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Millennials in Ministry:
The Experiences, Values and Vision of Rising Church Leaders

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

Jolene Cassellius Erlacher

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, MINNESOTA

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Millennials in Ministry:
The Experiences, Values and Vision of Rising Church Leaders

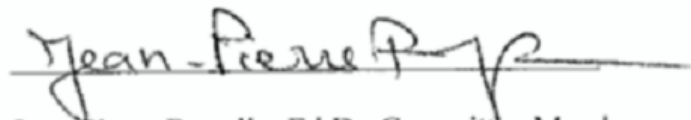
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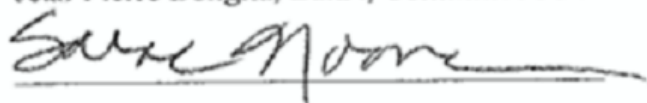
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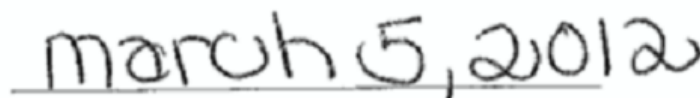
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Final Approval Date

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ABSTRACT

What is the lived experience of Millennials in ministry, specifically those in their first ministry position? What factors affect the job satisfaction and retention of Millennials in ministry roles at local churches? Unique factors and perspectives affected the job satisfaction and retention of Millennials in ministry positions. In-depth interviews with fifteen Millennial graduates of a Christian university provided the data for this research. Each had served in ministry for a minimum of nine months. Interviews revealed a vision for the church that differed from some traditional church practices. Phenomenological aspects of this study produced an account of the lived experience of Millennials in ministry. Themes that emerged as important in the experience of participants included a *sense of calling, relationships with leaders and colleagues, effectiveness in their role, and feeling meaning and fulfillment in their work*. Relationships with leaders and colleagues on staff emerged as one of the most vital aspects of ministry experience. This study explored factors affecting job satisfaction and produced a grounded theory of the emerging vision and values of Millennials in ministry. It revealed a Millennial view of the church as family rather than church as business. It demonstrated working at a church that embraced and practiced their values proved important to job satisfaction and retention. Primary among the values expressed by participants were *family and relationships*. Millennials expected and appreciated engaged leaders. They desired mentorship and personal relationships with mature adults who encouraged and supported them as they navigated the uncertainties of young adulthood. Developmental theories helped illustrate the importance of these mentoring relationships. Millennials valued people over programs, relationships over products and conversations over presentations. Reciprocal and servant leadership theories provided insight into effective practices for leaders and churches seeking to maximize Millennial job satisfaction and retention in ministry.

Key terms: calling, Christians, Christianity, church, clergy, faith, local church, Millennials, minister, ministry, religion, spirituality, retention, job satisfaction, developmental theory, servant leadership, leadership theories, vision, values, young adults, generations, phenomenology, grounded theory, lived experience

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My past is laden with various personal experiences in church ministry roles. During my childhood and youth, my parents worked as church leaders, missionaries and pastors. Throughout high school and college, I served in several volunteer positions within local churches, from singing on worship teams, to teaching Sunday school, leading children and youth programs and helping host large events. Though I did not obtain a ministry degree, upon graduating the leadership team of a church plant recruited me to serve as their volunteer children's pastor. Eventually, I became part-time staff, overseeing the congregation's children's ministries. I served on staff at that church for three years. When I left, I was relieved to transition to a different place. Differences in ministry and leadership philosophies, church politics and busyness from working a second job to support myself resulted in feelings of burnout and disappointment.

When I left the church position, I worked for eight years on staff at a Christian university where many students were preparing to serve in ministry positions. As students, they were often involved as volunteers, interns, and sometimes even paid staff at churches. Listening to their hopes, frustrations, and experiences gave me insight into changes they may bring to the church as they enter leadership. It also allowed me to see their disappointment with some current aspects of the church. Over time, I began to suspect many of their perspectives represented generational values.

About five years ago, I attended a workshop on intergenerational teams. The content of the workshop, highlighting core values and perspectives of various generations, resonated with me in a profound manner. It helped explain many of the frustrations, misunderstandings and differing opinions I navigated daily in my role at

work, interacting with students, staff and the administration. Shortly thereafter, I began my personal journey of research into the characteristics of Millennials, or Generation Y as some call them. This journey developed into a passion for the emerging generation of leaders and what they have to offer.

Millennials constitute the generation of children born between 1980 and 2000, to an American society promoting the protection and self-esteem of its young (Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). While every generation has characteristics and experiences influence its values and approach to life, the Millennials are emerging with some new and unique differences. The dramatic impact of postmodernism, globalization, and a new knowledge economy, along with the prevalence of technology in their lives, is affecting everything from how they communicate to how they perceive and interact with the world around them (Elmore, 2010; Greenberg, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007). As I studied intergenerational dynamics in my workplace, I began to wonder how they translated into the church context, specifically church leadership teams.

Going into this project, I brought with me some assumptions stemming from the experiences discussed above. I assumed some of the young people I would interview may possess frustrations or questions similar to those I felt as a young children's pastor. I also assumed their ideas, frustrations, or questions may echo those of their peers who have sat in my office and chatted with me over the years. Lastly, I anticipated church leadership teams would reflect generational differences highlighted in a growing body of literature about the workplace in America today, and Millennials in ministry would demonstrate characteristics similar to Millennials in other career fields.

Despite some previous exposure to and understanding of the topic I studied, during my research I keenly sought to set aside my assumptions, to listen to participants actively and to represent the voice of the Millennials in this project. I listened to this voice for many years working with students and this voice inspired me to pursue this study. I recognize Millennials possess many perspectives and characteristics that could prove problematic to their lives, our culture, and the church. Nonetheless, I also believe they are asking questions with potential to make the church better, richer and more effective as they enter leadership roles. They can provide insight into how their generation views and responds to the church. Thus, my priority in this study was to hear their voices and understand their experience.

Statement of the Problem

The emerging research regarding Millennials indicates the current generation of young adults varies significantly from previous generations. Millennials' perceptions of church represent one area of difference and potential concern. The Pew Research Center reported Millennials "are the least overtly religious American generation in modern times. One-in-four are unaffiliated with any religion, far more than the share of older adults when they were ages 18 to 29" (Taylor & Keeter, 2010, p. 2). Although this is a concern for church attendance nationwide, it may also have a major impact on future church leadership. If denominations are unable to retain and empower young clergy, they may face a shortage of leadership in the future.

"Christianity has an image problem...our research shows that many of those outside of Christianity, especially younger adults, have little trust in the Christian faith" (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 11). This is in part due to the fast changes occurring in our

culture today. Modernity strongly informs American Christianity, yet we live in an increasingly postmodern society. Many church leaders look at the diminishing number of young people in churches and call for a discussion about what an emerging church should look like in our changing society (Kimball, 2003; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Sweet, 2000).

The perception problem regarding the church is not limited to those young people who are outside the church. “Those inside the church see it as well—especially Christians in their twenties and thirties. They are bringing up some of the same challenges, questions, and doubts facing those outside the church” (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 18-19). This fact holds true for many young Christian leaders who are graduating with ministry degrees and going into full-time vocational ministry. How older church leaders respond to their ideas, questions and doubts may determine not only the job satisfaction and retention of these young leaders, but also the future of the evangelical church in America.

Leadership styles and responses are crucial as intergenerational church leadership teams look to navigate the changes emerging from significant generational differences and changing societal values. “Younger people in the church need to be able to bring new ideas to the older leaders; if they can’t do so, the church comes across to them as organized religion with no sense of freedom or organic change, and emerging generations feel more disconnected from the culture of the church” (Kimball, 2007, p. 91).

Unfortunately, some young leaders leave the church because “the older upper leadership controlled things, and though young leaders could lead their specific areas of ministry, they could not have influence in the larger church” (Kimball, 2007, p. 91). Kimball

(2007) argued, “A major question we need to address is whether younger leaders have a place of leadership and voice in our churches” (p. 81). To answer this question accurately, young leaders in ministry must contribute to the discussion and share their experiences.

This study examined two research questions regarding Millennials in ministry positions at churches. What is the lived experience of Millennials in ministry, specifically those in their first ministry position? What factors affect the job satisfaction and retention of Millennials in ministry roles at local churches? In answering these questions through phenomenological and grounded theory lenses, this study further seeks to develop a theory regarding factors affecting job satisfaction and retention and how these reflect the values and vision of Millennials for the future of the church. The scope of this study focused solely on churches in America, and specifically on staff at evangelical churches.

Statement of Significance

In responding to the research questions above, this study seeks to make two significant contributions to the current literature. The first is in the area of clergy experience. While there is research available on factors affecting job satisfaction of clergy, the assimilation of young clergy into the ministry profession, clergy turnover, and other related topics, minimal information exists on the Millennial generation specifically and how they experience and will practice the clergy role moving forward.

As a response to this need, I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with Millennials who have served in church ministry positions for a minimum of nine months. In chapter four of this study, phenomenological methods help describe the experience of

these young ministers. In chapter five, grounded theory helps identify trends or patterns in their experiences regarding job satisfaction and retention. I examined how an emerging generation of church leaders experiences their roles. I also looked at factors affecting job retention and sought to understand their vision for the church.

The second contribution this study seeks to make is in the area of leadership and management as those topics relate to Millennials in ministry. Extensive research and information exists regarding this generation entering the corporate workplace, along with strategies, guidelines and suggestions for the business world in managing this emerging group of young adults (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). However, minimal research or resources exist specifically for the non-profit and church sectors.

Nonetheless, this generation sees high value in making a difference in the world. It is imperative the non-profit and church sectors identify effective leadership styles and management strategies to empower this unique group of young adults fully to work and lead as we operate in the context of an increasingly postmodern culture and move into the 21st century. As a result, the analysis section of this study in chapter six provides insight into leadership strategies likely to resonate with the needs and desires expressed by participants.

Because the current generational trends reflect historical trends and correlate with changing cultural and societal values, a literature review in the following chapter will provide a context for this study. I examined research on historical trends in culture, generations and the church. Aspects of clergy preparation and experience, and perspectives regarding spirituality complete the contextual framework for this study.

Theoretical literature on developmental and leadership theories provided the tools for the analysis of my findings.

Chapter three provides an overview of the methodologies used in the research for this study. The final chapter provides a summary of the findings, including practical implications and conclusions. I describe opportunities for future research based on the strengths and weaknesses of this project and identify additional questions that could build on the findings of this study.

Definition of Terms

- Calling:* A sense or impulse to pursue a job in or related to the church or other ministry work
- Christians:* For the purpose of this study, the term Christians is used to describe Protestant or evangelical Christians in America, as differentiated from Catholic or Orthodox Christians
- Christianity:* Protestant or evangelical Christians in America collectively, who believe in salvation by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ, personal conversion and the inerrancy of Scripture
- Church:* Used interchangeably with the term *Christianity*
- Clergy:* Individuals trained for vocational ministry who serve as paid staff at a local church, not necessarily licensed or ordained
- Faith:* Personal belief systems and experience relating to the divine, held individually
- Local church:* A congregation in a specific location as opposed to a parachurch organization, ministries connected to a church, or a denomination or church group
- Millennials:* A generation of individuals born between 1980 and 2000
- Minister:* Used interchangeably with the term *clergy*
- Ministry:* Work dedicated to the spiritual growth and development of individuals, for the purpose of this study, occurring in the local church

Religion: Organized or institutionalized systems of beliefs and traditions relating to the divine

Spirituality: Used interchangeably with the term *faith*

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Context is extremely important in understanding the values related to job satisfaction and retention of young leaders in church ministry positions today. A historical perspective provides the background for understanding how significant the changes we are currently experiencing may actually be and why the changes we are facing require thoughtful, informed and creative leadership. Viewing the scope of the situation through the lens of the dramatic shifts occurring in Western and American culture, as well as in Christianity and the evangelical church is significant. This review of literature begins with an exploration of cultural trends in America and the Western world, moves to generational trends in America, and finally, trends in Christianity.

Cultural Trends in America

Schaeffer (1976) explained the flow of history and culture is rooted in the thoughts of people. The inner life of the mind, with its perspectives and worldview, determines our actions and value systems. Western history reveals significant shifts in culture every few hundred years. Drucker (1993) indicated we are currently living through such a transformation and within a few decades society will rearrange itself along with its values, social and political structures, and key institutions. He labeled the emerging structure a post-capitalist society.

Many others agree with the assessment we are in the midst of a significant change in Western, even global, society. Smith Jr. (2001) called it a “cultural fault line between two epochal periods” (p. 12). The transition between the modern era and the postmodern era, is thought by some to be as significant as the shift that propelled the world out of the Middle Ages, 500 years ago (Drucker, 1993; Grenz, 1996; Kimball, 2003; Smith Jr.,

2001). Drucker (1993) identified the last significant cultural shift in Western society occurred around the time of the American Revolution, birthing such powerful factors as capitalism, communism and the Industrial Revolution. He argued, however, the current shift reaches beyond the Western world, into our global society.

The modern era centered on the enlightenment project of the mid-18th century. “The idea was to use the accumulation of knowledge generated by many individuals working freely and creatively for the pursuit of human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life” (Harvey, 1990, p. 12). The promise of scientific domination of nature included freedom from scarcity and want. Rational forms of social organization and rational modes of thought were supposed to liberate from the irrationalities of myth, religion and superstition (Harvey, 1990).

Kimball (2003) claimed modernism held to a universal worldview and moral standard, a belief in knowledge as good and certain, and truth as absolute. Individualism was valued while thinking, learning, and beliefs were determined logically. McLaren (2001) discussed ten major characteristics of modernity. They include conquest and control, the machine, analysis, secular science, objectivity, a critical age, the modern nation-state and organization, individualism, Protestantism and institutional religion, and consumerism. Postmodernism now challenges many of these ideas and characteristics (McLaren, 2001).

“Somewhere between 1968 and 1972...we see postmodernism emerge as a full-blown though still incoherent movement out of the chrysalis of the anti-modern movement of the 1960s” (Harvey, 1990, p. 38). Postmodern philosophers applied theories of deconstruction to the world as a whole, attacking the concepts of universal

meaning or a transcendent center to reality under modernism (Grenz, 1996). The beliefs in a timeless, absolute truth or salvation by society, as promoted by Marx, collapsed under postmodern thought (Drucker, 1993; Grenz, 1996; Kimball, 2003). Significant changes emerging from postmodernism are the values of all truth as absolute, community over individualism, and truth being determined in the contexts of specific communities (Grenz, 1996; Kimball, 2003).

Table 1 <i>Traits of Modernism and Postmodernism Affecting the American Church</i>	
Modernism	Postmodernism
Confidence in reason to discover truth	Acceptance of self-determined pluralistic views
Power and faith in human reasoning	Power and faith are in personal experience
Communication driven by the printing press	Communication driven by internet and media
Mechanical, structured	Organic, open
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Creation	Deconstruction
Individualism	Community
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Distance	Participation
<i>Note:</i> Adapted from Grenz, 1996; Harvey, 1990; Kimball, 2003; & McLaren, 2001	

Drucker (1993) indicated this period we are now experiencing is but a transition, and will not be permanent. “What will emerge next, we cannot know: we can only hope and pray. Perhaps nothing beyond stoic resignation? Perhaps a rebirth of traditional religion, addressing itself to the needs and challenges of the person in the knowledge society?” (p. 13). Grenz (1996) worried about overwhelming pressures on people who have no absolutes and feared impoverished values may make citizens vulnerable to dangerous political or social influences. He argued many of these pressures are upon us

already and include economic breakdown, war or the serious threat of war, chaos of violence/political violence/indiscriminate terrorism, radical redistribution of the wealth of the world, and growing shortage of food and natural resources.

The current state of flux in cultural and societal values provides an opportunity for leaders to take action and influence change (Drucker, 1993). “Most people catch their presuppositions from their family and surrounding society the way a child catches measles” (Schaeffer, 1976, p. 20). In the current postmodern society, families, teachers, and leaders are often encouraging young people to make their own decisions about values and religion and to be tolerant of all beliefs. These decisions will influence not only the direction of culture, but also individual lives and actions (Kimball, 2003; Schaeffer, 1976). As a result, perspectives and behaviors of emerging young adults look drastically different than those of their parents or grandparents. “What we are experiencing in our culture is not merely a generation gap but a change in how people view the world” (Kimball, 2003, p. 59). The following section examines how generational trends reflect these changing world views.

Trends in Generations

“We define a generation as a special cohort group whose length approximately matches that of a basic phase of life, or about twenty-two years” (Howe & Strauss, 1991, p. 34). Taylor and Keeter (2010) explained three primary factors in the formation of a generational cohort. These include life cycle effects, those characteristics more prominent at particular developmental stages; period effects or major events experienced simultaneously by all members of the cohort at a certain stage in development; and cohort effects, how major events impact the life-long perspectives of a group. Howe and Strauss

(1991) reiterated, “What makes the cohort-group truly unique is that all its members....encounter the same national events, moods, and trends at similar ages....since history affects people very differently according to their age, common age location is what gives each cohort-group a distinct biography” (p. 48). Generations have personalities, and Millennials, the emerging cohort of young adults at the start of a new millennium, have begun to forge theirs and its potentially significant impact is garnering much attention (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). It is valuable to look back at generational trends in American history to understand the emerging generation better.

Generational Cycles

Historians Strauss and Howe (1991, 1997) presented a theory of generations from the past five centuries in America. They explain Anglo-American society enters a new era, or turning, approximately every twenty years. “At the start of each turning, people change how they feel about themselves, the culture, the nation, and the future. Turnings come in cycles of four. Each cycle spans the length of a long human life, roughly eighty to one hundred years” (Howe & Strauss, 1997, p. 3).

