; and narrative research which involves an inquiry into the participants' lives via the use of stories were not appropriate for this research (Creswell, 2009).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the interviewer may have some biases. As a current pastor, my biases are naturally slanted toward how pastors may view their leadership style and how effective their leadership may be. Additionally, serving as a pastor within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, I have certain biblical views that may be different from those pastors in other denominations or nondenominations; therefore, to reduce bias, I maintained a neutral stance as a student researcher and did not discuss religious views or dogmas that had no bearing on the current research. Biases were addressed in this research by ensuring the participants had or took adequate time to answer the questions presented. The interview questions were open-ended, and responses of participants were accurately recorded and analyzed by me. In this study, I used semistructured interview questions designed to elicit honest and open responses from selected pastoral leaders from various Christian backgrounds. Participants were interviewed to gain insight into

methods employed to retain, engage, or re-engage millennial parishioners. Millennials from various Christian backgrounds interviewed to gain insight into things they seek in pastoral leadership and reasons they maintain a connection to their respective churches.

Ethical Considerations and Bias Reduction

I am a pastoral leader in an SDA Church and could unintentionally introduce bias into the interview process. Bias is inherent in any research. The researchers bias was managed and minimized by giving interviewees time to answer any questions or the choice to not answer questions with which they were uncomfortable. Bias was further minimized by ensuring that the results of this research were accurately recorded and codified by responses of pastors and millennials interviewed for this research. This study included church leaders from denominations other than the SDA church to provide a full, unbiased perspective. To further reduce bias and avoid being perceived as having positional power over the participant pool, I excluded my church from this study, as well as any participants who deem my professional role to be opposed to their beliefs or are biased toward pastoral leaders. Additional limitations included my bias as the researcher. Researcher bias could have affected the dependability of this study based on my awareness and investment in a predetermined outcome for this study. To ensure consistency with all research participants, I applied an interview protocol (Appendix D). In conducting this research, no ethical issues were identified. Before beginning the study, approval was sought from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). No highly sensitive questions were asked and due to the nature of the research questions, only questions related to the participants' experience were included. The following chart

shows the methodological format used for this research. The methodological process in completing this study and shows six distinct and sequential steps in Figure 1, which begins with recruitment of participants, followed by a data analysis plan. The next stage represented in the figure is participant selection followed by trustworthiness of the data collection and concludes with ethical procedures.

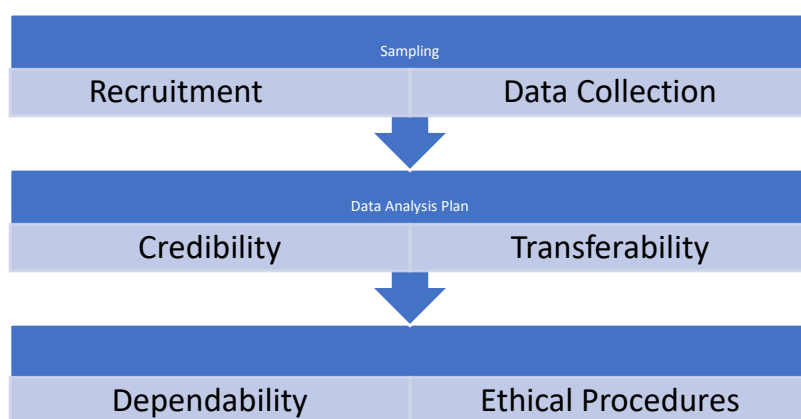


Figure 1. Methodological process used in the study.

Methodology

Target Population and Sampling Strategy

Christianity is defined as relating to or professing Christian beliefs or its teachings. The population of those interviewed for this research consisted of Christian pastoral leaders in the Southeastern U.S. with at least five years of experience, and millennials 18-30 years of age. A non-random, purposeful, convenience sample was used for this study. The sample included a minimum of 15 ministry professionals and 15 millennial participants from various Christian churches (Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, Non-denominational, Presbyterian) in the Southeastern U.S. Participant

selection was based on pastoral experience and millennial participation in their respective Christian churches. A ministry professional was considered as any formally identified or trained pastor, minister, deacon, or church leader. Millennials who may or may not be members of the participant pastors' churches were selected based on current or previous experience with the Christian church. The scope of this qualitative study was limited to the perceptions of designated individuals from the selected region; the extent of the study and focus of the research was limited to the demographics of the area and the participants.

Inclusion Criteria. To be eligible, all participants were required to speak and comprehend the English language. Participants recruited from Baptist, Methodist, Non-denominational, and Seventh-day Adventist churches reside and attend church in southeastern U.S. Pastoral leaders were adults aged 25-55 years, while millennials were aged 18-30 years. Participants signed an informed consent form to participate and agreed to have the interviews recorded.

Exclusion Criteria. Those who were not formal pastors, ministers, deacons, or leaders of a Christian church were excluded. Given that there are numerous Christian denominations, the researched focused on five Christian denominations that primarily made up the majority of Christian denominations in a large city located in the Southeastern U.S. Ministry professionals from non-Christian faith traditions, religions or denominations were excluded and ministry professionals who did not reside or work as ministers in the Southeastern U.S. were excluded as well. As noted, the primary researcher is a pastor of a Christian church; to reduce bias and not influence the

participant pool, the researcher's church was excluded from this study. For the interviews with the millennial participants, those who were not between the ages of 18-30 at the time of the interview were excluded. Millennials who have never been a member of a Christian church were additionally excluded. Additionally, participants who did not provide permission to record the interview were excluded, as the recorded interviews were necessary to record not only participants' responses; but their body language, as this was important to the research validity.

Recruitment, Sample Size, and Saturation

Participants were recruited from various Christian churches in Southeastern U.S. using the contact information obtained from their websites. Pastoral leaders were asked to distribute research invitations in the form of flyers to a minimum of three millennials from their congregation. Additionally, permissions were received to utilize interview questionnaire and interview protocol (see Appendices D & E).

The target sample size for this research was 30 participants. The study included 15 pastors/ministry professionals and 15 millennial parishioners. In interviews, repeated comments that do not provide any new information signaled that data saturation has been reached. Bernard (2012) stated that the number of interviews needed for a qualitative study to reach data saturation was a number that could not be quantified. Moreover, interview questions should be structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions, otherwise researchers would not be able to achieve data saturation as it would be a constantly moving target (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In this study, saturation was determined when no new information was yielded from the pastor/ministry leader

interviews or the millennial parishioner interviews.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

This qualitative inquiry used one-on-one interviews to collect data (Yin, 2014). This study was conducted by recruiting participants from five different religious denominations identified in this research to be more representative of the Christian church. IRB approval was sought before contacting participants or performing data collection. Data collection instruments were one-on-one interviews, audio, or videotape recordings, as well as note taking in the field. The questionnaires for the senior pastors and millennials were inspired by prior works published by Dent (2016). To establish sufficiency, the research questions in the questionnaires were vetted by the dissertation committee to ensure adherence to established research protocols and university standards. The original version of the questionnaires was developed by Christopher Dent and published as part of a dissertation thesis in 2016. However, not all the questions were pertinent to this research. As a result, the questionnaire was adapted, pilot-tested, then refined appropriately to fit this study.

In this research, two of the many types of validity of measures were discussed. The first is construct validity defined as the way one measure relates to another from a theoretical point of view (Crosby et al., 2006); and the other is content validity, which helps to ensure the chosen instrument or test appropriately measures the variable (Field, 2013). The interview protocol (Appendix D) was used by previous researchers and in this study, it has helped to ensure construct validity (Chetty, Partanen, Servais, & Rasmussen, 2013). Both content and construct validity were established by close oversight of the

dissertation committee members who have extensive experience using this research design. The data collection instrument was determined to be enough since questionnaires were specifically adjusted to ensure that the research questions for this study was addressed.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection Recruitment

Participants 18 years and older were recruited from churches (Baptist, Methodist, Nondenominational, Presbyterian, and Seventh-day Adventist). The participants were contacted through telephone calls. Pastoral leaders were contacted first and then asked to distribute research invitations in the form of a flyer to a minimum of three millennials from their congregation.

