

ATTRACTING MILLENNIALS

An Examination of Millennial Participation in Assembly of God Churches



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INTRODUCTION



PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Churches of every denomination have experienced a drastic decline among Millennials ages 18 to 34 in...
 - Attendance
 - Affiliation
 - Participation

(Chan, Tsai, & Fuligni, 2015; Burkimsher, 2014; van der Merwe, Grobler, Strasheim, & Orton, 2013).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- The decline has been attributed to...
 - The rise of Postmodernism
 - Shifting Attitudes toward the Church
 - The Church's inability to connect with Millennial needs

(Hall and Delpont, 2013; van der Merwe et al., 2013).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Millennial attendance has declined at an alarming rate...
 - 69% across all denominations
- Therefore churches must find ways to...
 - Reach and involve Millennials in the life of the church
- Further research is needed to...
 - Identify characteristics and strategies that will enable churches to attract Millennials
 - Help churches involve Millennials in the life of the church.

(Waters & Bortree, 2012; Wollschleger, 2012; van der Merwe et al., 2013; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007).)

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the current study was to explore the differences in the characteristics of Assembly of God congregations that successfully attracted Millennials versus those that did not in order to equip leaders to be more effective in attracting Millennials to their churches.

WHO ARE THE MILLENNIALS?

- Born between 1980 and early 2000s
- All about relationship
- Digital Natives
- Spiritual but not religious

(Hall & Delport, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau Report, 2015; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Stetzer, Stanley, & Hayes, 2009) ; Barna, 2014; Rainer & Rainer, 2008)

WHAT DO MILLENNIALS WANT?

- Community and belonging through relationship
- A church that addresses social issues
- Communication through technology
- A non-judgmental church
- Vibrant worship environment
- Authentic conversational sermons
- Emphasis on ministry to Millennials
- Emphasis on spiritual practices like prayer
- Collaborative team approach to ministry

(Briggs, 2013; Stetzer, et al., 2009; Sahlen & Roozen, 2011; Smith & Snell, 2009)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What characteristics are different in churches that have demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?
2. What differences exist in the experiences of Millennials in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?
3. What characteristics do Millennials prefer when choosing a church?
4. What church characteristics are most likely to be related to Millennial church attendance?

METHODOLOGY

- A quantitative research methodology that utilized convenience sampling was used to survey pastors and Millennials from Assembly of God churches in Illinois.
 - ✓ Population was 272 A/G churches
 - ✓ Mean Millennial attendance was 18%
 - ✓ Standard Deviation was 8.96 %

(Salkind, 2012; Robson, 2011; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample group for this research study was pastors and Millennials from 54 A/G churches in Illinois
 - ✓ 27 churches fell one SD above the stated mean of 18% and were deemed high attraction churches
 - ✓ 27 churches fell one SD below the stated mean of 18% and were deemed low attraction churches

INSTRUMENTS UTILIZED

- Questions utilized the following formats...
 - The U.S. Congregational Life Survey for Pastors (Barnett, 2008)
 - The Faith Communities Today Survey (Houseal, 2010)
 - The Seventh Day Adventist Young Adult Survey (Barna, 2013)

- Surveys Questions were drawn from...
 - ✓ Likert Scales
 - ✓ Multiple Choice
 - ✓ Fill in the Blank

(Surveys taken online via SurveyMonkey.com)

ANALYSIS

The following analysis was done to answer the Research Questions

- Independent t -tests on interval data
- Chi-square tests on the nominal data
- Mann-Whitney U tests on the ordinal data
- Spearman Rho Correlations
- Descriptive Analysis of Frequency Counts
- Hochberg Correction Procedure

RESULTS FOR RQ #1

What characteristics are different in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Table 1

Importance of Ministries - Pastor Survey

Ministry	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		High	Low			
Discipleship	26	15.97	7.94	27.500	.006*	.534 ^a
Ministry to Millennials	26	16.09	6.44	15.500	.002*	.621 ^b
Community Service	26	14.53	11.19	53.500	.277	.213
Small Groups	26	13.35	12.25	62.000	.704	.074
Marriage Ministry	26	14.69	10.81	50.500	.216	.242
Prayer Ministry	26	13.72	13.00	68.000	.804	.048
Bible Study	26	13.89	12.63	65.000	.648	.089
Children's Ministry	26	13.61	13.25	70.000	.879	.029

* = $p < .01$

^aEffect Size .534

^bEffect Size .621

RESULTS FOR RQ #1

What characteristics are different in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Table 2

Importance of Ministries - Millennial Survey

Ministry	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		High	Low			
Discipleship	112	53.03	67.98	819.500	.033*	.201 ^a
Community Service	112	55.12	61.08	999.000	.386	.081
Ministry to Millennials	112	55.94	56.19	1100.000	.970	.003
Small Groups	112	53.66	62.58	969.000	.248	.109
Marriage Ministry	112	58.65	49.40	933.500	.190	.123
Prayer Ministry	112	55.82	58.75	1059.500	.651	.042
Bible Study	112	56.86	55.31	1087.000	.817	.021
Children's Ministry	112	56.22	57.44	1093.500	.840	.018