The repeating pattern of generations illustrates ebbs and flows in culture and perspectives. Howe and Strauss (1991, 1997) labeled these turnings to indicate the role they play in forming society: the First Turning is a High, the Second Turning is an Awakening, the Third Turning is an Unraveling, and the Fourth Turning is a Crisis. They presented four generational types with the four turnings: Idealist or Prophet, Reactive or Nomad, Civic or Hero, and Adaptive or Artist. Howe and Strauss (1991) explained “from the 1584 Puritan birth year forward, we can trace five such cycles through

American history...with these cycles, we identify eighteen generations from John Winthrop's Puritans to Jessica McClure's Millennials" (p. 35).

Howe and Strauss (1991, 1997) indicated the significance of two types of social moments in the propelling of generational cycles. The first is a secular crisis, with an outward focus on society reordering its institutions and behavior. The second is a spiritual awakening, focused more on the inner world of values and beliefs. "Social moments do not arrive at random. For example, a secular crisis and a spiritual awakening never occur back to back. Nor does half a century ever pass without a social moment of either type. Instead, social moments arrive on a rather regular schedule" (Howe & Strauss, 1991, p. 71). Greenberg (2008) argued moments of social change are facilitated by "a society ripe for change; a new generation ready to drive change; the emergence of one or a few leaders to articulate the need and set the agenda; and in many cases, technological or economic shifts that made innovative action possible" (p. 155).

Howe and Strauss's (1991, 1997) model indicated two generational cohorts are dominant and drive social change. They explained Civic or Hero generations enter adulthood in the midst of a social moment of Crisis, while Idealist or Prophet generations enter adulthood in the midst of a social moment of Awakening. The most recent Idealist or Prophet generation was the Baby Boom cohort, born from 1946 to 1964. Boomers entered adulthood amidst the awakening resulting in events such as the civil rights movement and Woodstock. Millennials, born after 1980, comprise the next Civic or Hero generation and are currently entering adulthood (Howe & Strauss, 1997).

Howe and Strauss (1997) predicted, "The next Crisis era will most likely extend roughly from the middle Oh-Ohs to the middle 2020s. Its climax is not likely to occur

before 2005 or later than 2025” (p. 51). The historians claimed their generational cycle can predict “during the late 2010s and early 2020s, American generations will pass deep into a ‘Crisis Era’ constellation and mood—and that, as a consequence the nation’s public life will undergo a swift and possibly revolutionary transformation” (Howe & Strauss, 1991, p. 15). As this predicted Crisis era unfolds, the next Civic generation is transitioning into adulthood.

Generational Transition

The four generations in the American workplace entering the twenty-first century represent a full generational cycle. They span a remarkable period of American and world history. “Three major wars, economic booms and busts, social upheavals, rocketing technological achievement, presidential impeachment, and the first steps beyond the boundaries of our planetary bonds are among the milestones that have directly and indirectly shaped the temper of their and our times” (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000, p. 18). As the twenty-first century begins to unfold, significant events and change continue, and they coincide with the entrance of a new generation into adulthood.

Millennials comprise the next dominant generation and the eldest are currently entering their early thirties. They will likely inform and direct the current period of rapid and significant change as it sets the stage for the next turning. Diverse views exist regarding the potential of this cohort to achieve good. Greenberg (2008) optimistically claimed, “today, a new generation is about to seize the reins of history...they are a generation that appears to be unique in American and world history—a generation that is incredibly well prepared to tackle the huge challenges we all are facing. They are often known as the Millennial generation” (p. 13).

Others support this positive view of the emerging Civic or Hero generation. “The view that says generations cycle and recycle back on themselves may be confirmed with this latest cohort of confident, achievement-oriented young people, or so it seems right now” (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000, p. 25). Howe and Strauss (1997) explained, “Hero generations develop a strong ethos of constructive activity, a peer-enforced code of dutiful conduct, and an overwhelming sense of generational community. Instinctive doers and team players, they gravitate toward social goals and human relationship that can be clearly defined” (p. 269). Further review of the emerging Millennials reveals they do reflect many of these predicted and lauded characteristics. However, potential shadow sides of their characteristics do present potential difficulties and challenges as they transition into adulthood (Elmore, 2010).

Generational Characteristics of the Millennials

Millennials are becoming the most studied generation in American history. Howe and Strauss (1997) indicated this may be due to the fact “the Euro-American experience confirms that the faster a society progresses, the more persistently generational issues seem to keep springing up” (p. 63). The rapid changes in American society over the past century have contributed to the diverse perspectives of the four generational cohorts represented in the workplace today. Elmore (2010) illustrated this diversity in various areas. Regarding responses to authority figures, Silents endure them, Boomers replace them, Xers ignore them, and Millennials choose them. When it comes to technology, Silents hope to outlive it, Boomers master it, Xers enjoy it, and Millennials employ it. Careers also hold different significance for each generation. For Silents it is a means of living, for Boomers it is a central focus in life, for Xers it is an irritant, and for

Millennials it is a place to serve (Elmore, 2010). These and other differences can often present challenges when generations interact (Elmore, 2010; Raines, 2003).

Ironically, the characteristics individuals often find frustrating in other generational cohorts are in some cases their own making. “Most parents enter midlife trying to raise a new generation whose collective personality will complement, and not mirror, their own” (Howe & Strauss, 1997, p. 82). Twenge and Campbell (2009) reminded, “Young people didn’t raise themselves” (p. 34). A look at the seven core traits of the Millennial generation, identified by Howe and Strauss (2007), revealed the powerful effects of parenting and education on the emerging generation. These characteristics demonstrated Millennials are: *special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured* and *achieving* (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Born during the emergence of the self-esteem movement, Millennials believe they are special.

They are the first generation who got... ‘Baby on Board’ signs announcing their arrival. They are the first generation of ‘winners,’ because they were not allowed or able to lose in school, and basically got gold stars just for showing up. They are the first generation who stopped passing notes in class and started text messaging instead. They are also the first generation that went to elementary school with cell phones in their messenger bags, [and] attended high school with metal detectors. (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009, p.15)

Unfortunately, the results of some of these factors have been negative, resulting in a sense of entitlement and narcissistic personality traits prevalent throughout this group (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). The technological world of social networking in which they develop reinforces a narcissistic way of relating to the world (Turtle, 2011).

“Narcissism causes almost all of the things that Americans hoped high self-esteem would prevent, including aggression, materialism, lack of caring for others, and shallow values” (Twenge & Campbell, 2009, p. 2).

This generation has been sheltered. Howe and Strauss (1997) indicated a recurring pattern lies in generational cycles, an oscillation between the overprotection and underprotection of children. Unlike Xers, who experienced the underprotection of being latchkey kids, the lives of Millennials have been programmed, enclosed, monitored, and closely directed by adults (Howe & Strauss, 2007). In part, this protection from reality has contributed to their sense of confidence and trust in parents, leaders and systems. Rainer and Rainer (2011) reported, “The Millennial generation may well be the most connected generation to their parents. Parents are involved in the weekly, if not daily, affairs of their Millennial children well into adulthood” (p. 34). Millennials welcome this parental involvement. The optimism they display despite difficult entry into careers and first jobs during the Great Recession results in part from the continuing shelter and support they receive as young adults from their parents (Taylor & Keeter, 2010).

Howe and Strauss (1997) predicted, “A Hero generation grows up as increasingly protected post-Awakening children, comes of age as the heroic team workers of a Crisis” (p. 84). Millennials definitely illustrate a sense of team orientation. Not only do they feel connected to the people around them, but through technology, their sense of connection extends around the world. “They believe that all of us—not only all Americans, but all humans around the planet—will ultimately share the same destiny, and therefore must find ways to work together for the common good” (Greenberg, 2008, p. 55).

Millennials are often conventional in their approach to life. “They’re rule followers. Over the past ten years, rates of violent crime among teens have fallen by 70%, rates of teen pregnancy and abortion by 35%...and rates of alcohol and tobacco

consumption are hitting all-time lows” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 15-16). They respect older generations unless they prove themselves unworthy of respect. A majority view the older generation as superior to the younger generation when it comes to moral values and work ethic (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The conventional platform of the Millennials at times differs drastically from other generations however, as it is also very tolerant and open-minded, sometimes regarding issues of great controversy to other generational cohorts. “More tolerant and accepting than any previous generation, Generation We is ready to call a halt to ‘culture wars’ that pit people of different religions, races, ethnicities, regions, cultures, values, and sexual orientations against one another for political gain” (Greenberg, 2008, p. 55).

Yet another trait of Millennials is intense pressure to achieve. This is the result of parental and personal ambitions, increasing demands from technology and schools, and seemingly higher stakes (Elmore, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Driven to achieve, they are arguably America’s busiest people (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Greenberg (2008) depicted them as innovation-minded. “They’ve adopted the pioneering American spirit and embraced it in the form of a profound belief in innovation—technological, social, political” (p. 29). He saw this as indicative of their character and promise. Elmore (2010) countered:

These kids really do desire to change the world; they just don’t have what it takes to accomplish their lofty dreams. When the work becomes difficult, they change their minds and move on to something else. The new term for them is ‘slacktivists’—they are both slackers and activists. (p. 27)

In many cases, young adults today simply lack the skills and ability required to navigate change in the complex world they inhabit.

Elmore (2010) laid out additional pros and cons of this paradoxical generation: they own the world of technology, but expect easy and instant results; they are the focus of their parents, but they may be unable to cope with reality; they are high on tolerance, but often lack absolute values; they have had relatively easy lives, but may lack stamina to finish a project; they catch on to new ideas quickly, but struggle with long commitments; they are adept at multitasking, but have difficulty focusing; they want to be the best, but get depressed when they are not; they hunger to change the world, but anticipate doing it quickly and easily. “While teens and young adults have absorbed digital tools into their daily lives like no other age group...young Americans today are no more learned or skillful than their predecessors, no more knowledgeable, fluent, up-to-date, or inquisitive, except in the materials of youth culture” (Bauerlein, 2008, p. 8). These aspects of Millennials’ development pose significant challenges as they enter the adult world.

Their size alone as the largest generation in American history would make the Millennials a powerful force for change even if they were similar to past American generations, which they are not.

In many ways, the Millennials represent a brand-new America, transformed by demographic and cultural trends that have been building for decades. Generation We is America’s most diverse generation ever, with more Hispanics (18 percent), Blacks (14 percent), and Asians (5 percent) than any previous cohort...they are also the best-educated generation in history. (Greenberg, 2008, p. 21)

Nonetheless, Bauerlein (2008) argued, “The world delivers facts and events and art and ideas as never before, but the young American mind hasn’t opened” (p. 9). The potential effects of these realities for the future of American culture and society are significant.

“Instead of using their youthful years to discover who they are and develop a lasting set of values to live by, they may become adults who can’t make it unless they are constantly on Twitter with their friends” (Elmore, 2010, p. 21). The potential effect on relationships and communication for a generation short on patience, listening skills and conflict resolution has yet to be determined. Furthermore, evidence shows prevalent use of technology is not only addictive, but may change the functioning of young brains (Elmore, 2010).

Ninety percent of Millennials agree their generation shares specific beliefs, attitudes, and experiences that set them apart from generations before them (Greenberg, 2008). The years to come will reveal how these beliefs and the characteristics delineated above will impact the future of this generation and our nation. In the meantime, the entrance of Millennials into the workforce is producing a powerful illustration of generational differences in close proximity (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000).

Generational Challenges in the Workplace

“The workplace...today is awash with the conflicting voices and views of the most age- and value-diverse workforce this country has known since our great-great-grandparents abandoned field and farm for factory and office” (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000, p. 10). The collaborative nature and close proximity of many employee groups today require a concerted effort in managing these intergenerational teams. Understanding of one another is essential since tension in intergenerational relationships often emerges from behavioral expectations disallowed by peer groups. “There is a growing realization that the gulf of misunderstanding and resentment between older, not

so old, and younger employees in the workplace is growing...it is a problem based in economics, demographics, and world views that must be confronted” (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000, p. 1).

Research, trainings, and strategies for managing intergenerational teams are increasing with the need for integrating the generations effectively on the job. Raines (2003) mentioned several benefits for companies and organizations that empower the multi-generation work team. These include an organization’s ability to attract and retain talented people of all ages, its flexibility, its stronger broad-based decisions, its innovation and ability to meet diverse needs (Raines, 2003). Aggressive communication is another component of successful intergenerational teams. This style of communication promotes over-communication, anticipates generational needs, values differences and empowers individuals to contribute their strengths to a team. Leadership that does not try to homogenize employees is an essential key to successful intergenerational teams (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000).

Millennials enter the workforce with a work ethic different from previous generations and it is often misunderstood. Lipkin and Perrymore (2009) explained differences between a traditional work ethic and a Millennial work ethic. In a traditional work ethic, embraced by most Silents and Baby Boomers, work comes first, the boss deserves respect, seniority results in promotion, hours worked reflect accomplishment, and the needs of the organization dictate change. For Millennials, personal life is paramount, leaders and colleagues earn equality and respect, talent results in promotion, completion of assigned tasks dictates hours worked, and the needs of employees should dictate organizational change (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009).

“People in the American workforce today are taking care of themselves...the young ones are on the move, watching and waiting for the next best opportunity...the number of years employees stay with a job continues to decline” (Raines, 20003, p. 113). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) also noted their survey results indicated a lot of employees are contemplating their next move. Raines (2003) explained Millennials leave when their job does not expectations, is repetitive or boring, and does not offer challenges and opportunities for development. Reasons they stay are because of professional growth and personal satisfaction. “If something doesn’t work for them, or if they are not permitted to participate in the process, they quickly move on to something that grabs them” (Kinnaman and Lyons, 2007, p. 23). Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) identified important factors in retaining Millennials include valuing their work, developing their career, giving them responsibility, utilizing technology, and providing recognition.

Retaining Millennials is proving challenging for many organizations. “Losing employees is tremendously costly. The brain drain interferes with the smooth operation of the business...as a result, retention has moved to the top of the list of cost-containment measures and it’s an everyday deal” (Raines, 2003, p. 113). Companies assess turnover costs based on time and money spent on an employee. “They need to look deeper and think about the level of competence that is also walking out the door” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 239). The workplace is not the only place affected by generational characteristics and cycles. These factors also have a large effect on the church and religion in America.

Trends in Christianity

Historical Trends in Christianity

Every five hundred years or so, Christianity experiences a season of change and renewal, what Bishop Dryer calls a “giant rummage sale” (Tickle, 2008). Through these seasons of transition, the structures, trappings, and embellishments of the institutionalized church fade and a fresh energy emerges for the church. Tickle (2008) indicated three consistent results from these upheavals. The first is a reenergized passion and faith, the second is the demise of ossified church structures, and the third is the spread of the faith.

Without a doubt, the most significant event in church history occurred in the first century of the Common Era (CE). The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ affirmed biblical prophecies and gave rise to Christianity and the church. During its youth, Christianity demonstrated powerful resilience and tenacity. Surrounded by the oppressive influences of the Roman Empire, it managed to survive. Schaeffer (1976) explained the fact “it was the Christians who were able to resist religious mixtures, syncretism, and the effects of the weaknesses of Roman culture speaks to the strength of the Christian worldview” (p. 22).

Halter and Smay (2008) lamented by the fifth century Christianity was changing from the determined, organic faith of its origins into the institutionalized version we know today. With the conversion of Roman Emperor, Constantine, in the fourth century, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. Over the course of the following centuries, the church was defined and reinforced as “a place where” rather than “a people who” (Halter & Smay, 2008; Kimball, 2003). Halter and Smay (2008) argued we are still recovering from this “1,700-year wedgie” of institutionalized church.

Tickle (2008) outlined how Christianity would grow and spread until the time of Gregory the Great around 540 CE. As the world entered the Dark Ages, following the Fall of Rome, Christianity retreated to convents and monasteries where monks and nuns faithfully guarded it for many years. In this regard, the institutionalization denounced by Halter and Smay (2008) did serve to protect the church. For about 1,000 years following the Fall of Rome, throughout the age of castles and monasteries, Christianity dominated Western Europe (McLaren, 2001). The year 1054 marks the next transition in Christianity, also known as the Great Schism, where Constantinople and Rome parted ways, resulting in Greek or Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism (McLaren, 2001; Tickle, 2008).

The next major shift in Christianity occurred approximately 500 years after the Great Schism. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther's 95 Theses symbolically represented the most recent shift in Christianity with the unfolding of the Reformation (Tickle, 2008). Gonzalez (1985) explained the Reformation did not occur as a result of Martin Luther's will or effort, but rather because the time was right and it became the responsibility of those living at the time to fulfill their roles as agents of historical change. Thus, we enter the 21st century, historically situated 500 years beyond the most recent major shift in Christianity.

Lyons (2010) positioned current changes in the American church in light of history, as well as current culture. While Christianity experienced many alterations over the past 2000 years, these changes typically occurred in the context of social and cultural transitions. "No culture shift is an island unto itself, but rather it is intimately connected to the historical moment from which it arises. So it is with the demise of Christian

America” (Lyons, 2010, p. 19). Thus, we now look at the current cultural trends in America and their effect on the church.

Cultural Trends in Christianity

In light of the drastic cultural shifts occurring in America, change in the church seems inevitable, even essential to its future.

As George Marsden correctly concludes, in some sense evangelicalism—with its focus on scientific thinking, the empirical approach, and common sense—is a child of early modernity....the transition from the modern era to the postmodern era poses a grave challenge to the church in its mission to its own next generation. (Grenz, 1996, p. 10)

The emergence of postmodernism is in some ways challenging the ethos of the church.

“Evangelicalism shares close ties with modernity. A child of the Reformation, pietism, and revivalism, the evangelical movement was born in the early modern period. And North American evangelicalism reached maturity...at the height of the modern era” (Grenz, 1996, p. 161).