Data Collection

Semistructured interviews were conducted by the researcher. Each interview was audio-recorded, and lasted for approximately 10-20 minutes, with the use of a standardized interview protocol (Appendix D; see Chetty, Partanen, Servais, & Rasmussen, 2013). Apart from the recorded interviews, I used field notes and documented any emotional responses, facial expressions, and other nonverbal communications that might have otherwise been missed. All interviews were transcribed verbatim prior to analysis. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there was anything else in the interview they needed to add or remove. Nothing was expressed by the participants. The participants were thanked for their time and were informed they would receive a copy of the study upon successful completion by the researcher.

Data Analysis Plan

The responses to the semistructured interviews were transcribed verbatim into a word processor document. The inductive thematic analysis approach was used to analyze and cluster the data into themes. The researcher carefully accessed the data, which allowed for interpretation of the meaning of the experiences. To increase study rigor, the researcher implemented the trustworthiness criteria of truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality to the analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness and Credibility

Crosby, DiClemente, & Salazar (2006) outlined seven threats that may affect the internal validity of a study. Some of these factors include history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, and selection bias. History could alter the results of a study based on an event that occurred between observations (Crosby et al., 2016). The historicity of this research was not problematic for this study, since it entailed a case study design and participants answered questionnaire items at a single moment in time. Maturation refers to participants becoming increasingly experienced between observations (Crosby et al., 2016). Attempts were made to interview millennials who attend the same church on the same day; and a maximum of one to three millennials would be chosen from each congregation. Testing refers to the number of times the responses were measured, which involves running a test until the desired results are achieved (Crosby et al., 2016). In the current study, no pre-or posttest was conducted; and the results were not duplicated. Instrumentation is a threat that is possible due to a change in the measuring instrument used (Crosby et al., 2016). This researcher used the same instrument throughout the data

collection process. Finally, selection bias is a common threat which could equate to differences that may have been present in participant groups before the research began (Crosby et al., 2016). To prevent selection bias, I asked each pastoral leader to refer at least three English-speaking millennials from one's congregation. No other selection criteria pertained to the millennials.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity refers to the generalizability of the findings from the study (Crosby et al., 2016). To establish transferability, a variety of participants were recruited from five different denominations of Christian churches in the southern U.S. (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I provided a graphic description of the face-to-face interviews which were audiotaped. In addition to recording, I took detailed notes throughout the interview process. Once the interviews concluded, more notes were taken to succinctly capture the event and I transcribed the recordings verbatim.

Dependability

The dependability and transferability of the case study findings are often unclear because the study is reflective of a snapshot in time in a natural setting and not necessarily a process that can be generally recreated to deliver the same results (Yin, 2013). Dependability ensures that if the research were repeated using the same context, methods, and participants, the results would be similar (Shenton, 2004). Strategies to establish dependability included using a questionnaire to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions in the same manner. The processes followed in the study were documented clearly for possible future researchers (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability and Intra- and Intercoder Reliability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's biases, objectivity, and sensitivity not imparting his/her experiences to possibly influence the findings of the study (Shenton, 2004). Strategies to establish confirmability include the researcher representing himself as a student and not as a pastor or member of a specific church. The use of triangulation to decrease researcher bias, admission of presuppositions and keeping a journal of reflective commentary, as well as a detailed audit trail that may be used to follow the step-by-step process of the research to ensure confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Intercoder reliability refers to cross-checking the data (Creswell, 2000). This will be achieved with the assistance of the dissertation committee as well the assistance of someone with this expertise.

Ethical Procedures

Approval to conduct this study was sought from the Walden University IRB. The researcher first contacted the pastoral leaders to seek their cooperation and asked pastoral leaders to distribute research invitations in the form of flyers to a minimum of three millennials from each of their congregations. Furthermore, participants were asked to sign a consent form and a data use agreement form to participate in the study. The researcher ensured anonymity of participants and their respective churches and pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee to protect confidentiality (i.e., pastors as P1, P2, P3...and millennials as M1, M2, and M3...).

All research participants in this study were over 18 years of age. Participants were informed about the nature of the study before conducting the interviews, including their

choice to participate and their right withdraw from the study at any time of their choosing. As such, participants were informed of the risks, discomfort, or potential negative effects as well as possible benefits or rewards.

Each participant was informed of steps researcher would take to assure confidentiality and a point of contact was provided to address questions before or after the collection of data. I submitted a formal letter to participants and was available to answer any questions about the research prior to their involvement. Collected data were stored on a flash drive and used on a personal password-protected computer. When the data were not being used, all materials collected were locked in a safe deposit box. All data will be stored securely for 5 years, after which all files will be destroyed.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology for a qualitative case study design to explore connections between pastoral practice and the millennial exodus from Christian churches. This approach allowed the researcher to gather and use comments and responses in the narrative form based on what participants shared, rather than presenting the data in a numerical or quantitative form. Participants in the present study were purposefully selected to comprise 15 pastors and 15 millennial parishioners ($N=30$) from Christian churches located in the Southeastern U.S. Data were collected using two separate questionnaires for pastoral leaders and millennials. Line-by-line coding was then used to code the transcripts and the gathered information provided a synopsis of the data collected. Once coding was complete, the coded transcripts were used to generate main themes and subthemes regarding the study phenomena from the perspectives of the

participants. Chapter 4 will detail the procedures of the data analysis and results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The central research question for this study was: “What leadership practices do pastors employ to retain millennial parishioners?” In this chapter, I present the context in which the study was conducted with participant religious backgrounds (Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Nondenominational), the method used for data collection, data analysis, evidence of the study’s trustworthiness and credibility, and results of the study.

Research Setting

The sampling strategy employed for this study was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was used to recognize specific participants with in-depth knowledge, to offer rich data regarding leadership assumptions and burnout (Patton, 2002). Research participants should come from a common context and have a shared experience in common (Compton-Lilly et al., 2014). Participants in this study met the following criteria: (a) pastors in various denominations within the scope of this research, (b) located in a Southeastern city, (c) a millennial actively attending church. I interviewed each participant face-to-face, utilizing an interview tool I had been granted permission to use. I offered the participants a choice of time and location for the interview. The ideal location was a place that allowed both pastors and millennials to engage and be comfortable. Most interviewees chose to meet in their church offices.

Demographics

I explored the understanding of leadership with 15 pastors and 15 millennials in a Southeastern city. Each participant was from a different denomination. The pastors indicated that they held on overall responsibility for the conduct and execution in some aspect of ministry in their respective congregations. Additionally, the millennials indicated that they were active members their places of worship. Of the 15 pastors, 13 were men and two were women; and of the 15 millennials, 10 identified as male, and 5 identified as female. From the interviews, I observed that the median age of pastors was 45 and the median age for millennials was 28. All the pastors indicated that they had theological training and were pursuing advanced degrees. Most were experienced pastors with many years in the role of senior or assistant pastor. Most of the pastoral participants described having more than 10 years of experience. The millennials, who consisted of primarily African Americans and White Americans (not Hispanic or Latino), indicated consistent church attendance and excitement about being a part of their church's experience.

Data Collection

I collected data from 15 pastors and 15 millennials from different denominations, including nondenominational churches and I conducted 30 semistructured, in-depth interviews that ranged from 10 minutes to 20 minutes over a period of several months. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder on my cell phone. The data were then transcribed through <rev.com> transcription service and printouts of each interview were produced and secured in a locked safe. I implemented the data collection plan as

submitted to and approved by Walden’s IRB under dissertation approval number 05-30-19-0335439. All interviews that I conducted were informative, respectful, and cordial.

Results of Millennial Interviews

Research findings from millennial interviews are described in the following graphs. The following figures shows the importance of church attendance by millennials.

Question 1, identified in Figure 2, asked: “How often do you attend church services?”