* = $p < .05$

^aEffect Size .201

RESULTS FOR RQ #1

What characteristics are different in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Table 3

Sermon Focus - Pastor Survey

Ministry	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		High	Low			
Relationship	26	15.72	8.50	32.000	.014*	.481 ^a
Evangelism/Outreach	26	15.28	9.50	40.000	.028*	.430 ^b
Grace	26	14.78	10.63	49.000	.083	.340
Hot Topics	26	14.44	11.38	55.000	.295	.205
Social Justice	26	15.03	10.06	44.500	.105	.317
Practical Issues	26	13.58	13.31	70.500	.910	.022
Doctrine	26	14.39	11.50	56.000	.333	.189

* = $p < .05$

^aEffect Size .481

^bEffect Size .430

RESULTS FOR RQ #1

What characteristics are different in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Table 4

Sermon Focus - Millennial Survey

Ministry	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		High	Low			
Relationship	116	61.79	48.16	942.500	.047*	.184 ^a
Evangelism/Outreach	116	57.35	62.13	1130.500	.478	.065
Grace	116	58.16	59.57	1202.000	.828	.020
Hot Topics	116	56.22	65.68	1031.000	.167	.128
Social Justice	116	58.76	57.70	1209.500	.877	.014
Practical Issues	116	60.22	53.09	1080.500	.290	.098
Doctrine	116	55.83	66.89	997.000	.110	.010

* = $p < .05$

^aEffect Size .184

RESULTS FOR RQ #1

What characteristics are different in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Appendix Table 1

Presence of Technology						
Attribute	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Technology	26	.8077	.40192	9.846	.008*	.520 ¹

* = $p < .05$

^aCramer's *V* effect size .520

RESULTS FOR RQ #2

What differences exist in the experiences of Millennials in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Table 6

Mission and Identity in High vs Low Attraction Churches

Ministry	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		High	Low			
Welcomes Innovation	114	61.86	43.46	795.000	.007*	.252 ^a
Close Knit Family	114	56.84	59.61	1117.500	.687	.037
Mission/Purpose	114	58.34	52.74	1046.000	.384	.081
Pastor Listens	114	54.95	65.70	953.000	.115	.146
Congregational Diversity	114	58.24	55.11	1110.000	.642	.043
Reaching Millennials	114	57.48	57.57	1172.500	.989	.001
Serves Community	114	60.49	49.87	968.500	.113	.147

* = $p < .05$

^aEffect Size .252

RESULTS FOR RQ #2

What differences exist in the experiences of Millennials in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Table 7

Congregational Experience in High vs Low Attraction Churches

Ministry	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
		High	Low			
Can Be Myself	117	62.76	47.04	911.000	.018*	.218 ^a
Show Compassion	117	59.49	57.45	1202.500	.750	.029
Relevant Teaching	117	60.66	53.73	1098.500	.277	.100
Tolerant	117	59.26	58.18	1223.000	.879	.014
Have Close Friends	117	58.06	62.00	1162.000	.576	.051
Church Empowers Me	117	60.93	52.86	1074.000	.159	.130
Sense of Belonging	117	60.52	54.18	1111.000	.362	.084
Like the Pastor	117	59.93	56.04	1162.00	.556	.054

* = $p < .05$

^aEffect Size .218

RESULTS FOR RQ #3

What characteristics do Millennials prefer when choosing a church?

Table 8

Reasons Millennials First Attended the Churches They Attended

Item	Sample Size	Very Important		Important		Total
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Spiritual Experience	112	77	65% (73)	27	23% (25)	88% (98)
Common Values/Beliefs	112	81	68% (76)	22	18% (20)	86% (96)
Pastor's Teaching	111	86	73% (81)	13	11% (12)	84% (93)
Relationship	112	53	45% (50)	32	27% (33)	80% (89)
Worship Style	110	54	45% (49)	36	30% (33)	75% (82)
Pastor	112	55	46% (51)	33	27% (30)	73% (81)
Music	112	48	40% (44)	37	31% (35)	71% (79)
Ministry to Millennials	112	35	29% (32)	30	25% (28)	54% (60)
Community Outreach	111	32	27% (30)	42	25% (27)	52% (57)
Facility	111	16	13% (14)	14	12% (13)	25% (27)
Children's Ministry	112	0	0% (0)	22	18% (20)	18% (20)

Note. * = % > 80% considered meaningful by researcher

RESULTS FOR RQ #3

What characteristics do Millennials prefer when choosing a church?