Kimball (2007) offered a poignant explanation of the dilemma facing the church in America today: “The world is profoundly different than it was at the middle of the last century...so far the North American church largely has responded with heavy infusions of denial, believing the culture will come to its senses and come back around to the church” (p. 18). Eck (2001) echoed the concern many Christian communities remain unaware of the drastically changing cultural and religious landscape of America. Today, the indication of America as a Christian nation produces extreme tension as the populations of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs have continued to grow, yet many churches are ignorant of the new religious America (Eck, 2001, p. 3-4).

American culture is increasingly post-Christian. Whereas Judeo-Christian values and ethics once held great influence, pluralism now marks American's public square as religious liberty is being redefined (Eck, 2001; Kimball, 2007; Lyons, 2010). Lyons (2010) explained the Christian faith is losing its influence in Western culture. This is in part the result of how those who call themselves Christians behave, but also a symptom of the church's unwillingness to change and adapt. Part of it also extends from the real and perceived position of influence American Christianity has held for so long. "It's in vogue to be different, under the radar, and independent. Christianity feels like none of these things" (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 19). Christianity often declares what it stands against, rather than what it believes. Some perceptions regarding Christianity today see it as disrespectful of women, anti-homosexual, judgmental, and hypocritical (Kimball, 2007; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). Christianity is often viewed by those outside of the church as no longer in step with their fast-moving and ever-changing lives; separated from real spiritual vitality and mystery and a religion of rules and standards; discouraging of thoughtfulness; sheltered (Kinnaman and Lyons, 2007, pp. 123-125).

The church can appear ill-equipped to respond to social and cultural changes occurring in America today. McLaren (2001) identified most of America's Christian institutions are modern inventions and unable to respond to the increasingly postmodern world around them. Christianity was born as a faith or religion and as it moved through history, it at times took on characteristics of a philosophy in Greece, a legal system in Rome and a culture in Europe. When it arrived in America, it took on many characteristics of big business (Kimball, 2007, p. 83).

Kimball (2007) reported reasons why people today see the church in America as organized religion, bearing many of the marks of modernism. These include the unnatural structure of organized church, hierarchy, political agendas, and leaders who function like Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) desiring power and control. These perceptions are not unfounded. By the 1980s, not only did titles and positions change within hierarchical church structures to resemble those in the business world, church leaders began applying business principles, language and metaphors to the church (Kimball, 2007).

Business principles began to define priorities in the church. “Similar to the business world, the modern church often counts the three B’s (buildings, budgets, and bodies) as criteria for measuring success” (Kimball, 2003, p. 15). Kimball (2003) argued in adding the words excellence and relevance to church value statements, the focus of church leaders naturally shifted to quality of music, sound system, and bulletins. When the business aspects of the church take precedence over the needs of people, the principle of corporate subservience becomes relevant (Haas, 2008). Haas (2008) defined this principle, “The moment the corporation becomes equal to (or greater than) the spiritual body in terms of focus, energy that is the moment the church begins to die” (p. 25). When this occurs, the corporation or business aspects of the church appropriate the spiritual body. Many people are no longer content to participate in a church structure where this occurs.

The response to the church in America mirrors changing generational values and ideals, rooted in cultural shifts. “The further you go down the generational food chain, the lower the percentage each succeeding generation reports going to church...it’s more

than numbers. The American culture no longer props up the church the way it did” (Kimball, 2007, p. 18). Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) reported even young people who were involved in a church as teenagers remove themselves from church life and often from Christianity at some point during early adulthood. Research indicated they may be less likely to affiliate with a church and to return to church later than previous generations (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Even those young people within the church are often uncomfortable with the motivation, attitudes, and images of modern Christianity. These young Christians often sense inconsistencies between their lives today and what they understand of Jesus’ life (Kinnaman and Lyons, 2007). Kimball (2007) posited, “Among those who are under thirty-five years old, and especially younger people in their teens and twenties, there is a quickly growing misperception of what Christianity is, what church is, and who Christians are” (p. 31).

A crisis faces the American church if it is unable to retain not only young members, but young leaders. Unfortunately, many current efforts to connect with the younger generations have proven ineffective. Tactics implemented to make services contemporary or relevant have at times backfired (Kimball, 2003). Without systemic changes, growth may not occur. As long as the church continues to maintain its hierarchical infrastructure that impedes change, and the voice and empowerment of young leaders, the church will face a deficit of young talent, energy and leadership (Kimball, 2007; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007).

The cry for change is continuing to grow within the American church. Halter and Smay (2008) claimed, “We need to start by doing some things that we haven’t been doing, and we must stop doing some things that we have been doing” (p. 12). Gulley

(2010) argued the question for Christians to answer is how the church reflects the teachings of Jesus. The roughly 39,000 Christian denominations in our country, however, indicate even the most basic questions regarding the Christian faith can prove divisive. What it means to be Christian has changed dramatically over the centuries and will continue to change. The Hebrew children of ancient Israel or the Christians of medieval Europe would not have considered modern Christians true Christians (Gulley, 2010; McLaren, 2001). This reflects the fact that manifestations of faith can change as culture evolves

“Time passes, new generations are born, and cultures change, so the church must change. We see this in ancient church history, in European church history, as well as in American church history” (Kimball, 2003, p. 28). Gulley (2010) determined the information and knowledge age, which has expanded our understanding of Jesus and his culture, has opened the doors to a more critical examination of Jesus teachings and activities. No longer are the church and its teachings considered divinely ordained in its right for uncritical acceptance. The American church’s response to this season of transition is proving to be fraught with varying degrees of reluctance, conflict and excitement. Lyons (2010) adamantly stated, “I believe this moment is unlike any other time in history. Its uniqueness demands an original response” (p. 11). Yet, an original response is difficult to embrace as there is no clear pattern to follow or model to replicate.

Halter and Smay (2008) discussed the tension during seasons of change. For those in vocational ministry roles, indications the structure of the church may be falling can trigger this tension. Anything new may require the abandonment of systems that have imbued church leaders with respect, self-esteem, and probably their livelihoods.

Nonetheless, changes to church methodology and practice may be required for the survival of the church in America.

Challenges for Methodology and Practice

In light of the sweeping cultural and societal changes emerging today, many church leaders are calling for a change in the way we do church in America. This proposed change encompasses methodology, the organizing system, by which the church functions; and practice, or habits and traditions. This, however, is a subject wrought with conflict and confusion. While some argue changing culture requires changing methods, others believe the way of practicing religion they know is a finished product (Eck, 2001; Kimball, 2003; Smith Jr., 2001). “Christendom is divided today between Old World Churches and New World Churches. They move at different speeds. They prize different values. They measure success differently” (Sweet, 2000, p. 140).

Birthered, as it is in modernity, the evangelical church culture in America today reflects the values and style of modernity, with its focus on capitalism, structure, individualism and scientific measurements of progress. Tomlinson (2003) argued evangelicalism indeed developed its own culture, with a particular social ambience. When a person converts to an evangelical Christian, he or she enters a subculture with its own church services, festivals, concerts, conferences, magazines, books, merchandise, record companies, mission organizations, training schemes, vacation clubs, and celebrities (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 27). Garrison (2011) echoed this premise, citing self-appointed Christian leaders who focus on marketing their message and selling it to the masses rather than the actual mission of the church. International missiologist Andrew Jones predicted the end to the Christian conference carnival back in 2008. He saw a

move from celebrity-based performances towards something relational, communal, sustainable, accessible and meaningful in an emerging culture. His hope was the economic recession might help facilitate this shift (Garrison, 2011). Regardless of how the change occurs, it is definitely coming. “Christendom’s predominant model of performance-based church cannot hold up under post-modern hermeneutics and philosophy” (Sweet, 2000, p. 143).

Emerging change often encounters friction and confusion among church leaders today. Conflicts can arise between those accustomed to a modern mindset with its corresponding methods and those who embrace or seek to engage a more postmodern mindset (Kimball, 2003; Kinnamon & Lyons, 2007). Frequently, these differences emerge along generational lines, since young leaders tend to be more postmodern in their own personal perspectives. More experienced pastors or leaders do not always understand why a new methodology in the church is necessary (Kimball, 2003). History reveals, however, church methodology is not static, but rather there have been and will continue to be many changes in what being a Christian looks like (Eck, 2001; Gulley, 2010).

A change in methodology does not have to change the essence of the church. Warren explained in ministry, “some things must never change, while other things must be constantly changing...the way or style in which we fulfill...eternal purposes must continually be adjusted and modified, because human culture is always changing” (Kimball, 2003, p. 7). As spiritual relativism has diminished the effectiveness of most current, modern church ministry strategies, it is imperative the church find new ways of

conveying its ancient message lest it find itself obsolete in a new generation (Kimball, 2003).

Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) identified, “Christianity has an image problem...especially younger adults, have little trust in the Christian faith, and esteem for the lifestyle of Christ followers is quickly fading” (p. 11). Even those young people who have grown up within the church see the problem. They, too, are bringing up the questions, challenges and doubts often heard outside the church walls (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). Church leaders must be willing to reach out to emerging generations as their numbers are diminishing in church pews across the nation. “Those ages 18-29 are the least likely to describe themselves as religious, as Christian, or as committed Christians” (Kimball, 2003, p. 40). Discussion regarding the changing culture and what an emerging church could look like, must take place (Kimball, 2003).

Considering new methodologies and practices for an emerging church involves rethinking almost everything we do. The Sunday worship service is but one part (Kimball, 2003). Sweet (2000) proposed ministry methods in the twenty-first century may have more in common with the first century than with the modern world that is currently collapsing.

EPIC model of doing church that is biblically absolute but culturally relative: Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, Connected. Like the church of the first century, the twenty-first-century church must learn to measure success not by its budgets and buildings but by its creativity and imagination. (Sweet, 2000, p. xxi)

This is just one of various proposed approaches to church in the twenty-first century. The emerging church has an exciting opportunity to define the church scripturally again for a new generation (Grenz, 1996; Kimball, 2003; Lyons, 2010).

Significant challenges remain in developing a future model for the church in America. McLaren (2001) was cognizant for those Christians who were conditioned by modernity, changes to engage with a postmodern culture can appear secular and dangerous. Yet, those churches refusing to adjust in light of cultural shifts are dying. Halter and Smay (2008) explained the danger of an emerging church that simply absorbs those leaving these dying feeder churches. “It is good that we’re ‘rechurched’ America, but we also need to realize that when the feeder churches finally die off, everyone will feel the paucity of churchgoers” (Halter & Smay, 2008, p. 13). Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) provided a response in calling for people who will seek an authentic vision for a church model to illustrate the Christian faith effectively in a pluralistic, sophisticated culture.

A difficulty for many leaders may be they have what McLaren (2001) called an “immigration problem.” They have a modern faith, a faith developed in a homeland of modernity. Now, they must immigrate to a new land of postmodernity (McLaren, 2001, p. 13). Unfortunately, for many younger church members and leaders, the culture within the church continues to reflect the modern homeland. Thus, many Millennials feel disconnected, like immigrants, in the church context (Kimball, 2007). Tomlinson’s (2003) analysis was Christians or post-evangelicals differ from traditional evangelicals in that they developed in a different culture than present-day evangelicalism.

If the church is to change, it may be essential for young people to be a part of the process. “Younger people in the church need to be able to bring new ideas to the older leaders; if they can’t do so, the church comes across to them as organized religion with no sense of freedom or organic change” (Kimball, 2007, p. 91). Unfortunately, some

young leaders leave the church because “the older upper leadership controlled things, and though young leaders could lead their specific areas of ministry, they could not have influence in the larger church” (Kimball, 2007, p. 91). Empowering this emerging generation of young adults could bring some valuable perspectives on spirituality into the church (Kimball, 2007). Generational perspectives hold power with the exploration and expression of spirituality.

Generational Influences on Spirituality

As mentioned earlier, Howe and Strauss (1991) described specific generational roles in the development of society. “While all generational types contribute to the nature of each constellational era, the two dominant types...are key. Coming of age into rising adulthood, these two types recast society’s new ‘active’ agenda, either from secular to spiritual or vice versa” (Howe & Strauss, 1991, p. 76). As the most recent dominant cohort, Boomers came of age during a period of Awakening, an inwardly-focused season “loaded with passionate attacks against the morality of cultural and religious norms that felt old at the time” (Howe & Strauss, 1997, p. 40). As such, their perspectives on spirituality, faith and religion have set the stage in many ways for the next dominant generation, Millennials, as we enter an outwardly-focused season of Crisis in America (Howe & Strauss, 1997).

Boomers and Spirituality

In some ways, Boomers resemble the Millennials. From childhood, they understood they were special. Larger than the generation before or after them, they create a bulge in the population as they move through life, “forcing society to adjust and accommodate their needs. At every stage in the life cycle, then, this generation has had a

dominating influence on how Americans live and think and believe” (Roof, 1993, p. 2). Another similarity between Boomers and Millennials is the criticism of both cohorts as being self-centered, narcissistic, and non-committal (Elmore, 2010; Roof, 1993; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Some of the complaints regarding religion and spirituality from both cohorts may sound similar, but as we will see, their perspectives on these topics can also differ significantly.

The generation of Baby Boomers “grew up in very different decades: the turbulent 1960s, in the Age of Aquarius; the mid- to late 1970s, a time of evangelical and charismatic revival; and the 1980s, with its smorgasbord of New Age spiritualities” (Roof, 1993, p. 1). The sixties jarred the confidence of many Boomers in institutions and led them to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life. These questions propelled them into more personal quests of the self, consistent with the nature of an Awakening era, focused on the inner-world of the individual (Howe & Strauss, 1997; Roof, 1993). “A common theme in this turning inward is the emphasis on exploring religious and spiritual traditions. Exploration gets elevated to the level of a spiritual exercise” (Roof, 1993, p. 70). Roof (1993) emphasized it was the experiential quality of seeing, of feeling, and of acting many Boomers found missing in organized religion. This led many of them to turn to metaphysical quests on their own in an effort to discover a more fulfilling way of believing and living (Roof, 1993).

Another response also emerged to the moral and cultural changes of the 1960s. “Religious counter movements and a resurgence of traditional faith and lifestyles were as much a part of that era as were the mystical quests...the moral relativism and permissiveness arising out of that era in great part inspired the conservative religious

response” (Roof, 1993, pp. 89-90). For those evangelical Christians embracing this approach, the reading of the Bible became paramount to knowing what was morally right and wrong (Roof, 1993). This approach is at odds with the approach taken by many emerging adults today. Millennials are moral intuitionists, they believe they know “what is right and wrong by heeding the subjective feelings or intuitions they sense...thinking and living morally is easy, you must only pay attention to your inner self and the way becomes clear” (Smith, 2009, p.46). Whereas Boomers, whether mystical or fundamental, were seekers of truth, Millennials have often given up on an external truth. “The absolute authority for every person’s beliefs or actions is his or her own sovereign self. Anybody can literally think or do whatever he or she wants” (Smith, 2009, p. 49).

Boomers not only differ from other generations, but also from one another in their religious and spiritual styles. Roof (1993) outlined some of the basic differences. In their conception of self, some Boomers seek self-fulfillment, while others seek fulfillment through submission to divine will. In their understanding of authority, some Boomers believe the locus of authority lies within the self while others identify it in an external source, a transcendent God. Boomers embrace either a mystical or a theistic approach in their perspectives on systems of meaning (Roof, 1993). Some fundamental affinities between congregational cultures and Boomer sensibilities include the following: a place where things are done right, a church that respects people and recognizes freedom of conscience and does not rely on fear, and a place that invests in people (Roof, 1993).

Boomer sensibilities inform how many churches in America currently conduct business. In recent decades, many who dropped out of churches as young adults began shopping around for a congregation (Roof, 1993). Popular cultural styles and the

language of consumption often inform how Boomers speak of religion. It is “something you ‘buy into’; religion is something about which you have options—you select it, and if it fits your needs, then you get involved” (Roof, 1993, p. 153). Unfortunately, an emerging generation may view some of the church’s attempt to cater to Boomers in this regard as unnatural, hierarchical and overly organized (Kimball, 2007). As a result, Millennials are now projecting their own perspectives and views onto church and spirituality.

Millennials and Spirituality

Glynn (1997) argued the past century suffered “disenchantment with reason, the collapse of the Enlightenment’s secular and rational faith...God is reemerging in Western intellectual life...we indeed find ourselves in a strange cultural moment, suspended between the twilight of the old paradigm and the birth of a new one” (p. 139-140). Undoubtedly, Millennials will play a significant role in the emergence of this new paradigm. Kimball (2007) said, “I hear quite often today that parents want their children to have spiritual beliefs but encourage them to discover them on their own and want them to consider a diversity of choices” (p. 166). This mindset encourages a shopping mentality when it comes to faith, encouraging young adults to pick and choose elements of faith or belief systems as they would their lunch at a salad bar (Elmore, 2010; Kimball, 2003; Smith, 2009). For the emerging adult, God is often “pieced together from a mix of world religions and various personal beliefs” (Kimball, 2003, p. 73).

“As emerging generations grow up...we now see postmodernism impacting spiritual beliefs. A person can claim spiritual belief without living out faith in any genuine way. Contradiction in spirituality is acceptable. And that is exactly what we are

seeing” (Kimball, 2003, p. 53). Smith (2009) claimed young adults do not avoid religion; it simply does not come up as a topic of importance. Unlike Boomers before them who were deeply involved in their own personal quests for meaning and spirituality, only a small minority of emerging adults today are seeking and practicing spiritual lives (Roof, 1993; Smith, 2009).

Consistent with their place in Howe and Strauss’s (1991) generational constellation, Millennials seem to be more outwardly-focused than the inwardly-focused Boomers. “The ways emerging adult culture constructs the lives of most 18- to 29-year-olds simply seems to leave little room or felt need for God, faith, worship, prayer, community, or other forms of religious learning, practice, and service” (Smith, 2009, p. 82). As the arguably busiest generation in America, young adults have little time to accommodate the demands of a committed religious life in their hectic and volatile schedules (Elmore, 2010; Smith, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 2007). “Sustaining strong religious belief, practices, and membership in a specific community of faith requires emerging adults to forego some options...and commit to something particular that will involve opportunity costs” (Smith, 2009, p. 80). Despite the fact many young adults are not interested in religion or spirituality, interestingly “emerging adult religion correlates significantly with, we think actually often acts as a causal influence producing, what most consider to be more positive outcomes in life for emerging adults” (Smith, 2009, p. 297). For young adults pursuing a career in the church, these factors regarding their peer group’s response to spirituality can be significant. Other factors also influence and affect young adults desiring to be clergy.