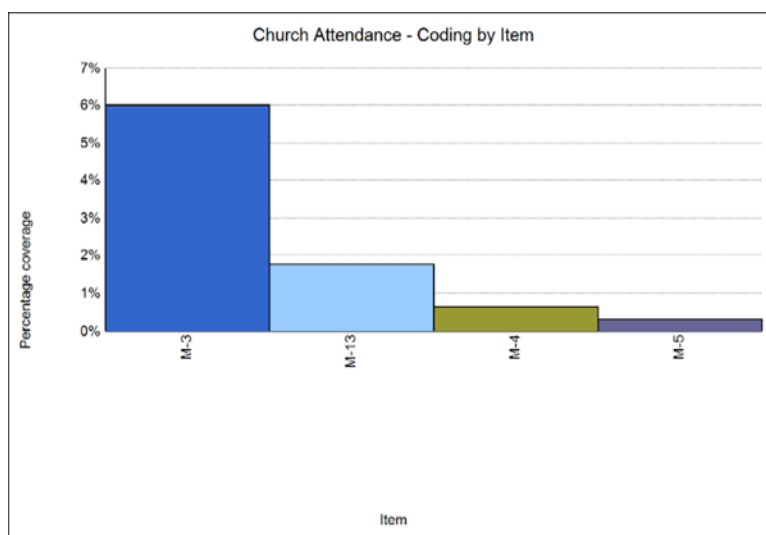


Figure 2. Millennial response to church attendance

As indicated in Figure 1, church attendance was an important factor in remaining connected to their respective churches. Millennials responded to the opportunities to interact with their peers and find a place where they can bond and feel a connection. Moreover, millennial respondents expressed certain life challenges which may keep them from attending church. Those identified responses were (a) work, (b) young children, and (c) time that church service started. In accord with this research, millennials interviewed cited these life issues as felt needs that affected regular attendance at their churches. Previous research has shown that older congregants tend to have judgmental attitudes

(Eck et al., 2016); however, in my study, judgmental attitudes from older members were not highlighted as a reason for not attending church within this group. It is possible that the identified reasons for not regularly attending church masks millennials' deeper feelings towards perceived attitudes from previous generations. Figure 3 indicates how both pastors and millennials view the importance of leadership opportunities.

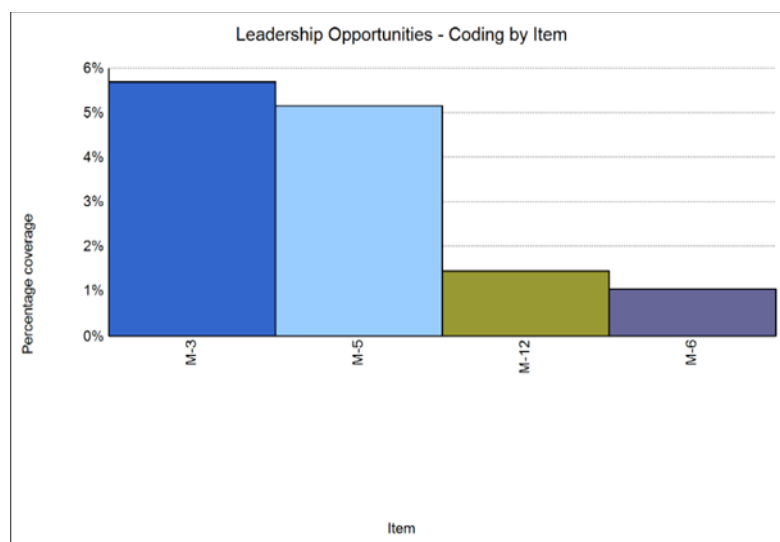


Figure 3. Leadership opportunities.

Leadership Opportunities

Of the identified researched items found by both groups (pastoral leaders and millennials) in Figure 3 was that of leadership opportunities. Although this was not indicated in the millennial questions, I found it to be an important element for pastoral leaders and millennials. Most millennials cited leadership opportunities as a plus for remaining connected to the church. These encouraged millennials to actively look for ways to benefit their churches. Both groups found that providing leadership opportunities was instrumental in maintaining millennial involvement within local congregations.

Pastoral leaders found that by providing leadership roles to millennials, they were able to gain a greater relationship with the millennials. Through this relationship, church leaders observed an increase in millennial involvement and found that millennials desire to be part of an organization that recognizes they can contribute in meaningful ways. Pastoral leaders found that by providing these leadership opportunities, millennials became more open to hearing existing leadership's perspectives on current ministry methods, and ways millennial involvement was important in moving local church ministries further. Spiritual growth was one question asked of millennials. Figure 4 identifies millennials perceptions on pastoral leadership for spiritual growth.

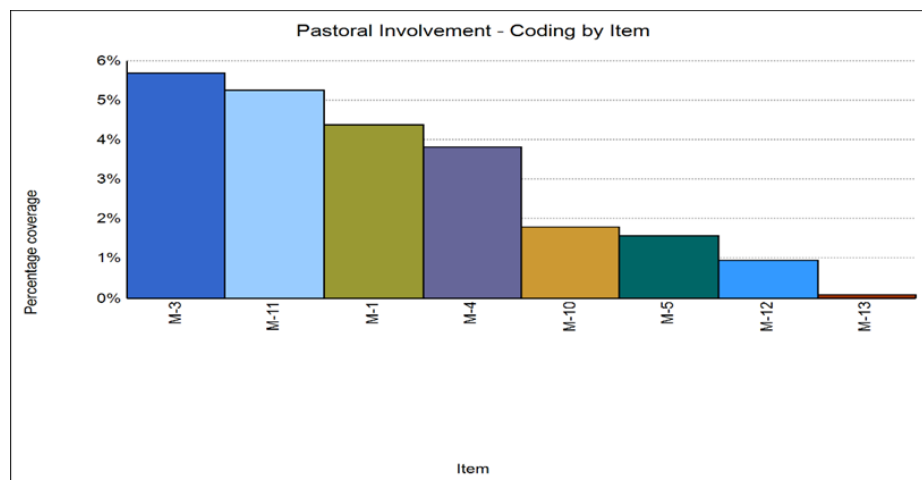


Figure 4. Pastoral leadership necessary for your spiritual growth?

In answering this question, the millennial respondents stated that pastoral leadership is important for their spiritual needs. This response indicated that millennials felt that pastoral leaders were necessary for their spiritual development. They felt pastoral involvement is a necessary component for millennial involvement in their respective

churches. Of millennials interviewed, 23.4% felt that pastoral leadership was necessary for their spiritual growth, whereas less than 1% felt pastoral leadership was not necessary for their spiritual growth. Relevant topics from pastoral leaders was important as shown in Figure 5.

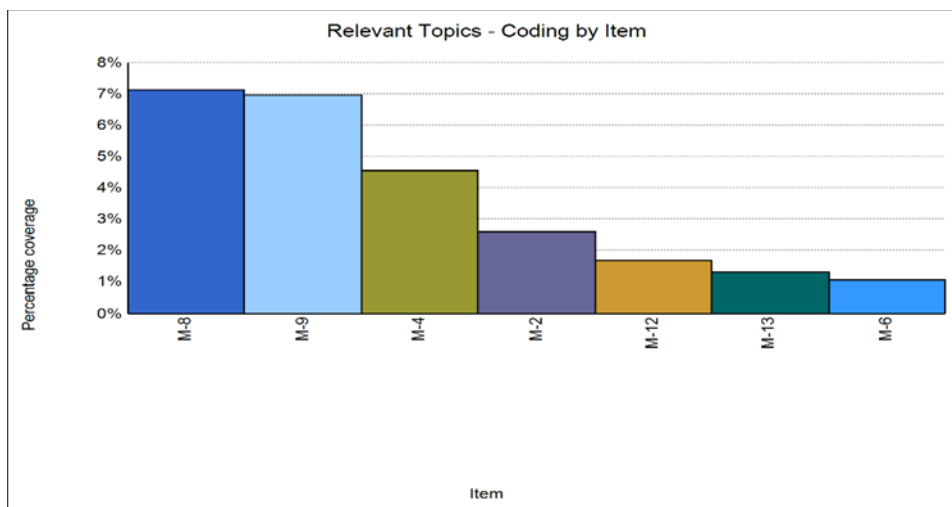


Figure 5. Relevancy of topics

Many millennials stated that part of their spiritual growth was related to the relevancy of topics pastoral leaders shared with their congregations. During the interviews of the millennials, 24.7 % felt this was a primary reason for remaining connected to church. This number can be used by pastoral leaders to ensure they may not only reach but retain millennial parishioners as part of the Christian church. Figure 6 represents the value of establishing and maintaining relationships with millennials, with nearly 35% of millennials and pastors sharing this as the most important in staying connected to their churches.