Table 10

Characteristics Millennials Preferred in their Ideal Church

Item	Sample Size	Very Important		Important		Total
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Spiritual Growth	107	83	70% (75)	22	18% (19)	88% (94)
Sense of Belonging	106	86	73% (77)	17	14% (14)	87% (92)
Relationship	106	82	69% (73)	20	17% (18)	86% (91)
Relevant Sermons	107	79	67% (71)	20	17% (18)	84% (89)
Encounter w/Holy Spirit	106	84	71% (75)	16	13% (14)	84% (89)
Leadership Style	107	62	52% (55)	38	32% (34)	84% (89)
Vision and Values	107	74	62% (66)	25	21% (22)	83% (88)
Evangelistic	107	55	46% (49)	42	35% (37)	81% (86)
Prayer	107	74	62% (66)	23	19% (20)	81% (86)
Opport. for Involvement	107	66	56% (60)	30	25% (26)	81% (86)
Community Outreach	107	61	51% (54)	34	29% (31)	80% (85)
Non-Judgmental	106	71	60% (63)	24	20% (21)	80% (84)
Hypocrisy Free	106	71	60% (63)	22	18% (19)	78% (82)
Small Groups	107	53	45% (48)	38	32% (34)	77% (82)
Bible Study	107	50	42% (44)	40	34% (36)	76% (81)
Children's Ministry	107	71	60% (64)	17	14% (15)	74% (79)
Worship Style	107	39	33% (35)	47	40% (42)	73% (77)
Millennial Ministry	107	53	45% (48)	33	28% (30)	73% (78)
Diversity	107	45	38% (40)	34	29% (31)	66% (70)
Social Action	107	43	36% (38)	34	29% (31)	65% (69)
Social Activities	107	30	25% (26)	40	34% (36)	59% (63)
Social Justice	106	23	19% (20)	35	29% (30)	49% (52)
Technology	107	21	17% (18)	36	30% (32)	47% (50)
Facility	105	11	9% (9)	32	27% (28)	36% (37)

Note. * = % > 80% considered meaningful by researcher

RESULTS FOR RQ #3

What characteristics do Millennials prefer when choosing a church?

Table 11

Top 3 Characteristics that Attracted Millennials to the Church

Reason	Sample Size	Result
Atmosphere of the Church	100	26% (26)
Pastor's Teaching	100	22% (22)
Knew Someone/Programs	100	8% (8)

RESULTS FOR RQ #3

What characteristics do Millennials prefer when choosing a church?

Table 12

Top 3 Characteristics that Caused Millennials to Remain in the Church

Reason	Sample Size	Result
Pastor's Teaching	98	31% (31)
Relationships	98	26% (26)
Atmosphere of the Church	98	13% (13)

RESULTS FOR RQ #4

What characteristics are most likely to be related to Millennial church attendance?

Table 13

Hochberg Procedure – Importance of Ministries

Ministry	<i>p</i>	Hochberg Threshold
Ministry to Millennials	.002*	.05/8 = .00625
Discipleship	.006*	.05/7 = .00714
Community Service	.028	.05/6 = .00833
Marriage Ministry	.216	.05/5 = .01
Bible Study	.648	.05/4 = .0125
Small Groups	.704	.05/3 = .01667
Prayer Ministry	.804	.05/2 = .025
Children's Ministry	.879	.05/1 = .05

Note. * = $p < .000625$

Note. * = $p < .00714$

RESULTS FOR RQ #4

What characteristics are most likely to be related to Millennial church attendance?

Table 17

Hochberg Procedure - Mission and Identity in High vs Low Attraction Churches

Ministry	<i>p</i>	<i>Hochberg Threshold</i>
Welcomes Innovation	.007*	.05/7 = .00714
Serves Community	.113	.05/6 = .00833
Close Knit Family	.687	.05/5 = .01
Pastor Listens	.115	.05/4 = .0125
Mission/Purpose	.384	.05/3 = .01667
Congregational Diversity	.642	.05/2 = .025
Reaching Millennials	.989	.05/1 = .05

Note. * = $p < .00714$

RESULTS FOR RQ #4

What characteristics are different in churches that demonstrated an ability to attract Millennials versus those that did not?

Appendix Table 1

Presence of Technology						
Attribute	N	M	SD	X ²	p	V
Technology	26	.8077	.40192	9.846	.008*	.520 ¹

Note. * = $p < .05$

Note. ¹Cramer's V effect size .520 = large

CONCLUSIONS

The characteristics that were most likely to be related to Millennial church attendance were...

- ❖ Ministry to Millennials
- ❖ Discipleship Ministry
- ❖ Welcomes Innovation
- ❖ Technology

IMPLICATIONS

- ❖ Church leaders must familiarize themselves with the characteristics that attracts Millennials
- ❖ Church leaders must be intentional about ministry to Millennials
- ❖ Church leaders must build relationships with Millennials that involve, empower, and utilize them within the church
- ❖ Church leaders must embrace change, innovation, and technology to attract Millennials
- ❖ It is possible for the church to attract and engage Millennials

LIMITATIONS

- Only Millennials and senior pastors in Illinois Assembly of God churches were surveyed, limiting the generalizability of the study.
- The use of an online survey may have limited responses.
- Convenience sampling was used to obtain the sample groups, which allowed for the possibility of non-representative sample groups.
- The size of the sample groups should be larger in order to provide more power for multiple comparisons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Include churches of all denominations in Illinois in future studies to determine if the statistically significant characteristics are the same or different across denominations.
- Add a qualitative component to the study
- Send surveys to all Assembly of God churches and pastors in Illinois to increase power.
- Look for newer measurement tools that may be available that meet the needs of the study.

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