Clergy Preparation and Experience

Ministry Preparation and Education

A number of challenges exist in the preparation of clergy for ministry roles. Denominations and religions often approach this preparation differently. Some require many years of academic work, others require extensive hands-on experience. Since all of the participants in this study have graduated from a four-year Assemblies of God (A/G) university, some of the challenges in A/G ministerial preparation will be looked at here.

One important issue in the discussion of clergy preparation is the balance between theological learning and practical preparation. Ministers are required to defend the tenets of their faith, while also possessing a vast array of practical skills. In her study of a ministry program at an A/G institution, DeGrave (2009) explained:

In recent years, there has started to be a strong movement away from the older model of high theology/low practices toward a newer model of low theology/high practices....what is left is a group of new ministers who have heard of all the “right ways” to do things (having never done them themselves) and who do not understand why the church does what it does. (p. 7)

Rapidly changing culture presents challenges for ministry graduates as methods must constantly adapt to how people communicate, think and live. “Successful pastors often leave active ministry in order to teach....they teach the methods and practices they employed while in active ministry....as professors age, so does the information they possess....methods and practices expire quickly with time and shifts in culture” (DeGrave, 2009, p. 8).

In her study of A/G ministers in the state of Oregon, Brainard (1996) found these “ministers manifest more confidence in the theological aspects of their professional preparation than they did in those areas related to actual practice” (pp. 173-174). These

clergy experienced preparation under what DeGrave (2009) called an older model of preparation with higher emphasis on theology. “Ministers indicated their educations had given them a solid theological and biblical foundation. But they all indicated they would have liked to have learned more about the ‘practical’ side of ministry as well” (Brainard, 1996, p. 178). These practical areas where the ministers felt unequipped included people skills, such as how to deal with the senior pastor or congregation members, counseling, finance management and business administration (Brainard, 1996).

Another challenge in the education of young ministers is the learning style of Millennials often fails to connect with the teaching style in many educational settings today, including ministry preparation programs. One student said, “when I step out of school, I have a pretty high tech life...when I step in school, I feel like I’m not me anymore, I have to jump into this old-fashioned thing” (Bauerlein, 2009, p. 68). Wilson (2004) looked at effective teaching methods for Millennials and suggested “rather than faculty being primarily lecturers, they are designers of learning methods and environments” (p. 59). DeGrave (2009) argued for a deviation from lecture-style instruction. “Allowing facilitated discussion of Pentecostal theology will help students to understand the reasons for and implications of adhering to Pentecostalism...it is important to provide space for discussion... [to] ensure that students understand completely” (DeGrave, 2009, p. 6).

DeGrave (2009) proposed a principle-based practices approach to ministry preparation for both classic and new models of pastoral education. It could facilitate critical thinking and engagement to empower young ministers to adapt and change to the contexts they encounter. “Educators must keep in mind that churches are made of a mix

of modernists and postmodernists. Young pastors will enter this mix and be expected to minister to each age group and mindset. They must adapt immediately and successfully” (DeGrave, 2009, p. 8). While important, adequate preparation is just one aspect of clergy job satisfaction.

Clergy Satisfaction and Retention

The clergy role presents various challenges in regard to job satisfaction, as well as the personal health of the minister. “Many ministers feel there is a great deal of loneliness associated with the ministerial profession. They often feel alone and isolated from other professionals in their field” (Brainard, 1996, p. 220). This sense of isolation increases when “ecclesiastical hell is bred in the contradictory situation of the minister who works for God and simultaneously for the will of his congregation” (Zelizer, 2002, para.13). A study by the Barna Research Group (as cited in Zelizer, 2002) found whereas 20 years ago the average minister remained at least seven years in his church, today his stay has decreased to barely five years (para. 4). Zelizer (2002) argued there is currently a danger “the most competent clergy will flee the calling, mediocrity will fill the void, church numbers will erode, and America's faiths will diminish” (para.15).

In Brainard’s (1996) study, while “ministers indicated they were ‘fairly’ satisfied in their jobs, all but one indicated they might be happier in another profession...although the profession is very challenging, all the respondents firmly believed they had been called by God into full-time ministry” (p. 194). Two primary areas resulted in the least amount of satisfaction. These included administrative responsibilities and the stress of dealing with people on a continual basis (Brainard, 1996). In Makin’s (2005) study of youth pastors, he discovered,

The more satisfied a youth pastor is with his or her work, the less likely he or she is to think about leaving the church and youth ministry career...more specifically, a youth pastor who is satisfied with his or her supervisor, with non-monetary rewards, with the communication on the job, and with the nature of the work are less likely to consider exiting their church. (p. 206)

Jackson (2009) explained “burnout is a disease nobody talks about until it’s too late. Statistics and stories prove that the health of those serving in ministry is declining—spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally” (p. 15). In a questionnaire of ministers she conducted, Jackson (2009) learned the following:

Almost every person who completed the questionnaire said the stress from ministry had affected them either emotionally (most common were feelings of worthlessness, depression, anxiety, anger, or loneliness) or physically (most common problems were insomnia, headaches, stomach problems, heart issues, weight gain). (p. 47)

As a young generation of ministers, who are already extremely busy, pressured, and driven, enter the ranks of clergy, addressing these concerns is even more imperative (Howe & Strauss, 2007). If ignored, these factors could contribute to job dissatisfaction and burnout among Millennials.

Conclusions from Topical Literature

Overall, the review of literature indicated a lack of research on Millennials working in ministry roles at local churches. Many authors have written regarding the significant impact of generational trends and diversity on culture (Howe & Stowe, 1997; 2007), spirituality (Kimball, 2003; 2007; Roof, 1993; Smith, 2009; Taylor & Keeter, 2010) and the workplace (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Raines, 2003). Others have researched the preparation and satisfaction of clergy (Brainard, 1996; DeGrave, 2009; Makin, 2005). However, there is

a critical need for additional research and analysis of factors surrounding the entry of the influential Millennial generation into leadership in the American church.

The literature revealed some of the characteristics and challenges that face Millennials and can add unique pressures to their experiences entering ministry. Already burdened by pressure to achieve, stay connected, and make a difference in a rapidly changing world, for many the transition into adulthood is daunting (Rainer & Rainer, 2011). Elmore (2010) explained, “*Time* magazine reported on this phenomenon and concluded that many young people are just overwhelmed with adulthood—the obstacles, the opposition, the opportunities, and especially the options” (p. 55). When combined with the stress of navigating changing culture, experiencing generational differences with colleagues and feeling disconnected from the current practices in the church, Millennials encounter many obstacles to feeling satisfied in ministry.

In this study, theoretical literature complemented the findings of the topical literature review. Developmental theories provided an additional lens through which to analyze the factors uncovered in the topical literature and collection of research data. They illuminated needs of young adults and factors affecting their journey toward mature adulthood. Leadership theories exposed the values and presuppositions that Millennials bring with them into the workplace as they enter ministry positions. The theories discussed in the following section provide insight into the necessary circumstances and elements to best foster the success and satisfaction of Millennials, both personally and professionally.

Analytic Literature

Analytic theories provided lenses through which to view the findings of this study and identify themes and patterns. I used two primary theoretical frameworks. The first was development theories, particularly those related to faith development in young adults. The second was leadership theories. Servant leadership emerged as a theory that subsumed other relevant theories for understanding the values of Millennials in ministry.

Developmental Theory

In analyzing the experience of Millennials in their first full-time ministry position, developmental theories illuminate the significance of interactions with others and the world around them. They also contribute to interpretations of morals, faith, and values. Furthermore, developmental theories reveal characteristics and responses typical to young adult development and provide insight into maximizing Millennial job satisfaction and retention. In this section, I first give an overview of several key developmental theories. I then focus on faith development and important factors in that process such as mentoring and community.

Overview of theories. Piaget's (1952) stages of cognitive development, Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral development, Erikson's (1997) psychosocial stages of development, and Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development along with Parks' (1986) faith development theory all present lenses through which to examine the lived experience of young adults as clergy. For the purpose of analysis in this study, our discussion focuses primarily on those stages most likely to occur in adolescence and early adulthood, the period of life represented by the participants in this study, and the concepts with the greatest potential to provide insight into this transitional time in life.

Piaget is one of the foundational theorists of the constructivist approach to development. Two essential concepts of Piaget's theory are assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation, information from the world around us is absorbed into existing structures of knowing. In accommodation, present structures must adjust to make sense of the information received. The balancing of these dynamics dictates stages in cognitive development. "Piaget described development as an evolving movement from equilibrium through disequilibrium toward a new equilibrium" (Parks, 1986, p. 35). Parks (1986) explained, "A potential strength of the Piagetian paradigm is its conviction that human becoming absolutely depends upon the quality of the interaction between the person and his or her environment. The human being does not compose meaning all alone" (p. 61). Piaget's final stage, formal operations is comprised of deductive reasoning, abstract thought, and complex problem solving. One enters this stage as early as adolescence and it lasts through adulthood. However, "movement from one structural-development stage to another is not automatic or inevitable...many American adults do not attain Piaget's formal operational stage of reasoning...one can 'arrest' or equilibrate in one of Piaget or Kohlberg's intermediate stages" (Fowler, 1981, p. 50).

Kohlberg's theory stems from Piaget's work and is cognitive-developmental in nature. "Kohlberg and his associates defined six stages of moral development...Kohlberg grouped the six stages into three moral levels, each with distinct stages" (Hock, 2009, p. 145). The three moral levels are pre-conventional, which occurs during childhood; conventional, which occurs during adolescence and young adulthood; and post-conventional principled, which occurs in adulthood (Fowler, 1981). Kohlberg and his associates looked at how individuals structure their experiences of and judgments

about the social world and develop moral reasoning as they progress through these stages (Fowler, 1981). “At the core of Kohlberg’s theory is the claim that...each level represents a different relationship between the self and society’s rules and expectations (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010, p. 103). Kohlberg’s research has consistently shown a majority of persons in this society fall into the conventional stages of moral judgment.

Like Kohlberg, Erikson’s (1968) work looked at the development of individuals as impacted by relationships with significant others and society. He built on Freud’s theoretical work and traced stages of psychosocial growth. By putting the developing person in a social and historical context, Erikson “addressed the influences of significant others and social institutions across the life span by describing eight stages of development” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 48). These included adolescence, which deals with identity and identity confusion and healthy self-esteem; young adulthood, which deals with intimacy vs. isolation and the role of relationships in a young person’s life; and adulthood, which deals with generativity vs. stagnation (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Erikson’s “understanding of the formation of identity moves...to suggest the significance of the entire life span, and his attention to the social dimension of development offers a rich understanding of the significance of the interdependence or ‘cogwheeling’ of the generations” (Parks, 1986, p. 32). Fowler (1981) stated “we began to realize that a time of movement from one of Erickson’s eras to another frequently correlated with or helped to precipitate a change in the structural operations of faith” (p. 106).

Drawing from the work of Piaget, Kohlberg and others, Fowler (1981) is the primary theorist in applying a developmental approach to the experience of faith. After

training as a Methodist minister, Fowler worked at a retreat center for clergy and lay people. As he listened to the stories of individuals “he began to notice...how people’s faith tends to address different issues at different eras of the life cycle” (Dykstra & Parks, 1986, p. 7). Times of transition, he argued, “are initiated by the awareness that our existing structures are no longer sufficient for dealing with the shape and content coming to us from our experience-world” (Fowler, 1996, p. 72). “We need ‘holding environments’...that can help us pace our reentry and reintegration in a new stage or place, protecting the fragile new beginnings against the power of old patterns or the premature forging of new ones” (Fowler, 1996, p. 74). The following section looks more closely at Fowler’s stages of faith development and their implications.

Faith development. In examining differences between religion and faith, Fowler (1981) stated, “Faith, at once deeper and more personal than religion, is the person’s or group’s way of responding to transcendent value and power as perceived and grasped through the forms of the cumulative tradition” (p. 9-10). While religion encapsulates the faith experiences of past generations, faith is personal to each individual. “Each is dynamic; each grows or is renewed through its interaction with the other. The cumulative tradition is selectively renewed as its contents prove capable of evoking and shaping the faith of new generations” (Fowler, 1981, p. 9-10). Fowler (1996) explained religion is comprised of cumulative traditions and meaning developed over many generations. Faith, on the other hand, is more immediate and personal and “may be characterized as an integral, centering process, underlying the formation of beliefs, values and meanings” (Fowler, 1996, p. 56).

Fowler's (1986) approach to faith as a way of seeing and knowing arises from the structural-developmental tradition pioneered by Baldwin and Dewey. It proposed the process of composing what is known. "In...faith development, periods of equilibration alternate with transitional phases in which, under the impact of new experiences, of changed environments, and of new ways of knowing in other domains, the structural patterns of faith-knowing undergo relinquishment and transformation" (Fowler, 1986, p. 26). Fowler believed the equilibrated stage-like positions he established constituted a developmentally related sequence.

As with other constructivist theories, movement from one of these stages to the next is not an automatic function of biological maturation, chronological age, psychological development, or mental age. While each of these factors plays a significant role in the 'readiness' for stage transition, transition itself occurs when the equilibrium of a given stage is upset by encounters with crises, novelties, and experiences of disclosure and challenge which threaten the limits of the person's present patterns of constitutive-knowing. (Fowler, 1986, p. 27)

Dynamics inherent in a new job, new boss, and new responsibilities could contribute to an upset of the equilibrium of whatever stage a young minister might be in when they enter a new ministry role.

Fowler (1981, 1986) argued faith begins in relationship and believed faith has a triadic structure. "In communities, a self is bound to others by shared trust and loyalty. But our ties to others are mediated, formed, and deepened by our shared or common trusts in and loyalties to centers of supra-ordinate value" (Fowler, 1986, p. 17). He explained faith functions as a means of understanding our relatedness to one another. Shared causes serve to unify and give character to relationships and community.

In his stages of faith, Fowler (1981) looks at these operations of faith in one's life as he or she develops and matures. Stage one, Intuitive-Projective faith, is the imitative

phase in which a child primarily responds to the modeling of adults. Stage two, Mythic-Literal faith, is when a person begins to own his or her own beliefs with literal interpretations.

We see a fair number of persons—most frequently though not exclusively men—whose emotional development exhibits arrest at a stage at least as limited as the operations of the Mythic-Literal stage. At the same time, their cognitive functioning exhibits the selective use of operations that correlate with the Individuative-Reflective stage. Confident and authoritative in their professional and occupational domains, these persons are often unaware of the sharp limits of their empathy and their abilities to construct and identify with the interior feelings and processes of others. (Fowler, 1996, p. 63)

Stage three, Synthetic-Conventional faith, represents the phase when a person's experience extends beyond the family and faith must provide a foundation for identity (Fowler, 1981). In this stage, Fowler (1996) explained,

Identity and personal interiority—one's own and others'—become absorbing concerns. Personality, both as style and as substance, becomes a conscious issue. From within this stage youth construct the ultimate environment in terms of the personal...youths develop attachments to beliefs, values, and elements of personal style that link them in conforming relations with the most significant others among their peers, family and other adults...at this stage, one's ideology or worldview is lived and asserted; it is not yet a matter of critical and reflective articulation. (p. 61)

At this point, many young people feel uncertain in their identity. However, comfort exists in believing God “knows who we are and who we are becoming—and, in connecting deeply with others and ourselves, we are somehow linked with the depth, or height, of ultimacy” (Fowler, 1986, pp. 29-30). It is possible many young people receive their call to ministry in this stage.

Parks (1986) hypothesized “a stage between Fowler's stages three and four—a stage between a conventionally assumed faith and a critically appropriated adult faith” (p. xvi). Her work emphasized young adulthood as a place where the individual begins to

consider the meaning of life and one's place in the world (Evans et al., 2010). The stage of young adulthood Parks believed was missing from Fowler's work is the place "where individuals begin taking responsibility for themselves, including their faith. Parks noted this stage rarely occurs until at least age seventeen and that many people never reach it at all" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 203).

Stage four, Individuative-Reflexive "is particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes" (Fowler, 1981, p. 182). For the Individuative-Reflective stage to emerge, Fowler (1996) indicated two important dynamics must occur, either simultaneously or in sequence.

First, the previous stage's tacit system of beliefs, values, and commitments must be critically examined. The configuration of meanings assembled to support one's selfhood in its roles and relations must now be allowed to become problematic...second, the self, previously constituted and sustained by its roles and relationships, must struggle with the question of identity and worth apart from its previously defining connections. This means that persons must take into themselves much of the authority they previously invested in others for determining and sanctioning their goals and values (p. 62)

This may be the stage many Millennials are moving towards or experiencing while in their first ministry position. Stage five, conjunctive faith, requires critical reflection on the perspectives ingrained in one through socialization in a particular social class, religious group, or ethnic group. The final stage, universalizing faith, is obtained by few (Fowler, 1981). In the next section, I provide an overview of Parks' (1986) model of faith development which highlights important factors in moving a young adult to the next stage of faith in his or her personal development.

Mentoring and community. Parks (1986) built on many of the ideas delineated by Fowler (1981) regarding faith development. She saw young adulthood as a place

where one develops meaning. This process of meaning-making essential to adulthood is an intentional composing of order and significance contextually consistent with our awareness. “In other words, whenever we organize our sense of a particular object, series of activities or institution, we are also compelled to compose our sense of its place in the whole of existence” (Parks, 1986, p. 16). Parks described this composing of meaning or faith can direct the soul to truth and navigate one’s relationship to the world as the central task of young adulthood. This daunting undertaking requires certain supports. She explained, as “they engage that task, young adults are dependent upon the mentorship of the adult world” (Parks, 1986, p. 177).