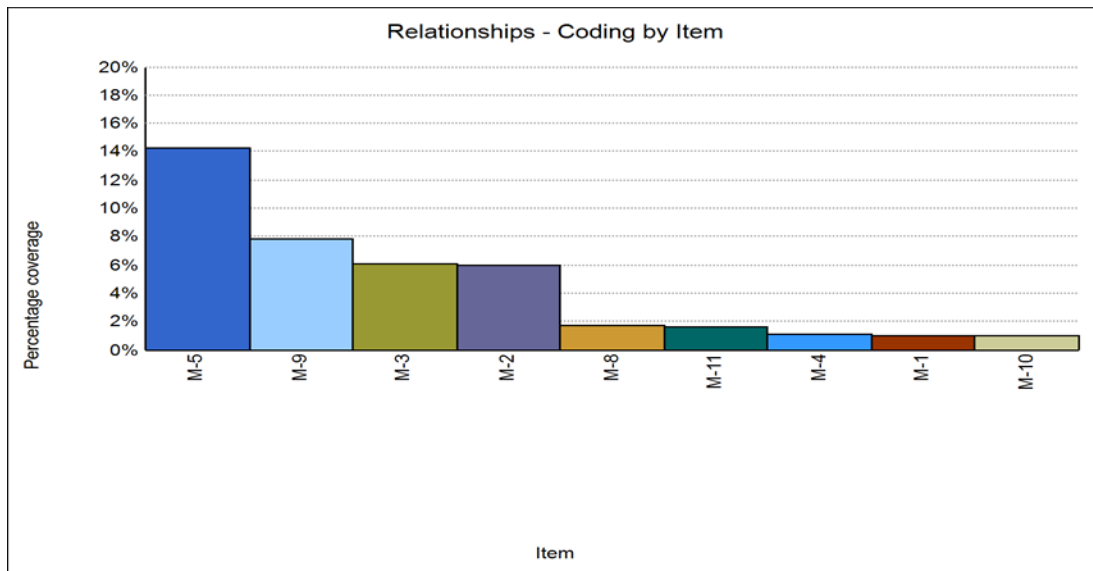


Figure 6. Relationships and millennials

Another key aspect found in the research was the importance of relationships pastoral leaders have with millennials. Of this group, 33.8% of respondents stated that it was essential for pastoral leaders to have and maintain a relationship with millennials. Several millennials expressed this as being very critical to them for maintaining connection to their respective churches. Millennials stated that having pastoral leadership showing interest in them as individuals was personally fulfilling and encouraged them to be more active in their churches. Ministry opportunities represented in Figure 7 embodies elements of what belonging to a church means to millennials.

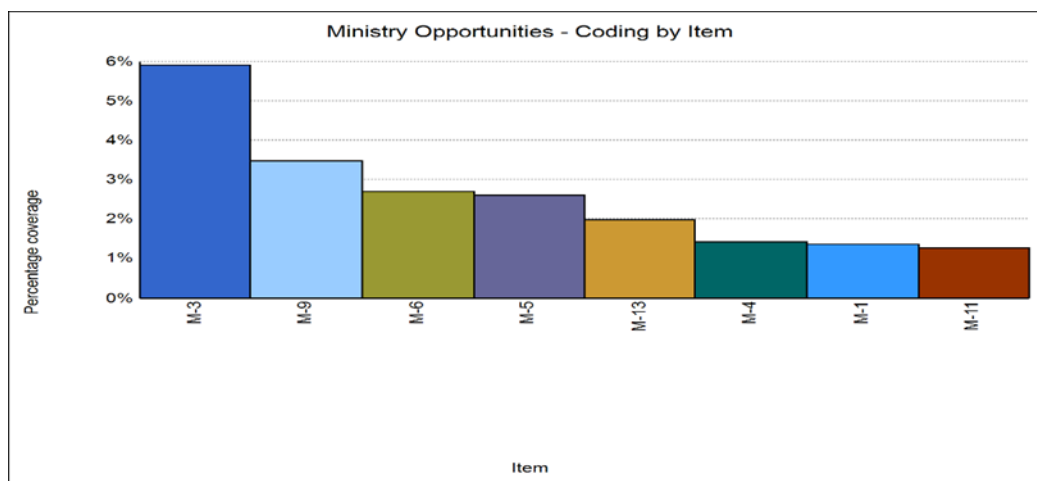


Figure 7. Ministry opportunities

Millennials were excited about this aspect of pastoral leadership. One millennial expressed that “having opportunities to work with older individuals made me excited that pastoral leadership offered this to me.” Other millennials shared that when given the opportunity to serve and to have pastoral leadership support, “they gave even more of themselves to their church and used this as a means to invite their friends and non-Christians or nonchurchgoers, to come and help.” Those ministries included feeding the less fortunate, donating clothes, tutoring children, and using their talents to further build their respective churches.

Pastoral Interviews

The researcher interviewed lead and administrative pastors of 15 churches representing various denominations in a Southeastern city in the United States. The pastoral leaders indicated that they were responsible for the execution of their respective churches or served in an administrative or assistant pastoral role within the churches. All pastors or assistant pastors who were contacted agreed to the interviews, which

represented 100% participation. The lead or senior pastors gave permission to ask millennials in their respective parishes to be interviewed.

Results of Pastoral Interviews

Question 2 asked: “How long have you been a pastor?” The answers varied as pastoral leaders ranged in age from the mid-20s to the early 70s. To better understand how pastors viewed millennial retention, some pastoral leaders had fewer than five years of pastoral experience. As Figure 8 shows, this age gap represented a range of experience that added value to this research.

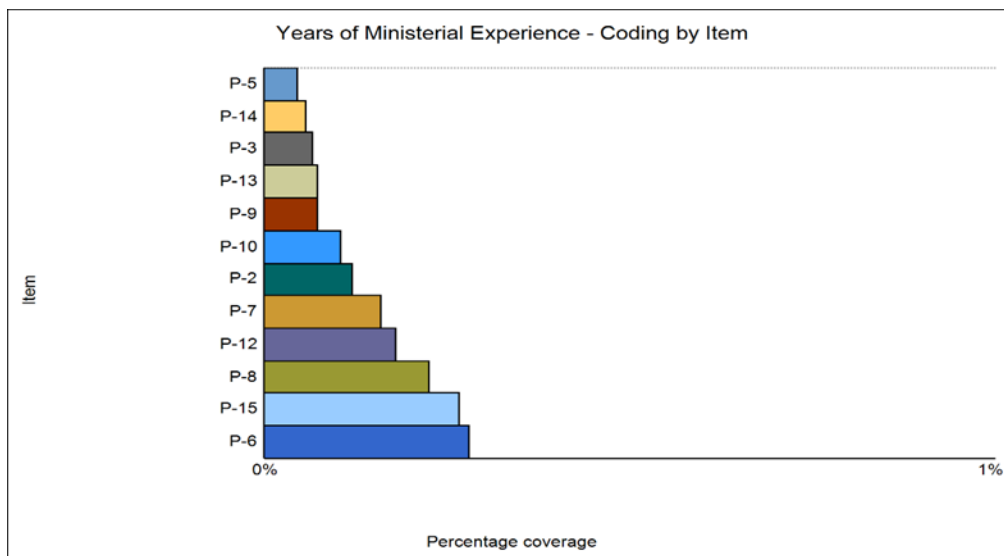


Figure 8. Pastor years of ministerial experience

Question 3 asked: “Do you hold a degree in theology/training to be a pastor?” When asked this question, approximately 98% indicated they had some form of pastoral training. Most pastors in the study reported holding advanced degrees in ministerial training. Others had training in other degree fields but felt a “call” to ministry and pursued training under a pastor. Although no pastor indicated that ministerial training

was necessary, anecdotally it shows that those seeking to serve as pastoral leaders felt that ministerial training was an important factor in being or serving as a pastor. Pastoral training in Figure 9 represents a wealth of pastoral training and further adds to the importance of receiving advanced degrees to aid in pastoral work.