Parks emphasized the role of a mentoring community in the life of young adults. “It is the combination of the emerging truth of the young adult with the example and encouragement of the mentor, grounded in the experience of an ideologically compatible social group, that generates the transforming power of the young adult era” (Parks, 1986, p. 89). The mentoring group or social context surrounding the young adult serves a critical role in affirming emerging faith and creating a safe space for this transformation to occur. Daloz, Keen, Keen and Parks (1997) explained, “Central to our understanding of human development is that it matters who our partners are in the dance of life” (p. 27).

Parks (1986) and others reflected on the potential value of intergenerational mentoring and engagement. Young adults can benefit greatly from “mentors who know or have experienced something that they sense they need to learn. In times of rapid and discontinuous change, however, the wisdom young adults need has often not yet been sufficiently cultivated by the older generation” (Daloz et al, 1997, p. 45). The benefits of intergenerational mentoring can be reciprocal. “It is unfortunate when the energy of the

young adult life is simply resisted and feared as counter to culture rather than prized for its potential as prophetic power” (Parks, 1986, p. 97). Parks (1986) acknowledged value in reciprocal mentoring for not only individuals, but also a broader community of faith. “I suggest that just as a consciousness of the needs of young adults may serve to renew older adults, the consciousness of the needs of a young adult world may serve to reawaken religion to its deepest vocation” (Parks, 1986, p. 199).

Social networks of belonging may complement the positive influence of mentoring in the young adult’s life. Daloz et al. (1997) identified two patterns important to developing responsible young adults who can lead in our current, complex world. “These two patterns are trustworthy and transformational relationships with threshold people and hospitable spaces within which those relationships may develop and new forms of agency be practiced” (pp. 53-54). Threshold people include mentors, parents, and influential peers. “The young adult (and his or her culture) most thrives when there is access to a network of belonging anchored in the strength of worthy and grounding meanings” (Parks, 1986, p. 91).

Parks (1986) identified three forms of development with subcategories within each to explain her theory of faith development. The categories are Cognition or forms of knowing, Dependence and Community. Form of Cognition moves through four positions. The first is authority-bound or dualistic ways of knowing, where authority is derived from an external source. The second position is unqualified relativism, where the individual understands relation and context affect how meaning or knowing is composed. Commitment in relativism, the third position, is where the individual begins to make choices, despite an understanding of the relativistic nature of truth. In the fourth position,

convictional commitment, where a deep conviction emerges after the individual transverses the previous three positions.

Form of Dependence is the second category of faith development in Parks' theory. This dependence is a manifestation of relationship (Parks, 1986, p. 53). It moves through three positions. The first is dependent/counter-dependent, where the individual depends on an authority figure and then moves to opposition of the authority figure, a process that allows for passage into the unknown. Inner-dependence, the next position, is the confidence to acknowledge oneself as also having authority. Interdependence, the final position, occurs when meaning is derived in the meeting of self and other.

Form of Community is the final category and deals with the network of belonging Parks (1986) deemed so critical. This category follows four positions. The first is conventional and relies on membership in a group of individuals who share similar values and norms. The second, diffuse community entails the experience of relationships that fall outside of assumed norms and confront the individual with the "other." In the third position, self-selected group, individuals choose their patterns of affiliation. The final position, community open to others, marks a capacity to participate in and accept diversity.

Parks (1986) wrote adult faith is, "learning how to hold on and when to let go of the perceptions, patterns, and relationships that one experiences as partaking in ultimate value and truth" (p. 27). She cited a "shipwreck" of one's perceptions as the catalyst for the emergence of young adult faith. This shipwreck, so necessary to the development of a strong adult faith, potentially besets young adults as they are preparing for and entering their first ministry role, a role where they lead and help others in their own faith

development. She explained the potential difficulties inherent in this transition in today's society. "If 'adulthood' connotes a confident and secure sense of self in relationship to one's world, adulthood is difficult to achieve in a cultural climate marked by change in every dimension of knowledge" (Parks, 1986, p. 5). As a result, young adults entering ministry may need strong mentors, a supportive social network, and engaged leaders to become mature adults. The following discussion of leadership theory illustrates potential approaches for supporting young adults as they develop.

Leadership Theory

Leadership theories describe the nature of relationships among individuals working together towards a common goal. They offer a valuable tool for examining experiences of Millennials on staff in church settings. As young adults interact with colleagues and supervisors, leadership practices may critically affect their job satisfaction and retention. While many leadership theories exist, for the purpose of this study I have chosen to apply several reciprocal or relational theories for their value in illustrating the experience and values of Millennials (Komives, et al., 2006; Northouse, 2007). Servant leadership is the main theory discussed and applied in this study, but I also discuss relevant aspects of team leadership and transformational leadership theories included in servant leadership theory.

Leadership in the church. Leadership theories illustrate the critical role of leadership in churches today. One or more pastors are often responsible for a plethora of diverse responsibilities and tasks (Barna, 2002). The training of most ministers included learning "to believe that the pastor leads everyone and must have direct, unfettered oversight of the masses" (Barna, 2002, p. 71). Nouwen (1989) confirmed, "I was

educated in a seminary that made me believe that ministry was essentially an individual affair” (p. 35). This perspective of leadership holds innate dangers. “To be a lone chief atop a pyramid is abnormal and corrupting (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 63). Nonetheless, “when you look at today’s church, it is easy to see the prevalence of individualism among ministers and priests” (Nouwen, 1989, p. 38).

Barna (2002) found quality leadership is indispensable to ministry success and we expect too much of individual leaders. In fact, “most pastors neither see themselves as leaders nor aspire to be leaders...they went to seminary to learn how to preach and pastor, not how to lead—yet their people expect strong, visionary leadership” (Barna, 2002, p. 18). Churches desperately need effective leadership as cultural, societal and generational shifts propel change and upheaval. “Leadership is originally the source of the beliefs and values that get a group moving in dealing with its internal and external problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 36). Kouzes and Posner (2007) posited the responsibility of leaders is to look toward the future. Their legacy consists of developing people and organizations with adaptability to respond to impending change and prosper as they do. “The world is a lot messier than it once was believed to be...to successfully navigate in this world, new maps are needed—maps describing the leadership that is needed in an era of rapid change” (Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 2007).

Komives et al. (2007) labeled several approaches to leadership as reciprocal leadership theories. These deviate from classical management models that are more rigid, where leaders do not expect followers to think or take initiative (Morgan, 1998). Instead, they actively engage followers in the leadership process, in a more organic way and can accommodate for a changing environment (Komives et al., 2007; Morgan, 1998).

In doing so, they not only engage the followers, but also empower them to be a part of a leadership team. Followership possesses a similar responsibility to empower the leader (Greenleaf, 1977). “The mark of a great leader is the development and growth of followers. The mark of a great follower is the growth of leaders” (Chaleff, 2009, p. 29). Though the perspectives of Millennials often differ significantly from those of other generations in their workplaces, they may benefit greatly from approaches to leadership that develop and empower them as young adults in ministry. This, however, may entail some discomfort and adjustment for all involved entities.

Schein (2004) explained, “We will be maximally comfortable with others who share the same set of assumptions and very uncomfortable and vulnerable in situations where different assumptions operate...we will not understand what is going on, or...misperceive and misinterpret the actions of others” (p. 32). In this season of diverse and changing cultural perspectives, however, new models of leadership force us to engage with one another and help alleviate misperceptions or misinterpretations. Churches today may need to embrace reciprocal forms of leadership that actively engage all members and facilitate understanding. Reciprocal forms of leadership, as delineated by Komives et al. (2007), foster relationships and include theories such as transformational leadership, team leadership, and servant leadership. Often these theories share characteristics subsumed in servant leadership. As a result, servant leadership will serve as the primary theoretical framework for this analysis.

Servant leadership. “In the early 1970s, Robert Greenleaf developed a somewhat paradoxical approach to leadership called servant leadership” (Northouse, 2007, p. 348). Servant leaders are those who first seek to serve others and their needs

(Komives et al., 2007). This model possesses strong altruistic ethical overtones, and emphasizes leaders should be attentive to the concerns of their followers, empathize with them, and take care of them (Hunter, 1998; Leman & Pentak, 2004; Northouse, 2007). Leman and Pentak (2004) explained “you have to take a personal interest in each of the people who report directly to you...if you don’t genuinely care about the people who report to you, you’ll never be the kind of leader they’ll drop everything to follow” (p. 27). “In becoming a servant leader, a leader uses less institutional power and less control while shifting authority to those being led. Servant leadership values everyone’s involvement in community life” (Northouse, 2007, p. 349).

Greenleaf (1977) explained the difference between the leader-first and the servant-first styles as the “care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (p. 13). “A servant leader focuses on the needs of followers and helps them to become more knowledgeable, more free, more autonomous, and more like servants themselves. They enrich others by their presence” (Northouse, 2007, p. 349). Hunter (1998) explained, “Leadership that is going to go the distance over the long haul must be built on influence or authority. Authority is always built on serving and sacrificing for those you lead, which comes from identifying and meeting legitimate needs” (p. 86). “The biggest difference between a servant-leader and a person who wants to lead an organization is the servant-leader’s motive of putting the needs of others before his or her own needs” (Komives et al., 2007).

In anticipating a growing-edge church, Greenleaf (1977) said, “I have a feeling of imminence of a new prophecy being received, one that will come from among the young who have a fresh view of things” (p. 246). A quarter of a century later, Greenleaf’s

words may still hold true. A young generation with a new perspective may challenge and encourage the church to embrace models that will improve the leadership and influence it provides. “In addressing the subject of servant leadership and the churches I am bringing to bear my wider concern for institutions and their service to society. Churches are needed to serve...but I regret that, for the most part, churches do not seem to be serving very well” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 219).

Since Greenleaf (1977) introduced the theory in the 1970s, many have written regarding the concept of servant leadership. Russell and Stone (2002) conducted a review of the literature on the topic and developed a preliminary theoretical framework depicting servant leadership, with a foundation of identifiable attributes of servant leaders. They identified two lists of servant leadership attributes based on the existing literature. The first list consists of nine functional attributes with repetitive prominence in the literature. They are vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment. The second list has eleven accompanying attributes that complement the functional attributes. They are communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, and delegation (Russell & Stone, 2002). These attributes represent the tenets of servant leadership and help analyze the findings of this study. Several other theories share similar views. In the discussion below, I provide an overview of two complementary theories to help elaborate on specific traits discussed in servant leadership and relevant to this study.

Complementary leadership theories. Other reciprocal leadership theories include transformational, team and relational leadership. Transformational leadership

embodies practices incorporating servant leadership attributes identified by Russell and Stone (2002), specifically vision, integrity, service and empowerment.

“Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings” (Northouse, 2007, p. 175). The transformational approach to leadership has gained much attention since the early 1980s; it gives much emphasis to the charismatic and affective elements of leadership, as well as intrinsic motivation and follower development (Komives et al., 2007; Northouse, 2007).

“Transformational leadership fits the needs of today’s work groups, who want to be inspired and empowered to succeed in times of uncertainty” (Northouse, 2007, p. 175). The end goal of transformational leadership is for both leaders and followers to raise each other to higher levels of motivation, morality and conduct (Komives et al., 2007; Northouse, 2007). The “leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential” (Northouse, 2007, p. 176).

One model for transformational leadership was developed by Kouzes and Posner (2007). The researchers identified five fundamental practices that enable leaders to get extraordinary things accomplished: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Northouse, 2007). Relationships provide the foundation for this, consistent with the ethos of transformational leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2007) indicated “leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow....characterized by mutual respect and confidence” (p. 24). Transformational

leadership resonates with the Millennial desire to find meaning and be inspired in the work they perform.

Another theory illustrating Millennial values is team leadership. Team leadership models exemplify servant leadership attributes, especially characteristics such as honesty, trust, pioneering, and appreciation of others (Northouse, 2007). “Leadership in organizational groups or work teams has become one of the most popular and rapidly growing areas of leadership theory and practice” (Northouse, 2007, p. 207). A team-based structure of leadership empowers members throughout an organization and is an important way to remain effective by responding quickly and adapting to constant and rapid changes (Northouse, 2007, p. 208). Though important, team leadership is not necessarily easy. Lencioni (2002) explained “two critical truths have become clear to me. First, genuine teamwork in most organizations remains as elusive as it has ever been. Second, organizations fail to achieve teamwork because they unknowingly fall prey to five natural but dangerous pitfalls” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 187). Achieving the vulnerability-based trust necessary for effective team leadership is counterintuitive in a culture that promotes competitiveness and self-preservation and views them as essential to success. For many, “it is a challenge...to turn those instincts off for the good of a team” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 196).

“Some studies are indicating the importance of not just focusing on team outcomes, but understanding team variables and mediating processes such as trusting, bonding, planning, structuring and learning in relation to team performance and viability” (Northouse, 2007, p. 208). Indeed, the pitfalls referenced by Lencioni (2002) occur in the process of mediating team variables and processes. He delineated five common

dysfunctions in teams. The first is an absence of trust, which is an unwillingness to be vulnerable with one another. The second is fear of conflict which results in artificial harmony on the team. The third is a lack of commitment stemming from a lack of ownership. The fourth is avoidance of accountability, and the fifth is an inattention to results (Lencioni, 2002).

Based on Lencioni's (2002) model, a truly cohesive team trusts one another, engages in unfiltered conflict around ideas, commits to decisions and plans of action, holds one another accountable to those plans and the achievement of collective results. While involving everyone in the group, "a team leadership model places the leader in the driver's seat of team effectiveness and requires him or her to be behaviorally adaptable and possess diverse actions or skills to meet the team's evolving needs" (Northouse, 2007, p. 209). Leaders must assess their response not only to situations, but to people. Success is not simply production, but personal growth and development (Northouse, 2007). These ideas resonate deeply with young adults and rely heavily on relationships, a key element of relational leadership.

The relational leadership model developed by Komives et al. (2007) illustrates how servant leadership principles can fit together in practice. They identified five primary aspects in this model: purpose, inclusivity, empowerment, ethics, and process. "This approach to leadership is purposeful and builds commitment toward positive purposes that are inclusive of people and diverse points of view, empowers those involved, is ethical and recognizes that all four of these elements are accomplished by being process oriented" (Komives et al., 2007, p. 74). The concepts presented in this model make room for meaningful relationships and mutual understanding often desired

by Millennials. When integrated into leadership practices, these dynamics may help retain young staff members at churches.

The leadership theories discussed in this section reflect attributes of servant leadership, which in turn reflects the values of Millennials. As churches seek to develop, empower and retain young adults in ministry, some may need to adopt leadership practices highlighted above. As the analysis of findings in this study demonstrates, how a senior pastor or church leader interacts with a young staff member may have significant effects on his or her long-term job satisfaction and retention in ministry.

Conclusions from Analytic Literature

Developmental and leadership theories provided the foundation for the analysis in this dissertation. In the study of young adults, developmental theories offered insight into critical processes of evolving perspectives, identity, and action often invisible to supervisors, leaders, and colleagues who may themselves be in a different developmental stage. Furthermore, developmental theories validate the necessity of crises, questioning and change in the life of a maturing young adult. This phenomenon is what Erikson called “turning point,” Parks termed “shipwreck,” and Piaget described as the movement from equilibrium through disequilibrium (Evans et al., 2010; Parks, 1986).

Although these events often serve as a catalyst for propelling individuals into a season of transition and eventually into a new beginning or stage, if not understood, they can cast the young adult as unstable, irresponsible, or capricious. Finally, developmental theories confirm the need and value of mentorship and meaningful relationships in the faith development and maturing process of committed young adults (Daloz et al., 1997;

Fowler, 1986; Parks, 1986). These can also prove vital to the job satisfaction, success and retention of Millennials in ministry roles.

Leadership theories provided a valuable lens through which to examine and understand the relationships of young adults with those working around them. Millennials in this study consistently demonstrated values present in servant leadership models. As a result, servant leadership theories demonstrated areas of job satisfaction, as well as felt or perceived needs. Servant leadership theories furthermore offered practical applications for those seeking to respond effectively to Millennials on staff at local churches.

Summary of Literature

A review of related literature illustrated the uniqueness of the current phase in American, even global, history, culture and society as a significant move occurs from modernism to postmodernism. The literature further provided a context for understanding how changes are affecting generational expectations, behaviors and attitudes. Generational differences are significantly influencing schools, workplaces and the church. The literature review validated the timeliness of this study by illuminating the lack of research on Millennials in ministry and leadership roles in local churches. While much research exists on how Millennials view Christianity and how they view their careers, I did not find a single study specifically on Millennials who are pursuing a career working in the church and factors affecting job satisfaction and retention. The topical literature examined, however, proved important for framing, affirming and situating the findings of this study within a broader context.

The review of analytical literature provided a foundation for cementing the analysis of findings in this study. Utilizing both developmental and leadership theories proved beneficial. Developmental theories permitted a targeted examination of individual and internal aspects of the young adult experience while leadership theories illuminated the interpersonal and contextual dynamics in which they worked. Both offered valuable insights into the Millennial experience and provided questions and directions for further research on this topic. The next chapter examines the process I followed in this study for collecting and analyzing the data.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research looks deeper than physical events and behaviors to help answer the questions of how and why behind phenomena or responses (Maxwell, 2005). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained in qualitative studies “the data collected have been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures” (p. 2). The following study employed this type of research. I followed the process laid out by Creswell (2007) which dictated starting with an issue, examining the literature, posing questions, gathering data, analyzing them, and writing up reports of the findings. This process embodied important traits of qualitative research including descriptive data, concern with process, inductive analysis, and identifying meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this chapter, I provide the details of the process I followed in conducting this study, including data collection, analysis and validity.

I used qualitative research in this study because of its value in exploring the lived experience of individuals or a group, identifying variables, hearing silenced voices, and developing theories for complex situations or certain populations where only partial understanding exists (Creswell, 2007). I applied two primary qualitative approaches: phenomenology and grounded theory. Each brought into focus different aspects of the topic studied.

Phenomenology

Phenomenological studies explore the lived experiences of several individuals, identifying and describing what the participants share as they experience a particular phenomenon. “In phenomenological research, the question grows out of an intense

interest in a particular problem or topic... as the fullness of the topic emerges, strands and tangents of it may complicate an articulation of a manageable and specific question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104). This type of research looks to understand the essence of the experience, or the meaning assigned to it by the individuals, rather than provide a particular explanation (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Creswell (2007) explained qualitative researchers today are becoming more personal and engaged in their writing than they have been in the past. In phenomenological studies, writing a reflexive statement is an important way to acknowledge and bracket one’s own experience and potential biases (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1997). “The researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated...to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1997, p. 22). I began this project by writing a reflexive statement included in the introduction to this study. Throughout the research, I engaged in memo writing of my own thoughts and was thus able to focus on understanding the perspectives of participants when I interviewed them.

“Typically in the phenomenological investigation the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and question. The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (Moustakas, 1997, p. 114). Moustakas (1997) explained while the researcher may develop a set of questions beforehand to assist in producing a thorough account of a participant’s experience, these questions are often replaced by others as the

account progresses. Marshall and Rossman (2011) described phenomenological studies typically involve several “long, in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. Analysis proceeds from the central assumption that there is an essence to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience” (p. 19-20). In this study, the use of in-depth interviews depicted the lived experience of Millennials in their first full-time ministry position.

Grounded Theory

I also employed a second approach to qualitative study. While phenomenology sought to describe the experience of Millennials in ministry positions, grounded theory looked to explore an understanding and develop a theory of significant factors affecting their job satisfaction and retention. Strauss and Corbin (1990) described grounded theory as “one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents...one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (p. 23). Theory is “grounded” in the information gleaned from participants who have experienced the process or phenomenon being studied (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

Glaser and Strauss initially developed grounded theory methodology in 1967 (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). Since then, several forms of grounded theory have evolved. The more systematic approach is promoted by Strauss and Corbin. They explained the process as “a qualitative method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 24). “Its systematic techniques and procedures of analysis enable the research to develop a substantive theory that meets the criteria for doing ‘good’ science” (p. 31). The

structure of this approach allows for theories regarding a single process or specific category to emerge.

Charmaz presented a more constructivist approach to grounded theory, pushing away from what she termed the “positivist underpinnings” of other approaches (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). Charmaz (2006) explained unlike Glaser and Strauss, “I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices” (p. 10). She acknowledged researchers bring their experience and perspective to their work. Charmaz placed “more emphasis on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals than on the methods of research, although she does describe the practices of gathering rich data, coding the data, memoing, and using theoretical sampling” (Creswell, 2007, p. 66).

The grounded theory approach advocated by Charmaz (2006) provided the method for this study. I followed her process of gathering rich data, coding, memo-writing, sampling and data saturation, and constructing theory (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) identified this work “culminates in a ‘grounded theory,’ or an abstract theoretical understanding of the studied experience” (p. 4). The resulting grounded theory of the analysis in this study provides insight into the experience of participants and what factors contribute to their job satisfaction and retention in ministry roles. The collection of rich data is essential to grounded theory. The following section delineates that process.

Data Collection

Gathering rich data is critical to an effective qualitative research study. Charmaz (2006) explained the process for collecting data is important in determining which phenomena will emerge and how the researcher will view and make sense of them. The best-known representatives of qualitative research studies employ the techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviewing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2). In-depth interviewing comprised the primary source of live data for this project. In this section, I delineate the processes used for interviewing, selecting participants and achieving data saturation.

In-Depth Interviewing

In collecting and analyzing data, I applied aspects of both phenomenology and grounded theory. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested the purpose of phenomenological in-depth interviewing “is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share” (p. 148). Creswell (2007) indicated phenomenology might involve a single or multiple interviews with carefully chosen participants; individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question. Siedman (1991) delineated three distinct in-depth interviews for use in phenomenological study. The first is to focus on past experience. “The interviewer’s task is to put the participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time” (Siedman, 1991, p. 11). The second interview focuses on present experience, and the details of that experience. The third and final interview explores the individual’s essential experience with the phenomenon and asks the interviewee to reflect on its meaning (Siedman, 1991).

Due to the scope of this study, in most instances interviews covered the three elements discussed by Siedman (1991) in one interview. This was in part due to the relative youth of the participants. In most cases, life histories relating to the phenomenon, experience of the phenomenon, and distance from the phenomenon that allowed for quality reflection were all somewhat limited. I only conducted a second interview once in the course of this study.

Charmaz (2006) indicated intensive interviewing fits grounded theory methods particularly well as “both are open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (p. 28). Grounded theory principles dictate the purpose of in-depth interviewing is to explore the individual’s experience rather than interrogate and therefore questions should be limited and focused on the participant (Charmaz, 2006). In this study, I used an intake form to collect basic information (see Appendix A) and an interview guide (see Appendix B), but usually referenced only a few prepared questions and let others arise from the participant’s descriptions. Creswell (2007) explained in grounded theory, questions first focus on how individuals experience the process and then move to more detailed questions regarding the process or phenomenon.

Participant Selection

The numbers of participants for phenomenological and grounded theory studies vary, but typically range from 5-25 for phenomenological studies and 20-30 for grounded theory studies (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory actually consists of two types of sampling, initial sampling and theoretical sampling. Charmaz (2006) explained sampling criteria for initial sampling, where the researcher begins the study, should be delineated ahead of time. Once theoretical categories begin to emerge from the data, theoretical

sampling allows the researcher to conduct additional interviews to help clarify the emerging theories.

The number of participants desired for initial sampling in this study was 12-15. I interviewed 15 participants. This number proved a sufficient sample for data saturation. I selected participants using criterion, random purposeful, and snowball sampling methods. Individuals selected for initial sampling had to meet specific criteria including the following: hold a degree in a ministry-related field from an Assemblies of God university, be younger than 30 (born after 1980), have completed at least 9-months of work on staff at a church where they were paid for 25 hours or more a week. The sample was random purposeful in its intention for diversification in the demographics of participants. I made an effort to represent both genders, various types of positions, different church demographics, and both current and former ministers.

Selection of participants also followed a snowball method of recruitment. I provided faculty and staff at an Assemblies of God university with a brief explanation of the study and asked them to recommend potential participants who meet the criteria. The initial list of potential participants received a letter of invitation via email or Facebook (see Appendix C). Of these, approximately two-thirds responded and agreed to participate in the study. I also requested these participants to recommend others they knew who fit the criteria and could be invited to contribute. These recommendations led to additional participants.

Some potential participants were aware of my interest in and research on this topic and had already indicated their willingness to be involved. In such cases, I still invited them formally to participate with the letter. For others, the letter was their first

knowledge of the study. In both cases, I did not follow up the initial letter with any contact regarding the invitation in order to avoid the potential to be coercive.

Many of the participants were former students of mine and knew me personally, all of them attended an institution where I worked and knew of me, even if we did not know each other personally. One participant was a relative of mine. The letter to participants clearly expressed the voluntary nature of this study, as well as the ability of participants to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting their relationship with the researcher.

Data Saturation

Saturation occurs “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). Saturation provided an indication data collection for the selected categories was completed. I implemented the constant comparative method to seek saturation of identified categories, comparing data with other data, statements within the same interviews, and statements from interviews with other participants (Charmaz, 2006). This process allowed me to determine when a category was saturated and participants continued to convey the same sentiments and perspectives on a particular aspect of their experiences. When data saturation occurred, I then moved to data analysis.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis entailed a series of steps. These included collecting data, organizing data, coding data, generating categories and themes, offering interpretations, searching for understandings, and writing the report of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As indicated, I collected data via in-depth interviews with individuals. I then transcribed these interviews and stored them in both audio and text

files in the NVivo 9 software program and on the hard drive of my personal computer, in my home office.

Initial reading of the data studied words, phrases, patterns of behavior, and ways of thinking that stood out or were repeated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Phenomenological and grounded theory analysis use similar procedures, consisting of phases of coding (Creswell, 2007). My initial coding stuck closely to the data, examining them line-by-line and incident-by-incident, identifying themes repeated elsewhere in the data that could help inform emerging categories. Focused coding then allowed me to check my preconceptions about the topic and begin to form categories by comparing data and refining initial codes (Charmaz, 2006). I identified emerging themes for descriptions of the shared experience of Millennials in ministry, including an understanding of factors relating to their job satisfaction and retention in ministry roles. The final phase, selective and theoretical coding, allowed me to create statements or hypotheses emerging from the categories (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Memo writing provided a resource for reflection and interpretation of the data and brought to light potential themes for further research. Finally, I reported identified themes in a narrative depicting the experience of Millennials, describing their values and vision for the church. The validity of these themes was established through several means.

Validity

Validity refers to the “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 106). Validation strategies strive to identify ways in which the researcher might be wrong and ensure accuracy of the information presented. I implemented three specific methods to help ensure validity in this study: researcher bias, rich description, and triangulation.

Researcher Bias

Clarifying the researcher's position in relation to the topic studied at the outset can help clarify any experiences, perspectives, or orientations that could shape the interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2007). Research designs should include reflection on the researcher's own identity and voice in regards to the topics studied and analyzed (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). In this study, observer comments and memos throughout the analysis complemented the introductory reflexive statements I wrote. These reflected my own personal perspectives, questions and potential biases. In interviews, I consistently sought to engage in active listening to understand the participants' perspectives and experiences separate from my own. In the analysis, rather than seek to eradicate my own bias, I employed my experience, expertise and perspective to more effectively sort through the emerging data (Charmaz, 2006).

Rich Description

Rich description promotes validation of the data by giving the reader the ability to identify how the findings of the study might relate to other situations. "With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Cho and Trent (as cited by Marshall and Rossman, 2011) described the major validity criteria for thick description as triangulated data, knowledge of the daily life of participants, and member checks. After compiling initial findings, I sent a copy to all of the participants so they could review them and add any additional comments. Four members responded and enthusiastically verified the validity of the emerging descriptions. None of the participants had any corrections or additional comments to add. Thus, member checking validated the findings.

Triangulation

“In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence. Typically, this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). In this study, I compared the accounts of multiple participants to verify the validity of the emerging descriptions and theories regarding Millennials in ministry roles. Furthermore, I reviewed secondary sources discussed in the literature review to validate my findings in the context of other research. Besides conducting member checks, I also submitted my analysis to several peers for review and feedback. These steps helped ensure the validity of my findings.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) delineated two traditional guidelines for ethics in research with human subjects. First, participants enter the study voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study. Second, risks do not exceed the gains participants might derive from the study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) emphasized the importance of respecting and focusing on people. “Respect for persons captures the notion that we do not use the people who participate in our studies as a means to an end (often our own) and that we do respect their privacy, their anonymity, and their right to participate” (p. 47).

As delineated in the participant selection section above, the letter to participants clearly expressed the voluntary nature of this study, as well as the ability of participants to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting their relationship with the researcher. No additional request for participation was made beyond the initial letter to participants so as to avoid any semblance of coercion.

As indicated in the consent form (see Appendix D), the records of this study are completely confidential. The types of records I collected for data included intake forms and recordings of the interviews. All transcribed recordings used pseudonyms. I stored recordings in a secure location in my home office and will delete them within one year of the interview. I compiled intake forms or researcher's notes and stored them with interview transcriptions using only pseudonyms. I destroyed any original forms or notes immediately. Transcriptions and additional documents contained only pseudonyms and are stored on my personal computer, laptop and external hard drive. As they contain no information that allows for participant identification, I will store them indefinitely for future research purposes. I further protected participant anonymity throughout the study by substituting the term "participant" instead of using pseudonyms when citing sensitive or potentially identifying statements.

There were no known risks and/or discomforts with this study. The benefits associated with participation included the opportunity to discuss one's experience and contribute to a study designed to inform institutions and leaders who influence the preparation and empowering of young leaders in the church.

Summary

I employed qualitative methods of phenomenology and constructivist grounded theory in the implementation of this study. Data collection and analysis followed set qualitative processes including organizing data, coding data, generating categories and themes, offering analysis, searching for meaning, and writing the report of the study (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Member checks, peer review, and triangulation of secondary sources confirmed validity of the findings and

analysis. Finally, I ensured participant confidentiality and safety by disclosing the study's purpose and structure, using consent forms and pseudonyms, and responsibly storing confidential information. The implementation of this study successfully respected and focused on the people involved and their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The next chapter begins the discussion of my findings, describing participants' experiences and presenting the phenomenological conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS

In phenomenological studies, researchers seek to understand the meaning of situations and interactions to people in particular situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). They develop a description of the essence of the experience that consists of “what” participants experienced and “how” they experienced it (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Participants in this study described their experiences as young staff members working at local churches. In this chapter, I reported demographic information, characteristics of participants, and my phenomenological findings regarding significant elements in the experience of Millennials in ministry.

Typically, in the phenomenological study, the long interview is the method through which researchers collect data. Phenomenological interviews involve an informal and engaging process and utilize open-ended comments and questions (Moustakas, 2007, p. 114). Seidman (1991) delineated a three-interview series for phenomenological interviewing. The series consists of a focused life story, the details of the experience and reflection on the meaning. I adapted Seidman’s three components with my participants into one or two in-depth interviews, as this proved sufficient for the scope of this study.

In this study, I interviewed fifteen Millennials (born after 1980), 9 males and 6 females, who reported a minimum of nine months in ministry, with the average length of service being 28 months in their first position on staff at a church. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned a pseudonym for each participant, the churches where they worked, the pastors and boards and other locations, persons, or entities mentioned in self-reporting.

Description of Participants

The fifteen participants interviewed ranged in age from 22 to 28 years old. Retention in their first ministry positions ranged from 12 months to over 70 months. Thirteen of the participants held bachelor degrees in a ministry-related field from the same Christian university. Two held degrees in other fields, but had attended the same school as the others and held a minor in Bible/theology.

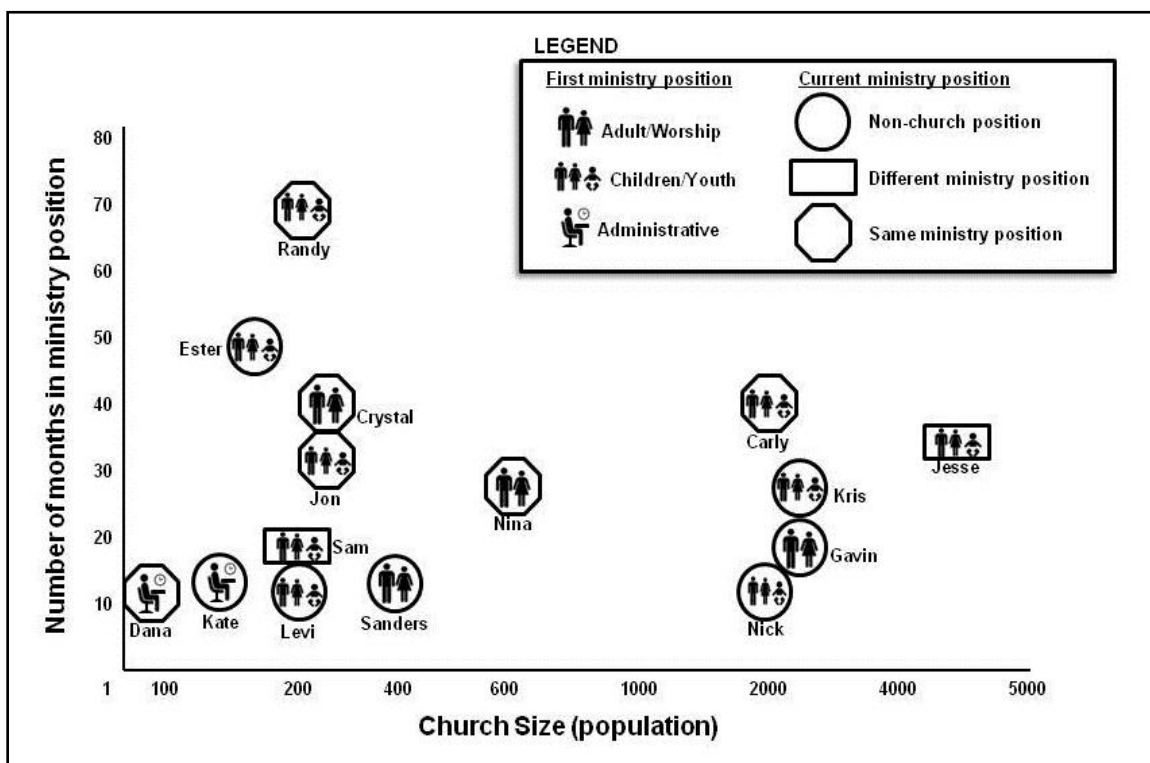


Figure 1. Distribution of study participants according to church size, number of months in first ministry position, type of role in first ministry position and current employment position.

Regarding their first ministerial roles, participants reported positions ranging from administrative staff to children's pastor. Two participants held worship positions, two held administrative positions, one held a children's pastor position, two were in adult ministries and eight held roles where youth ministry was their primary responsibility. Work locations and size also varied, three of the participants served in small towns, two

in urban settings, and ten in suburban churches. Five of the participants served in churches with less than 200 members, five others served in churches with between 200-1000 members, and the final five participants served in churches with over 2000 members.