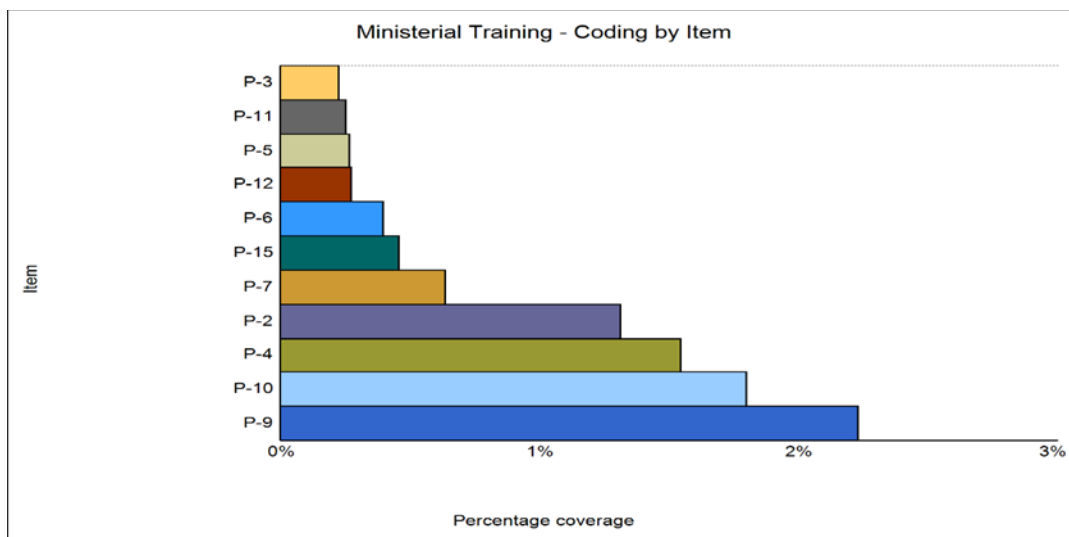


Figure 9. Ministerial training

Question 4 asked: “What is the percentage of millennials in your church?” This posed a challenge to the pastors interviewed. Most pastors gave a range from 5%-20% of millennials attending their churches. The pastors reported having millennial attendees however, they were unsure of the actual number and were not able to give a clear, well-defined total. As indicated in Figure 10, the figure shows that roughly 2-3% of millennials attended the churches of pastors interviewed for this research.

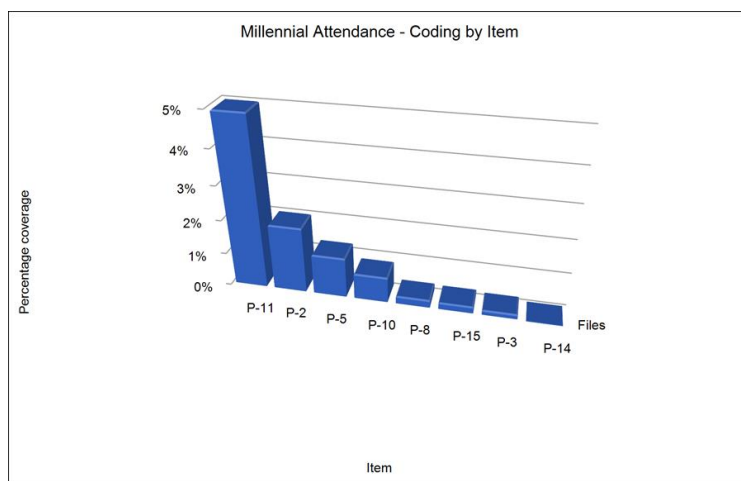


Figure 10. Millennial attendance

Hence, Question 5: “Has the number of millennials in your church decreased in the past year?” was notable, in that pastoral leadership was not able to give an answer to this in terms of percentages of an increase or decrease of millennial attendees. Pastoral leadership did capitulate that more could be done to attract millennials. Question 6 asked: “What practices do you use to retain millennials in your church?” One pastor stated, “They [millennials] like personal touch.” This pastor found it a key function for millennials in practice and in theory as being connected to churches. Pastoral leaders found that to retain millennial parishioners, the following factors are necessary: (a) relationships, (b) relevant topics, and (c) ministry opportunities. One pastor, when asked this question, articulated “What I've learned over the years is to let the young adults feel like they are a part of the church.” Another pastor mentioned that millennials

still need revelation, but [they] need revelation in the context of [being relevant] realness. Transparency, dealing with life's true crisis, dealing with where people are, and not being afraid to [have] conversations that are difficult, because [at

times] millennials have questions that churches have not been willing to answer or address and [millennials'] may feel this is disingenuous.

Another pastor conveyed millennials “are more project centered.” Regarding ministry opportunities, one senior pastor stated from their experience, “I’ve learned to ask them to utilize their gifts and talents for services that will bless them and bless others.” A recorded 40% of pastors interviewed for this research felt that relevant topics, relationships, and ministry opportunities were of most importance in retaining millennials as part of their congregations. When millennials participate and are recognized for their contributions, they feel confident, accepted, and more willing to give of themselves to the organization. For both pastors and millennials in this research, Figure 11 points out that ministry opportunities were indicated as important for retaining this cohort in their respective churches.

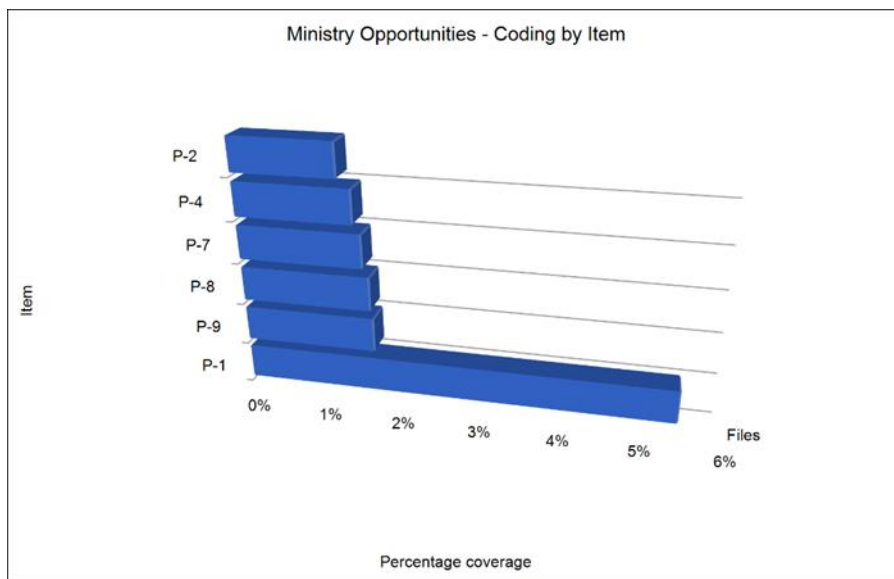


Figure 11. What practices do you use to retain millennials in your church?

Question 7 asked pastors: “What challenges do you currently face when trying to engage with millennials in your church?” One pastor stated that “It’s a disconnect and a lack of trust of putting millennials in leadership, and just taking too long to put millennials in a leadership role.” Another pastoral leader when asked this question stated, “A service that meets their particular needs.” Yet another pastoral leader mentioned that “you’ve got to be in their lives.” The pastors interviewed for this study viewed ministry opportunities for millennials as leadership opportunities among this group. By allowing millennials into leadership structures, pastors can learn from them and share their wisdom and experience with the millennials through mentoring and being mentored. However, Figure 12 indicates that roughly 30% of pastoral leaders are open to incorporating millennials into leadership roles.