Experience in Ministry

Many factors contribute to the first church ministry experience of Millennials. Although I did not ask participants to share their full life story, I did ask about aspects of their life story relevant to their decision to pursue a ministry position. Calling emerged as an important aspect of this journey. Relationships with leaders and colleagues, identification with the vision of the ministry, and a sense of effectiveness in their roles surfaced as common themes in their ministry roles. A number of participants self-reported their desire to stay in their current positions or work with their current leader as long as possible. Remaining in their first position required discipline and perseverance for other participants due to the difficult nature of the situation. Lastly, participants reflected on lessons and meaning derived from their experiences.

Calling to Ministry

Every participant had a story regarding his or her journey into a ministry role. Most participants reported experiencing a sense of calling. These looked different for each individual, but their experiences with calling fell into several categories. These included experience in ministry early in life, a moment or sense of calling, or confirmation by important others. Hands-on experience in ministry led to a revelation or desire to pursue this work as a career for some. Others experienced an event or moment in which a sense of calling became real or recognized. A few participants cited

confirmation or recognition by others as a source of encouragement in pursuing a career in ministry. Two participants found themselves in ministry roles by default, as the most logical course to pursue. For some, multiple factors encouraged the choice of a career in ministry.

Most participants became aware of a sense of calling or ministry as a career option before entering college, some as early as late childhood. In some cases, encounters of a divine nature confirmed a call to ministry. Fowler (1986) explained people in the Synthetic-Conventional faith stage, which often emerges in adolescence, identify God as the “one who knows us better than we know ourselves—knows who we are and who we are becoming” (p. 30). Responsiveness of participants to these encounters illustrates this faith. For others, confirmation or an example of important others in their lives contributed to choices regarding ministry. This reflects yet another aspect of the Synthetic-Conventional stage, where “selfhood derives from important relationships and roles... values, commitments, and relationships are seen as central to identity and worth, at a time when worth is heavily keyed to the approval and affirmation of significant others” (Fowler, 1986, pp. 29-30). Many participants cited calling, regardless of how it emerged, as important once they were in a ministry position. The following sections explore how participants experienced a sense of calling.

Prior experience in ministry. Active participation in ministry during childhood or adolescence helped develop a sense of competency and passion for ministry in a number of participants. Experiences of these individuals reflect aspects of Erikson’s identity development stages (Erikson, 1997). In stage four, Industry versus Inferiority, “children work toward developing a sense of industry, where they learn to master

different skills to feel useful...when children feel appreciated for making a contribution, they develop a sense of competency in their skills” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 50). Stage five represents the transition between childhood and adulthood as the young person seeks to define oneself, asking the question, “Who am I?” For some, the answer to this question emerged out of the ministry skills and experience they had early in life.

Carly and her family attended a small church when she was growing up. This provided her many opportunities to be involved in ministry, not only at her local church, but also on a traveling team doing programming around the world.

I found that I would rather teach a class of children than even go to youth group...I didn't fit in with peers super well at that time because I was an overachiever and a nerd...I just didn't fit well in youth group settings. (Carly)

She did, however, find a place of belonging serving in the children's ministry at her church. “They needed a lot of help and I just happened to be gifted...and so I naturally fit into a lot of those roles.”

Several participants grew up in ministry homes which also provided them experience early in life. Nina was the daughter of a pastor. She recounted her experience was very positive. “I grew up in ministry...my parents were very good at keeping the bad away from us as kids and so I had a very healthy view of the church.” She reported being involved in ministry from a young age.

They started plugging me in...letting me use the giftings that I had. I was leading worship when I was in youth group and at main services as well...so, it was just a passion of mine that God just kept confirming through different people.

Sanders had a similar experience as the son of a pastor. Early ministry experience revealed, “It was just very evident that [worship] was something I was great at and something that God had put in my life.”

A couple of participants experienced leadership in ministry while still in high school. This experience had a powerful impact on their lives and sense of calling. As a teenager, Randy attended a Christian school, but did not really connect with his peers there. He lived in a small, rural town and really felt he wanted to do something there. When he was about 15-years-old, he and a friend decided to start a youth ministry. He explained, “We saw that youth ministry grow from one student our first week...to 40 kids at one point and it really made a big impact in this little tiny town.” At that point, he identified a desire to serve in pastoral ministry. “I felt that calling on my life and I really have pursued it completely since that point in my life.”

Ester began leading a ministry in her high school after a self-reported encounter with God at camp. She explained, “I knew I had a responsibility to be obedient to the vision that I saw...so, through the next four years of high school I began to develop a program of peer leadership.” She disciplined about ten of her friends, teaching them about God and helping them grow in their faith. As a group, they “traveled all around the area to different churches...we all gave the gospel message, people gave their lives to the Lord.” Eventually, they saw their principal and superintendent make faith commitments. As a result, administrators allowed them to do assemblies at their school. She recounted seeing more friends make faith commitments and helping them learn more about God.

I really wanted to continue ministry that was intentional, and hands on, discipling people, which was something I was really passionate about because I saw the fruit that came out of it and the relationships it built with people. So, at that point, I was pretty certain that was the type of ministry I wanted to be involved in, ministry that was going to be hands on, one-on-one with people, discipling and mentoring.

Ester went on to attend a discipleship school before attending college to pursue a ministry degree.

Daloz et al. (1996) discussed individuals living lives of commitment to others. One of their participants reported, “I think that’s one of the things about assuming responsibility at a very young age and doing it successfully. You learn that almost everything can be scary, but if you kind of have a sense of who you are and what the situation is, you can deal with it” (p. 40). The stories of the participants in my study confirmed doing ministry successfully early in life can lead to a positive inclination towards future ministry involvement.

For other participants, experience in ministry helped redirect them from other fields into full-time ministry. Previously employed outside of the church, Gavin explained, “I took the position...because it was advertised that they were looking for someone to come in to lead small groups and organize the small group ministry and that was something that I had had experience with and had loved.” His passions and desires, discovered through prior ministry experience, aligned with those of the role. “One of my passions is discipleship and therefore it was a position that fit with my passion...what I wanted to do in life was to be a part of discipleship.”

Six months into college, Nick dropped out and started interning with a pastor at his home church. “That was when I decided, I’m going to do it. I don’t know how or what exactly, but I’m going to go into ministry.” He then went back to school to pursue a degree in ministry. “After that I couldn’t stay away and...it is actually something I can confidently say like I didn’t question at all when I was in college.” While for some participants experience in ministry encouraged their call to ministry, others experienced a moment of revelation or sense of calling.

Sense or moment of calling. In developmental theories, a moment of crisis, or what Erikson (Evans et al., 2010) called “turning point” and Parks (1986) termed “shipwreck,” often serves as a catalyst for propelling individuals into a season of transition and eventually into a new beginning or stage. For young people sensing a call into ministry, an encounter marked by the divine can serve as the beginning of a process resembling the “evolving movement from equilibrium through disequilibrium toward a new equilibrium” Piaget delineated as necessary for development (Parks, 1986, p. 35). Parks (1986) explained, “A potential strength of the Piagetian paradigm is its conviction that human becoming [growth] absolutely depends upon the quality of the interaction between the person and his or her environment. The human being does not compose meaning all alone” (p. 61). In the following examples, participants often composed meaning through interactions with their environments that confirmed a sense of calling.

Ester was in ninth grade when she remembered first deciding to go into ministry. “I had an encounter with God at a Bible camp...God gave me a vision of my high school and seeing people who were really lost coming to the Lord. A pretty open vision...” Several others also identified a camp or convention experience as pivotal in their decision to pursue ministry. Crystal described, “I gave my heart to the Lord in a youth ministry, I was called to ministry in a youth ministry, and so I really saw the importance of that ministry, like how it can change someone’s life.” That is where her passion started.

I didn’t know exactly where I wanted to go. Actually, when I was called to ministry, I didn’t even know what it was. I was just starting my walk with God when I remember being at a youth camp and them talking about being called to ministry. And, you know, feeling like God wanted to do more with your life and being willing to fully devote your life to Him...and I’m like, I don’t even know what that means, but I think that’s me.

Nick and Jon also reported experiences at camp or convention leading them to pursue a career in ministry.

Kris and Kate both experienced a confirmation of a call to ministry while on a missions trip.

I can't put exactly a date on when I felt called. I think...I saw evidence of my calling is probably the best way to put it. When I was ten, I went on a missions trip and I spoke and...people got saved...then I was like, oh, this is it, got it.
(Kate)

For some, the sense of call was disruptive to other plans they had for their lives.

Jon explained, "It was definitely God's calling. I wanted to go into the military and then be a police officer. That was my plan, what I wanted to do." As a pastor's son, he had seen negative aspects of ministry and the church.

I liked being in church, but I had this outlook on church ministry...I don't think I want to get into that...and so, it really took God pulling at me and numerous times through junior high and high school, calling me, confirming the call. (Jon)

Dana also described struggling with a call to ministry. "I felt like I was giving up a huge part of my identity...what I wanted to do because I had wanted to be an interior designer for a really long time." She finally asked, "What do you want to spend your entire life doing? Do you want to see the world changed by Jesus' love or do you want to make people's houses look prettier?" Once she made the decision to pursue ministry, she did not question it. "I don't remember where I was, but I remember there was a day I decided that, okay, I'm going to do this, God, and since then there hasn't been a question or a doubt in my mind whatsoever." For those who successfully navigated crisis or disequilibrium resulting from a call to ministry, the new equilibrium described by Piaget did emerge (Parks, 1986).

Confirmation of calling by others. Several participants received encouragement and confirmation of their call from important people in their lives. Parks (2000) strongly emphasized the need of a mentoring community for young adults to recognize and encourage what they could become as their identity forms. She identified repeatedly the role of adults in helping young adults as they learn to navigate their way in the world (Parks, 1986). In the following stories, instances of threshold people, “mentors who challenge, support, and inspire young adults” emerge (Daloz et al., 1997, p. 53).

Jesse related, “I remember my youth pastor just telling me all the time...you’re going to be a youth pastor...I was like, you are crazy, you probably just say that to everybody, don’t you?” After taking several ministry classes, though, Jesse realized he enjoyed it.

I loved it, I just ate it up, but still kind of felt like, I don’t feel called, I just feel like I’m kind of falling into this backwards because people are telling me that I should do it. And slowly but surely God would kind of reveal different things...I was this close to saying, I’m just done with youth ministry. This is too hard, I mess up all the time...and then all of a sudden, randomly getting calls from a buddy of mine saying, I don’t know why, but I’m supposed to call you and just tell you that God thinks you’re going to be a great youth pastor...and so, over time, I realized, you know, I am called.

Nina shared ministry was something she always wanted to do. In her senior year, an adult shared with her a word of encouragement to pursue ministry, confirming what she was already feeling. That confirmation really solidified the sense of call for her.

Jon communicated ongoing confirmation from leaders regarding his future in ministry. In his role as a youth pastor, he received support from two senior pastors about pursuing other pastoral roles in the future. He described a time when his senior pastor said, “Jon will be a senior pastor by the time he is 30. He made that comment in the meeting...you know, he’s made several other comments, hey, you’re a good youth pastor,

but you'd be a better senior pastor.” As a result of this encouragement, Jon admitted, “I’m open to it and I wasn’t before, but it’s taken the last two years for...other people to say it for me to get to the point where now I’m open.” Not all participants experienced such clear direction, however, in pursuing ministry.

Falling into ministry position. A couple of participants found themselves in ministry roles somewhat by default.

I was a ministry major. My dad’s a pastor so I kind of just always thought that’s what I would do...it was always kind of one of those things, I could do this, I understand the culture of church, I understand being in a ministry family, and so it just makes sense. (Levi)

Nonetheless, when it came time to graduate and pursue a position, he admitted, “I don’t think, towards the end of it I wanted to as much, but it seemed like the natural fit to do after that I guess.”

After graduating from college, Sanders got a full-time ministry position immediately.

It was just the easiest job for me to get. It’s really narrow, it’s very specific, and there are tons of openings for them. So, it was a much easier thing to do than to try and find...any other thing that I was great at was harder to get into, so...it just kind of all fell into place right when I needed it and so I just kind of went for it.

He described not feeling any hesitations about the position and feeling like it was what he needed at the time. “It wasn’t like I had said, I want to do this from the very beginning, this is what I want to be, this is what I think I am supposed to be...the pieces fell together for that place at that time.” However young adults arrived in ministry roles, many of them did experience a period or moment of questioning their calling somewhere along the way.

Questioning call to ministry. Fowler (1996) discussed aspects of movement in an Individuative-Reflective faith, often occurring in youth adulthood. Individuals must “take into themselves much of the authority they previously invested in others for determining and sanctioning their goals and values...definitions of the self that are dependent upon roles and relationships...must now be regrounded” (p. 62). This process appeared in some of the stories of questioning and accepting the call to ministry experienced by several participants.

Carly explained in her call to ministry, “No one really supported me in that besides my church family and my family...my friends or any professors I had that had mentored me thought it was a big mistake because it would be a waste of my talents, intelligence...” Initially in college, she double majored to have a contingency plan in case ministry did not work out. She recounted how God dealt with her after her first year. “I realized that I was not trusting God by having a back door, and when I was separated from a lot of the influences back home, I realized, okay, I was listening to them and I wasn’t listening to God.”

Crystal’s questions emerged largely from her understanding of what someone in ministry should be or what she perceived in others. She explained her doubts, “before I even started the internship, I was questioning it, and so I think that’s why I pursued that internship.”

I think a lot with my personality makes me question things like that because I’m not the normal extroverted pastor...but it took me a while to realize that...I have a purpose in ministry as an introverted person, as a detail-oriented person. (Crystal)

Kris reflected on personal changes that occurred throughout his college experiences.

I would say that going into it, I was very unsure about my calling. I had a lot of doubts and honestly I did not have a love of people and that was a very big thing for me to overcome. I think the Lord has given me that...

He explained that after a period of wrestling,

I had a pretty big epiphany moment coming into my junior year of college...that's where I kind of settled into the call and I really took the life-long thing, and that despite whatever circumstances I might encounter in life, that um, I knew I had a life-long call to be in ministry.

He described the epiphany as a turning point where he really owned his calling.

Value of calling. Many of the participants emphasized the importance of being called to ministry. They indicated knowing one is called can help a young leader stay committed.

Make sure that the Lord has called you to do it because when things get hard, you are going to have to look at that calling and know to stick it through, because that is what you are supposed to do with your life. (Carly)

Gavin reiterated this message.

Make sure this is what God's called you to do. Make sure that this is where God's calling you to go. If God's called you to go there, it's for a reason; He's going to give you the strength, what you need to be successful there and to learn what you need to learn.

Jon and Sam agreed ministry has too many discouraging days and potential for heartbreak. Calling is essential to have the strength to stay in ministry long term.

Participants explained other motivations for ministry do not compare to having a sense of calling. Sam warned, "Don't get into youth ministry or ministry just because someone you loved growing up did it and you want to be like them. You better know God calls you to do it." Carly noted the differences explicitly,

Your talents will fail, you know, and even if you don't think you are very good at preaching or teaching, if you have a heart for the job, then the Lord can take care of the rest...be faithful in what you know He's called you to do.

Gavin shared ministry is more than just what one can offer, those who are called need to recognize God's hand on their lives and His plan for them.

Someone who is just going into ministry, more than you going and being this great youth pastor, adult ministry pastor, children's pastor, whatever...probably God is taking you there to teach you something and not just for you to actually give something to the church.

Crystal shared a powerful story about the importance of calling to a ministry position. She explained how her pastor encouraged her in her calling when she arrived at the church.

He saw that I was a little intimidated, that I was a little like, well, I'm not outgoing, I'm just graduating, I don't know what I'm doing. He said, if you are called, your confidence needs to be in your calling. Your confidence doesn't need to be in pleasing your boss, your confidence doesn't need to be in pleasing people and pleasing, in your youth ministry, pleasing parents. You know, that's not what your confidence is.

Later, the church went through a period of turmoil and difficulty. When her pastor talked to her about the situation she responded, "Pastor, I'm called here. I will do whatever I have to do. We had a financial hit. If I have to go get another job, I'm called here and I'll do it." She explained, "There are a lot of times it would have been so easy to say, phsaw, I'm done! But, I know that's not what God has called me to do." Embracing a sense of calling thus contributed to job retention. Another important factor in the ministry experience stemmed from the relationship young adults had with supervisors and peers, discussed in the next section.

Relationships with Leaders and Colleagues

The experiences of Millennials with leaders and colleagues in their ministry roles were diverse and significant. In later chapters, I will present a grounded theory and an analysis of these experiences that reflect expectations of leadership and effects on job satisfaction and retention. In this section, however, I will maintain a phenomenological

approach. I sought to understand the essence of the experience, or the meaning assigned to it by the individuals, rather than provide a particular explanation (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This description of the experience consists of “what” the participants experienced and emotions related to “how” they experienced it (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Throughout the interviews, a contrast emerged between those who had and valued trusting, honest and encouraging personal relationships with their leader and/or colleagues and those who experienced uncomfortable, hurtful, or frustrating relationships. Parks (1986) emphasized the importance of close relationships in the developing young adult’s life. “It is the combination of the emerging truth of the young adult with the example and encouragement of the mentor, grounded in the experience of an ideologically compatible social group that generates the transforming power of the young adult era” (p. 89). The impact of the people with whom the young leader interacts on a daily basis is significant. “The character of the social context to which the young adult has access may be the most crucial element in the transformation and/or maintaining of what a young adult ‘knows’” (Parks, 1986, p. 89). Many participants’ tone as they conveyed their experiences indicated whether their relationships allowed them to thrive. Parks (1986) spoke of thriving “when there is access to a network of belonging anchored in the strength of worthy and grounding meanings” (p. 91). For others, the experience was less positive, even detrimental. I discuss these experiences first and then move on to those that were positive and constructive.

Isolation and disconnectedness. In describing his first year of ministry, Levi acknowledged, “it was a very isolating time.” For some participants, isolation or disengagement resulted from an absence or inaccessibility of the leader.