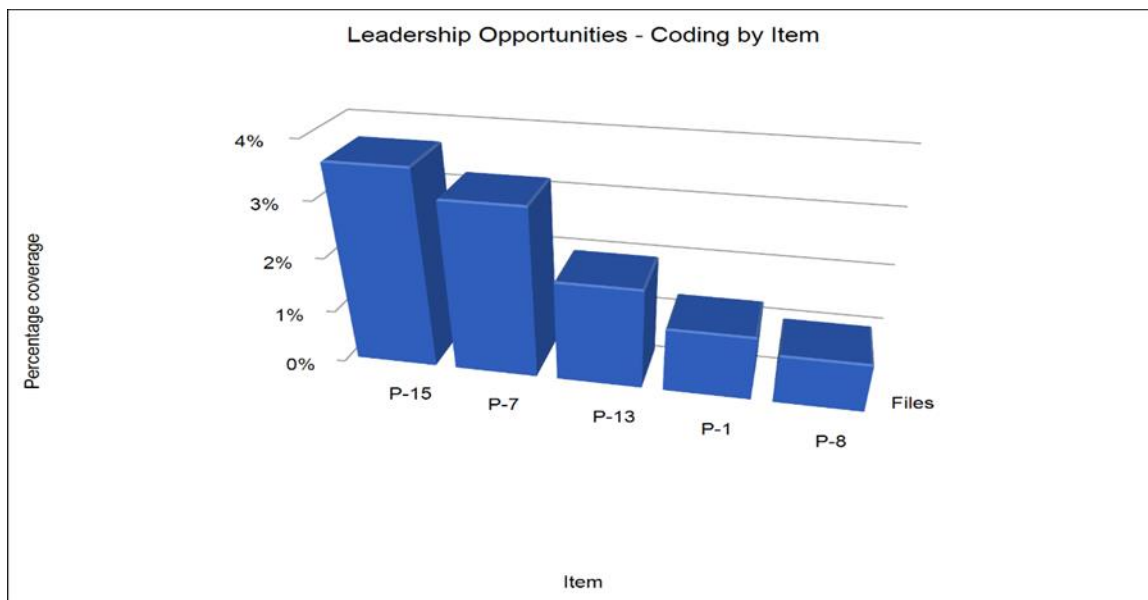


Figure 12. What challenges do you face when trying to engage with millennials in your church?

Pastoral Remarks

The importance of millennials in each pastors' respective churches was reiterated in response to the survey questions asked of both pastors and millennials. Each of these groups expressed an honest desire to work with, learn from, and be intentional about relating to each other to retain and remain part of each individual church ministry. A final comment by one pastor in maintaining millennials is: "There were millennials who spoke about their own particular church and they said they were no longer interested in attending church because the church was not about serving those in the community."

Evidence of Trustworthiness**Credibility**

The process of the interviews was in accordance with Walden University IRB approved application. The interviews were created using an interview instrument which had been requested and approved prior to use. The face-to-face interviews took place over several months at different locations amenable to the participants. The face-to-face interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed using <rev.com> transcription services. During the process, all information gathered was handled with the strictest confidence and professionalism. The unbiased interviews were based on participants' answers, and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, without personal bias or assumptions.

Dependability

The methodological process used in this research model shown in Chapter 3 illustrates my process in completing this study. Six distinct and sequential steps are

shown. The illustration begins with recruitment of participants, followed by a data analysis plan. The next stage represented in the figure is participant selection followed by trustworthiness of the data collection, then a conclusion with ethical procedures.

Dependability again ensures that if the research were repeated using the same context, methods, and participants, the results would be similar (Shenton, 2004). Strategies to ensure dependability included using a questionnaire to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions in the same manner. The processes followed in the study have been documented for possible future researchers (Shenton, 2004). In this study, a total of 30 participants (15 pastors, 15 millennials) completed the interviews. I attained the target goal and sampling deemed necessary for this research.

Confirmability

Strategies to establish confirmability include the researcher representing himself as a student and not as a pastor or member of a specific church. For study confirmability, I applied triangulation to decrease researcher bias, admission of presuppositions, and I kept a journal of reflective commentary, as well as a detailed audit trail that may be used to follow the step-by-step process of the research (Shenton, 2004). The data collected in the research through face-to-face interviews were thematically aligned then examined to ensure accuracy of the findings.

Summary

The interview questions were answered through my interviews and literature review. The findings suggested that developing community with millennials is essential, as was collaborating with them; and that providing ministry opportunities was important

for retaining them. Additionally, the findings suggested that being intentional about incorporating millennials into the overall leadership structure was necessary for retaining the millennials; that millennials desire to partner with the church and utilize their talents to make a difference in their surrounding community; and that church leadership needs to be open to other methods of doing ministry that may not necessarily be what has been or is currently being done in their churches. Further, the findings suggested that millennials desire relationships; that they are looking to get involved in effective ministries that reach beyond their church; and that pastoral leadership should be relevant in teaching topics that relate to what millennials are dealing with today.

Overall, the participants of this research expressed a desire and passion for maintaining and developing relationships among millennials, their pastors, and their respective churches. Results conveyed a sense of caring and concern for the overall well-being, spiritual, and relational needs of the churches where pastors and millennials serve. Pastors play a vital role in the success of their churches and need to implement strategies for keeping millennials involved, while millennials need to be open to serve and provide their talents in ensuring the church's success through dedicated involvement.

Chapter 5 will suggest recommendations and possible best practices for pastors and millennials to work more effectively together. Additionally, Chapter 5 will offer best practices on how both pastors and millennials may help each other be more intentional about developing methods to make their organizations more open to retaining millennials. Chapter 5 will also offer strategies for developing ministries that could have positive

impact on social responsibility and create an environment for cross-training in their churches.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to determine what practices pastoral leaders use to retain millennial parishioners by age 15. A secondary purpose was to identify what millennials viewed as important for them to remain connected to the Christian church. Moreover, the research sought evidence that would support previous research that showed prevailing attitudes of millennials toward the Christian church or any discrepancies that proffered a different view. The goal was to increase understanding of how pastoral leaders and millennials can work effectively to bring about positive social change. The research explored the felt needs of pastoral leaders and millennials in Christian churches located in a city in the Southeast U.S. and provides an understanding of the personality gaps needed to refine intra-church processes. Research findings indicated that open and honest communication along with opportunities for millennials and pastoral leadership to learn from each other could determine the success in local Christian churches. The interview questions were the following:

- 1) What practices do pastoral leaders use to retain millennials?
- 2) What challenges are faced when engaging with millennials?
- 3) How often do millennials attend your church?
- 4) What are reasons millennials do not attend your church?
- 5) Is pastoral leadership necessary for millennial spiritual growth?

The insights and thoughts of pastoral leaders and millennials who participated in the study have produced findings which could help to bridge gap between millennials and

church leadership. The findings equate to best practices which could serve as a model for Christian churches and help lay a foundation that is important for identifying, developing, and retaining millennial parishioners in Christian churches.

Limitations of the Study

Trustworthiness is a qualitative criterion that consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The basis of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to support the contention that researchers provide a valid claim that adds to the body of literature. To elicit trust in the participants, I informed them of my research as a doctoral student solely for the purpose of research. I obtained credibility during the research by sharing with participants an approved consent form and by being transparent when asked about my credentials and purpose for the research. Transferability for this study was accomplished by my being open and elaborating on questions to allow purposive sampling during the data collection process. The limitations of dependability and confirmability relied on participants' forthright responses to the research questions. To ensure participants' reliability and to check responses, I posed questions in another way that resulted in ascertaining the same answer. When there was a discrepancy from inquiries, clarification was requested from the participants to ensure the study met credibility requirements.

Interpretation of Findings

As reported in Chapter 4, pastoral leaders found that providing opportunities for millennials to participate in church leadership was useful in retaining millennials in Christian churches. Interpretation of the findings in Chapter 5 found that pastoral leaders

and millennials desire to have more interactions with each other. In Figure 13 below, I found that pastors and millennials agree on what is necessary for millennials to remain in their respective churches. Of the identified items, relationships, ministry/leadership opportunities, and relevancy were the primary responses for both groups. The research showed that millennials interviewed for this study did not express reasons such as churches being judgmental, nonscientific, intolerant of doubt, elitist with relationships, or excessively protective of their patrons. Regarding relevant teachings, this study did align with other millennial beliefs that the Christian church's teachings are shallow and do not deal with real-life issues. Millennials in this study did feel the Christian church does not meet their needs in this regard. Pastoral leaders can use the findings of this research to reach and possibly retain millennials with topics that are relevant to the millennials' experiences. Figure 13 identifies what millennials in this study have shared that is important to them. This information can be used by pastoral leaders to incorporate millennials in their respective churches.

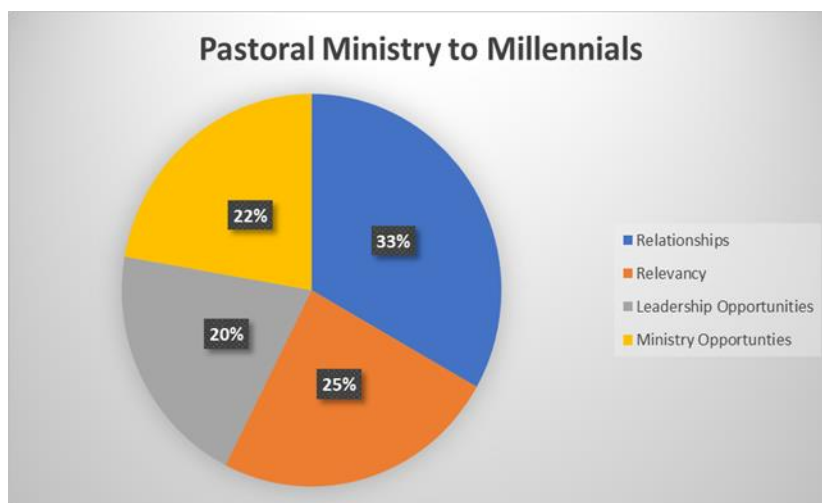


Figure 13. Pastoral ministry to millennials

Pastoral leaders need to be cognizant that they are leading a diverse group of individuals and recognize the importance of identifying with various groupings within their respective churches. According to Erlacher (2014), “Too often, the miscommunication and confusion that arises [sic] between ministers and their leaders or churches and organizations result in millennials choosing to leave formal ministry roles permanently.” (p. 5). Hence, pastoral leaders can do their part to ensure that relationship building is a key part of helping to retain millennials. Conversely, millennials are not taking part in church since they sometimes feel that the church does truly reflect what they wish to do. According to Erlacher, “many young adults have options to choose from when it comes to church experiences and spiritual growth. They want to clearly understand the vision and purpose of the church they are considering and what makes it unique.” (2014, p. 15).

This research may provide pastoral leaders with a unique opportunity to engage millennials with ministry options that the millennials see as being effective and accountable to larger society. Pastoral leaders should be intentional about sharing with millennials the vision or direction which their church desires to move towards. This could possibly result in millennials seeking ways to involve themselves in advancing the vision of the church they choose to attend. The research question for this research was: What leadership practices do pastoral leaders use to retain millennial parishioners. Questions 1-4 on the interview protocol for millennials, were designed to elicit millennials lived experiences as members of the Christian church. Questions 1-7 of the pastoral interview protocol was designed to elicit responses from pastoral leader’s challenges with retaining

millennial parishioners. All themes were derived solely from the 30 participants interviewed for this study. From this study, five themes emerged which are discussed in the following section.

Recommendations

All together overcoming barriers to reaching millennials can be accomplished by pastoral leaders and churches. In this study, I found what was important to millennials was as important for pastoral leaders. Both pastors and millennials expressed that forming and having a relationship was necessary for working together. Leaders must recognize things that were acceptable in their generation may not necessarily apply to this generation. As Pettigrew (2015) wrote, “It’s critical to know whom you’re talking to and recognize that this is not a one-message-fits-all generation.” (p. xviii). Pastoral leaders can ensure they are intentional about developing these relationships through engagement and open dialogue with millennials. Although pastors may become impatient in dealing with this concern, an understanding of their target audience may be instrumental in retaining millennial parishioners in their respective churches. Further, as described by a pastor in this research, “I must make sure that I allow them to lead out rather than have them lead my way.”

Theme 1: Millennials Desire Inclusive Leadership

Of the 15 participants, six stated that they [millennials] desire to be led; however, as one millennial responded, “pastors would do well to value what we bring to our church.” Millennials have a desire to serve but they wish to be treated as equal partners rather than being accommodated, which is viewed by some millennials as disingenuous.

According to (Meola, 2016), understanding millennials is critical because by 2025, 75% of the workforce will be composed of millennials. Moreover, Mishra, S. & Mishra S., (2017), identified that critical intrinsic needs may be important and that intrinsic motivation in the workplace is a vital issue for retaining millennials. Hence, pastors and millennials have a unique opportunity to engage with each other and both may benefit from what each group offers in way of leadership and mentoring.

Theme 2: Millennials and Pastoral Leaders See Relevancy as Important

Out of the 30 participants, 16 stated that relevancy was integral for retaining millennials in their churches. One millennial in this research responded, “relevant topics that speak to me and my situation [are] really important.” A pastoral leader echoed the same sentiment, “millennials want to know the pastor is not the little brother of Jesus. That the pastor struggles as well.” Thus, pastors and millennials working more closely together could help each other learn the present needs of their respective churches.

Theme 3: Millennials Desire Authentic Expressions of Faith and Belief

Out of the 15 participants, five stated millennials look for ways to minister in their churches. “Millennials appear to want an authentic expression of their beliefs in a safe place where they feel comfortable and not judged,” according to one pastor surveyed. Hence, pastors can be supportive of millennials in their churches and understanding of their perspectives and values even if those experiences contrast sharply from older adult members.

Theme 4: Millennials Want to Use Their Talents

Out of the 15 participants, seven stated that opening ministry opportunities for millennials gives them a sense of duty, a place where their talents and gifts are put to genuine use, and that their contributions are recognized as being valuable. For millennials in this study, when pastoral leaders utilize them, they tend to see their church as more practical and open and a place where they would invite their friends to come and take an active part.

Theme 5: Millennials Want Leadership Opportunities in Ministry

Out of the 30 participants (Pastoral leaders and millennials), 18 stated they viewed ministry opportunities as leadership opportunities. As millennials and pastors engage in dialogue relating to ministries that reached the broader community, it may provide openings for millennials to reverse mentor pastoral leaders in ways that pastors can minister more effectively in today's information age, while pastors are able to train millennials in the traditions of their respective churches. As one interviewed millennial stated, "When pastors are interested in our ideas, we feel they hear us and are willing to give us an opportunity to serve in a way that appeals to our way of thinking."

Methodological Implications

Methodological implications of this study have resulted in potential developments that can take advantage of the findings. Within this study, several recommendations were proffered as ways to identify, develop, and maintain millennials in the Christian church. By implementing specific strategies, pastoral leaders can achieve success in retaining millennials. Moreover, pastors could be able to mentor the next generation in valued

church traditions, and millennials could have opportunities to lead and have a greater connection to their respective churches. As one millennial expressed, “Being part of the mission of my church gives me confidence in our pastor and our pastor’s vision.”

Empirical Implications

Empirical implications of this study indicated that a definitive plan should be in place to carry out the mission of attaining and retaining millennials. The researcher found three methods for retaining millennial parishioners: (a) intentional relationships between pastors and millennials, (b) pastoral leaders’ relevance in presenting topics, and (c) ministry opportunities potentially leading to leadership opportunities. When millennials are actively engaged in their churches, their exposure to ministry opportunities may provide a venue to maximize their talents and intentionally put their gifts to genuine use. According to Erlacher (2014), “Because young adults have so many options to choose from when it comes to church experiences and spiritual growth...they want to clearly understand the vision and purpose of a church they are considering and what makes it unique” (p. 15). Pastoral leaders have it in their purview to engage, mentor, and provide ways to attract and retain millennials for this cohort to continue the mission of the churches they choose to be affiliated with.

Work is still needed to continually bridge the relationship divide between millennials and the Christian church, but pastors who are intentional about establishing relationships with millennials could reduce millennial departures. This research could help pastoral leaders identify specific ways to recruit, develop, and retain millennials in their respective churches.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical concept for this research was that if pastoral leaders and the Christian church in general would integrate millennials into the ministry and leadership components of their churches, it could retain millennials and potentially increase millennial involvement and recruitment. However, it would take a pragmatic understanding and insight into the lives of millennials and the overall responsibilities of pastoral leadership to eventually lead pastors to understand the millennial generation and how to retain and sustain this group for self-sufficiency in the ministration and possibly administration of their churches.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The focus of this study was to determine ways which could help retain millennial parishioners who desire to serve their local churches but feel rebuffed by church leaders and other parishioners. Church leaders purposefully acting to connect with millennials may provide access to millennial human capital that can further the reach of the Christian church and proffer ways for millennials and local church leadership to positively impact society via a “deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals and communities alike. (Walden University, n.d.). Although many possible actions may effect positive social change, selected actions must be carefully linked to what church leadership deems to be necessary and how best to relay the actions to their millennials. For positive social change to be effectual, millennials must be actively engaged with the local church so they can positively impact their church. Additionally, it is important for them to have access to

the church's support. The strategies of best practices along with a plan for implementation could serve as a model in local churches across America to bring about positive social change.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that pastoral leaders could implement to retain millennials in their individual churches. The research study included rich information about successful millennial retention strategies suggested by 30 participants (15 pastors, 15 millennials). The findings were limited to the knowledge and lens of the participants for this study at different churches in a city located in the Southeast. A future research consideration is to purposefully expand the number of participants to augment the findings of this study. Future research that considers increasing the targeted sample population may identify additional millennial retention strategies that lead pastors can apply. Any limitation of the research method that generalizes research findings possibly exposes potential weaknesses that could affect validity (Lingard, 2015; Pyrczak, & Bruce, 2017).

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to determine how to effectively identify methods to retain millennials in the Christian church. The theories of Albert Bandura (1977), James Burns (1978), and Bernard M. Bass (1985) provided the foundation for investigating the reasons that individuals observe patterns of behavior and choose to become and remain part of an organization. These theories suggested that leaders can influence others by how they conduct themselves and pastoral leaders may serve as a

model for millennials as well as members. Future research may necessitate a study on new methods that might enable pastoral leaders and millennials to further develop relationships that can lead to millennial retention and shared leadership responsibilities that may be a model for future generations. Researchers might consider taking a closer look at current methodologies to define how current and future technology may engage millennials. Millennials could take advantage of their expertise to enhance church involvement that will bring positive social change to their churches and local communities by developing relationships, being relevant, intentionally providing ministry. The opening of leadership opportunities in proper mentorship programs may mitigate barriers impacting retention.

The findings of this study could provide both pastoral leaders and millennials with an intuitive understanding of practical strategies to retain talented millennial parishioners. Given that millennials need a friendly work environment where they feel they are a vital part of the church, pastoral leadership could provide opportunities for millennials to be engaged in the function and direction of their church. Transformational leadership and social cognitive leadership theories could provide the necessary conceptual structure to combine the intellectual resources that may be relevant for the alignment needed in a changing and pluralistic environment.

Millennial retention strategies are a significant investment for any organization, including churches. The findings of this study provide pastoral leaders with an overview of practical suggestions and effective retention strategies that can be integrated into a church's strategic plan for the retention and inclusion of millennials. What are the

specific advantages for pastors to address the status, needs and concerns of their given millennials? Listening and responding to their needs and concerns, then devising and implementing appropriate retention strategies could gain steadiness and quality in the Christian church. Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng (2015) posited that millennials become reasonably stable as they gain work experience and maturity through mentorship experience. Naim & Lenka (2018) postulated that leaders who understand the psychological traits of millennials and are intentional about reinforcing a learning culture in the workplace could substantially foster an individual's competency development, which, in turn, could create a goal for the employee to stay in the organization.

Correspondingly, millennial employees' value open communication that encourages a free flow of information through experiential learning and mentoring for rapid development (Naim & Lenka, 2018). Millennials are an essential part of the Christian church for sustaining the traditions of the church, while incorporating new methods to reach society. A committed and connected millennial presence and involvement could position Christian churches for positive future growth and impact in the communities the Christian churches serve.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Pastoral Leaders

What is the denomination of your church?

_____ Baptist

_____ Methodist

_____ Seventh-day Adventist

_____ Non-denominational

_____ Presbyterian

(Because there are numerous Christian denominations, the researched focused on five Christian denominations that primarily made up most Christian denominations in a large city located in the Southeastern U.S.)

2. How long have you been a pastor?

3. Do you hold a degree in theology/training to be a Pastor?

4. What is the percentage of millennials (those born 1980-2000) in your church?

5. Has the number of millennials in your church decreased in the past year?

_____ 10% _____ 20% _____ 50% _____

6. What practices do you use to retain millennials in your church?

7. What challenges do you currently face when trying to engage with millennials in your church?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Millennials

How long have you been attending this church?

How often do you attend church services?

If applicable, what are some of the reasons that prevent you from attending church regularly?

Is pastoral leadership necessary for your spiritual needs?

Appendix C: Permission from Dr. Dent to use a version of his questionnaire and
interview guide

From: "Dr. Christopher" <d.christopher789@gmail.com>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 18:52:36 EDT
To: patrick carter <patrickcarter0@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Permission

Hi Pastor Carter,

Sure, you can use my appendices B and C to incorporate in your research. I am glad you enjoyed my dissertation. Please stay in touch and send me your dissertation after your defense. You're in my prayers.

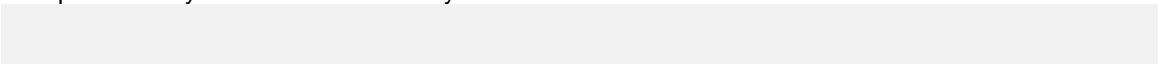
Best,

Dr. Dent

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 3:46 PM patrick carter <patrickcarter0@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Dr. Dent,

I am respectfully requesting your permission to use your letter and your appendices B and C to incorporate in my research. Thanks for your consideration.



Appendix D: Interview Protocol

1. The interview session will commence with salutations; I will introduce myself to the research participant, after which I will introduce the research topic.
2. I will thank the participant for taking the time to respond to the invitation to participate.
3. I will ask if the participant has any questions before proceeding to sign the consent form.
4. The participant will be given a copy of the consent form for his/her record.
5. The tape recorder will be turned on; and I will note the date, time, and location.
6. The coded sequential interpretation of the participant's name, e.g. 'respondent M1, will be indicated on the audio recorder (or electronic storage device), documented on my copy of the consent form; and the interview will begin.
7. The interview will span 15 - 30 minutes.
8. I will inform the participant that he/she may contact me with questions about the study at any time.
9. I will thank the research participant for taking the time to participate in the study.

Appendix E: Permission to Use Interview Protocol

Date: Wed, 7 Jun 2017 23:10:45 -0400

Subject: Simmons permission

Message-Id: <92F8AF80-7663-4189-9378-16A9CF6C9501@gmail.com>

Hello Dr. Simmons, I am a doctoral student at Walden University pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree. I am requesting permission to use and reproduce some or the entire interviewing instrument (or a variation of the instrument) from your study. I can be reached by email patrickcarter0@gmail.com

12:32 PM

Dr. Alphonso Simmons is now a connection.

Dr. Alphonso Simmons sent the following message at 12:43 PM

Hello Pastor Carter, You have my permission to use my instrument. I look forward to reading your completed dissertation soon. Let me know if you have any questions or need any assistance going through the doctoral process.

Alphonso