As far as Pastor, there being a connection there, there wasn’t...half of the time he wasn’t even at the weekend services and if he was there during the week, he was meeting...so he wasn’t just there during the week to be part of the staff. (Gavin)

The fact his pastor “always seemed very busy” dissuaded Gavin from ever just going in and talking to him. Levi explained, “Pastor made some of the final decisions, but he was very rarely in the office. He would be out...doing I don’t even know what.” In meetings, he “would often be up walking around or messing around or being on his computer or whatever, so he was never super engaged.” Others reported various reasons for inaccessibility of senior pastors. Sanders described his pastor having many outside commitments. Kate and Kris felt their pastors had personal issues resulting in choices to stay distant from the church and staff.

One participant admitted feeling some bitterness at times in regards to his pastor’s inaccessibility. “I think I learned a good lesson...whoever you are reporting to, it’s going to be work. I wish I would have known that beforehand.” He explained then he would not have felt sometimes “Pastor doesn’t care about me.” He acknowledged that when they were able to connect, his conversations with his pastor were meaningful and helpful. The irregularity of these interactions, however, proved disappointing.

Isolation also occurred through a division of labor or lack of interaction with other staff. One young man reported, “I was the only person that was concerned about discipleship...and maybe saying I was the only person is a little bit extreme but...there

weren't many other people that I worked with in that area...I was disconnected from everything that was happening.”

I felt very disconnected from the rest of the team, I felt pretty disconnected from other ministries in the church...I didn't really feel like I had a role in things...even though I was a part of the staff there. Our team never met together, never had any discussions together, there was no cohesiveness to that group of people, no bond or feeling like we had a same vision or goal in mind. It was very separate. (Ester)

Levi illustrated the isolation he experienced, “I would come in on Monday morning and I was the only one there...and I would spend most of that day working on website stuff.”

In some cases, the young leaders intentionally remained disconnected from leaders. Kate explained, “I never quite joined his team because I could see a lot of abuse happening the way he and his wife treated people who did come under them and I was...not about to do that.” Another participant explained his pastor, who was also his direct supervisor, took little time to understand his job. “He maybe knew like 20% of what I was actually doing...whenever I had a meeting with him, I always had to set it up and say, ‘can I meet with you sometime today?’” He further acknowledged, “If I had something going on in my personal life, I wasn't going to go talk to him about it, um, or if I was struggling with something, I probably wasn't going to go talk to him about it.” This sense of disconnectedness produced isolation and, along with other factors, contributed to feelings of frustration.

Frustration and discomfort. Although the following descriptions present various factors that contributed to a sense of frustration or discomfort for young staff members, a lack of direction and follow-through emerged as a significant theme. Howe and Strauss (2007) identified one of the core traits of the Millennial generation as a drive to achieve. They explained, “...to get Millennials fully energized...it helps to spell out a

clear goal, define an objective measure of success, explain possible strategies...and offer frequent feedback on their progress” (p. 158). In the workplace, they want to know expectations, feel their work is meaningful, and receive feedback (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Raines, 2003).

For some participants, a seeming lack of direction, clear goals, and organization contributed to their frustration on staff at churches. Randy explained his pastor’s philosophy was to “brainstorm and talk during staff meetings.” As a result, “we don’t come with an agenda and work through that real quickly...that’s not my personal preference, really, I’m more like, let’s come in with a plan and make the best use of our time.” Sam echoed this sentiment.

One of the toughest things for me...was the weekly staff meeting, which was like 90% talking and just kind of hanging out and then, “oh, it’s almost lunch, we should get some work done real quick.” I have a very driven personality...what do we need to do here, what are we accomplishing, what’s the agenda, let’s figure this out...the weekly staff meetings were something I dreaded.

Ester also expressed frustration with the mundane, directionless conversation dominating most staff meetings with her senior pastor. She described growing to dread these meetings, finding them unproductive and a waste of time. Unpredictability contributed to Gavin’s feelings regarding the vision of his church. “It seemed like everything changed from one meeting with Pastor to another and so...it was very confusing to figure out ‘what are we doing?’”

The frustrations of others arose out of a lack of follow through or action on the stated direction or goals, and no objective measure of success. One participant explained,

I didn’t want to say that my pastor was a liar, because he is not. But he would promise me so many things about where this church was going to go and the visions that he had and the contemporary views, and they never ever happened. So, finally...one day I just looked at him and I said, stop. I said, if you’re really

not going to do this, I don't want to hear it come out of your mouth, because all you're doing is getting my hopes up to shatter them...I'm done. I'm spent. I'm spent on listening to you have all of these things that you say that you're going to do and you don't do a single one of them.

Jesse said, "I was told, you can do whatever you want, you know...the skies the limit, if you dream it, you just do it. And then I'd get an idea and they'd be like no, no, we're not going to do that." Understanding his pastor's expectations confused him. "I kind of felt like...he's the vision...I don't know exactly what this is supposed to look like, so I'm either going to stand still or I'm just going to do whatever...but I know it's probably not going to be what he wants." An inability to meet expectations and achieve change proved discouraging to many participants.

When he was applying for his job, Levi said his pastors, "talked a lot about wanting to change and wanting to become more hip or relevant or connected to the community, which are all things that I value." However, once he arrived, he found "really, you know really, they weren't." He described the frustrating lack of consideration and follow through he experienced from his senior pastor even in small details.

I was in charge of the media...we implemented this rule that all media had to be submitted by Wednesday...that was acceptable for everyone else other than the pastors who provided most of the media. So, it was not uncommon for Pastor to be at the church on Friday night or Saturday night, finally doing his stuff for his sermon...I would walk into service, an hour before service and get handed a flash drive...oftentimes he would download things in the wrong file or format.

Levi's pastor disregarded not only his time, but also efforts of the staff to improve the functioning and effectiveness of the church.

Several participants shared stories of how interactions with leaders produced frustration or discomfort. In one case, where a husband and wife were both on staff, the participant explained in staff meetings,

There were often fights that would happen during staff meeting that were just so uncomfortable and so unprofessional. There were times where I would just be staring at the floor for fifteen minutes waiting for them to finish whatever spat...and a lot of times it would not be just about the material that we were discussing, but a fight that had continued from home and so it was really uncomfortable, and...it would finish and they would joke about it or whatever, and I think I was just so shocked that they didn't realize how inappropriate that was.

In another instance, the pastor's wife would attend staff meetings. The participant explained it was the pastor wife's "ranting and raving time. She would yell and scream and cry...she swore at me in staff meeting in front of everybody...that happened a couple of times, three or four times. It was just the most dysfunctional thing." These instances of inappropriate behavior left the young adults in a position great discomfort and uncertainty.

In some cases, participants experienced interactions with supervisors as very controlling and authoritative. One participant described the following pivotal interaction between him and his senior pastor.

I was in his office and he was getting frustrated that I wouldn't talk about it. And I tried to say, Pastor, I just don't have anything good to say right now, and I need to let my feelings, my personal feelings die a little before I can talk to you about this in a good manner. I said I just need you to be okay with that. He goes, well, I'm not. He kept pushing me and pushing me and pushing me until finally, he just slammed his hands on his desk and said, I am your boss, you sit down and talk to me right now...it became authoritative really fast...that was when I just realized, we really don't work well together and it just fell apart...it fell apart.

In some cases, young leaders identified their leader's behavior as controlling. Ester explained, "The love and care that I was feeling began to feel more like a control over me than love for me." Kate said of her pastor's wife, "That's what she wanted; she wanted people to be like under her total control. So, she set the tone for most of the things that happened."

Other factors producing frustration for young leaders with supervisors included misunderstandings, lack of relationship and ongoing criticism. Sanders reported, “it was just very, very hard a lot of times...pastor and I didn’t always see eye to eye, and we didn’t always understand each other...he didn’t understand where I was coming from...the mind of a 23-year-old.” Others cited the lack of a relationship and feeling awkward even passing their senior pastor in the hallway. Sam felt the environment on his staff was not positive. “There was a lot of criticism. Not a lot of affirming...if I had something great going on, it was like, that was good, but you could have done this better.” He explained what this felt like. “It was...hard for me, because one of my strengths is positivity, so to be around negativity is like putting me underwater without scuba equipment, it’s very choking.” While many participants echoed this sensation of “choking” in their ministry roles, the following sections describe the incredible support and encouragement others experienced from their supervisors.

Support and trust. Lencioni (2002) delineated characteristics that strengthen or weaken a team. The foundational principle he discussed is trust.

Trust is the foundation of real teamwork. And so the first dysfunction is a failure on the part of team members to understand and open up to one another...great teams do not hold back...they are unafraid to...admit their mistakes, their weaknesses, and their concerns without fear of reprisal (p. 44).

The following stories depict varying levels of trust and support experienced by participants on teams where they served.

Support and trust emerged as important in descriptions regarding what participants valued in a leader or pastor. Randy said, “I think the most important thing is they need to believe in you, believe in your vision and be supportive of you.” Ester described valuing “healthy conflict resolution, where there is a trust between leadership

and people you are leading to be able to talk through things.” She would hope “there could be a mutual trust of saying this is open dialogue...we might not always agree on what we are going to say, but there’s an understanding of how to have healthy conflict resolution.”

Evident distrust emerged in relationships between some participants and leaders or colleagues. One participant described his coworkers,

I also felt like they threw me under the bus a lot...not that they were my enemies, but at times it really was like that...yeah, it was hard...you know, I just didn’t trust them, I didn’t trust any of my staff members.

He told of a time he walked in on a staff member talking negatively of him to their pastor.

I walked in and I said, are you really doing this right now? You are throwing me under the bus when you should have come and talked to me about it first. I said, you should know you broke my trust and I don’t give it out freely. I was just done. If you have an issue with something I did, come to me, don’t go to my boss...and then, if I didn’t feel like it was right or she was wrong, then you go to the boss. But, it could have been resolved so much better...things like, it would happen every week and you can only pump yourself up so many times.

Kate shared, “we’d have...staff meetings everyone could attend except the children’s pastor because they weren’t allowed.” She explained the pastor “didn’t trust them, he didn’t want them to come. So, everyone else could come but not them.” Another participant discussed how her difficulties being honest surfaced from not feeling understood by her pastor. She explained working to have courage to step forward when she should.

Part of that for me always is my trust level with my senior pastor and feeling understood...he is trustworthy, but I’m very relational so when I don’t feel like he understands me, it’s not as good of a working relationship for me.

A number of participants felt very supported and trusted by their leaders and colleagues. Carly described arriving at her first full-time ministry position. “It was hard

at first, because people were used to a really different style...then the things that I did. But, because Pastor trusted me, and they trusted him, people did not question me in the things I did.” Her pastor clearly communicated his support of her when she arrived in the position.

If I ever have a problem with something you do, I’m going to tell you immediately. I’m not going to wait for you fix it yourself. If there is ever an issue that arises, we’re going to deal with it immediately, so you never have to worry I’m upset with you, or I’m disapproving of something you did, because if I am, then I’ll tell you. So, just rest in the knowledge you’ll never have to worry if what you did was unacceptable or if you did something wrong, because immediately you and I are going to talk and we’re going to do that because I love you.

Kris also described feeling supported by his leadership at the church. “They all had my back and so, if there was a situation that came up where it meant a family or two leaving the church or my job, I knew I wasn’t going to lose my job over it.” He said, as a result, “I felt free to stand up for what I felt was right.”

Jon described a very trusting, supportive, and authentic relationship with both senior pastors at his church.

It’s authenticity in that I know who they are. I also see who they are publicly, I mean they are public figures in the church, and I see who they are privately, and it’s the same person...who he was on the stage and how vulnerable he was on the stage, was exactly how vulnerable he was in the office and in our friendship and in our work relationship and so, that builds a level of trust for me.

Jon’s pastors demonstrated the qualities discussed by Lencioni (2002) when he stated, “The most important action that a leader must take to encourage the building of trust on a team is to demonstrate vulnerability first” (p. 201). Jon further conveyed how his pastors supported him personally and professionally. He described an instance just that week.

I never had to worry about getting into a situation where you know, somebody’s accusing me of something, something’s going on that they didn’t trust me and trust what I had to say...that’s been reaffirmed this week in a situation that’s going on in the church where, you know, the situation isn’t necessarily as bad as

in my mind I'm letting it become, but Pastor's been very supportive and encouraging and not condemning...it'd be easy for him to have handled it differently, but I walk away and I feel, I've got a pastor that supports me and cares about me.

Jon acknowledged the blessing of his situation. "I've been fortunate, because I know other pastors and other youth pastors aren't in situations like that. And so for me, it's been a blessing...I've had their trust and I've trusted them."

Dana also described a close and trusting relationship with her pastors and their family. Yet, it was not always easy.

Pastor is as opposite as you get from me on so many levels, work styles, personality styles, thinking styles, communication...he is a major extrovert...and is just managing a lot of different people, and then there is me, who has all her ducks in a row and communicates with all her ducks in a row and has her weekly schedule planned out and so, it's been a journey of okay, Dana, do you trust them, do you trust I [God] am working through them, do you trust I am blessing them.

She indicated the impact trusting and following her leaders had on her life. "God has given me the ability to just trust them and be their follower and they've changed my life, and have become a really irreplaceable part in who I am and in shaping me and just in my story."

Nina told the story of her team's journey back after trust had been broken. "There were some character issues there and it created a not good dynamic with our staff." After addressing those issues, the team was able to heal. "From where it was then to where it is now, the trust level has increased a ton."

That is definitely a strength now. I think we all trust who each other are as people and that is huge. If you don't have that, it was detrimental before and I am really glad they made the decisions they did to move forward.

The efforts of leaders to build trust with staff members resulted in appreciation and satisfaction among young adults and laid the foundation for empowerment and creativity.

Empowerment and freedom. Participants experienced empowerment and freedom in two different ways with their leaders and colleagues. The first was as freedom to be creative and make honest mistakes without negative consequences. The second was the ability to have a voice and vision. Nick referred to this as “whiteboard rights,” or the ability “to scribble all over” the church, giving input and having ownership in the ministry. Participants experienced empowerment and freedom primarily as positive, except in instances where they felt an absence of feedback and support.

Several participants voiced an appreciation for the freedom to make mistakes.

Dana explained,

I just feel safe...I mess up a lot, it's really hard to work there sometimes, and I know there's different parts where I don't meet expectations, but Pastor never focuses on those at all...it's not like he feels the need to scold me and tell me what I did wrong, because he knows I am aware of them and he's just like, it's okay. Our church building isn't burnt down, it's okay. So, that makes it a place where I can just learn and I'm just...I mean, I'm just so independent and I hate it when people are micromanaging and so I don't get that. And, I'm just experiencing a lot of growth on my own from being able to learn and mess up and then do things over.

Nina described her staff as having “freedom to be who you are, where you can try anything once and then if it doesn't work, then try it differently...I think that dynamic is really healthy.” Kris explained a similar freedom on his team where mistakes became opportunities for learning and staff could try new things in a responsible way. Several participants cited supportive bosses as essential to feeling freedom to make mistakes, learn, and grow as young ministers.

Participants valued freedom to make mistakes, but also wanted opportunities to dream and pursue their vision for ministry. When she applied for her position, Carly asked, “How much freedom are you going to give me?” It was very important to her to

know she would be able to implement her vision. She said in her first year, her pastor “was so protective of me, he really drove me crazy...finally I had to say, you hired because I’m independent, because I do a good job left by myself, and you’re making me crazy!” She explained, “He hires people who can take their vision and run with it.” Many young adults, however, experienced some challenges in implementing vision for ministry.

Nick described, “I was given a lot of freedom to do things, but also, the guy I worked for was very particular ...he was a dreamer, just a huge dreamer.” His pastor, “had a vision and I had the skills to be able to do it, so there were no boundaries, none at all!” While Nick’s pastor was somewhat particular, Gavin experienced the opposite.

They definitely empower you to make decisions and expect you to be able to come up with stuff on your own. It’s very hands-off, this is your department, and this is what we expect from you, do it, or figure out how to do it. (Gavin)

While he appreciated being empowered and provided with ample resources, he did feel the lack of support and feedback. He wondered if after 30 years of ministry, his leaders needed “someone who can just come in and just run this ministry and I don’t want to and I don’t have the energy or don’t have the capacity to do this.” Most young adults, although having passion, benefit from relationships, resources, and personal feedback in implementing their vision.

Friendship and personal connection. Parks (1986) developed a model of young adult development that consisted of three distinct strands. One of them, the young adult’s form of dependence, deals with relationships and the nature of dependence on others and self as one develops. She suggested young adulthood typically is the “fitting time for the mentor, guru, guide, coach, sponsor” (Parks, 1986, p. 86). These individuals serve to

“anchor the vision of the potential self” by providing “significant images of the emerging self” (p. 86). In the accounts of some participants, positive stories of mentoring, friendship, and personal connection provided insight and lent support to the young leader and emerged as powerful factors in his or her development.

Dana explained having a significant relationship with her pastors and their family, “they just let people in.” She spent time at their home and viewed them almost as parents. She described many “personal conversations...they are very aware of my struggles and frustrations and so, even though they are personal conversations, it affects my work. As they’re helping me grow as a person, then I’m growing as someone in ministry.” Nick and Crystal also mentioned the value of being at their pastors’ homes and spending time with them in that setting.

Jon and Sam both talked about investing in their relationship with leaders. Jon explained with his senior pastor, “I made it a rule, whenever he invites me out to lunch, I went. Even if I had a lunch, even if I didn’t have money for lunch, I just went because he was a very wise man with a lot of experience.” His relationship with each of the senior pastors he worked for developed into a friendship.

I took the effort of maintaining that relationship and it worked in my favor. He would have so much wisdom for me and so much counsel. The relationship began to blossom, not just a subordinate relationship, but it became a friendship...I felt close to him in that there was more of a relationship there than just I work for him. Pastor was my friend. I looked at him almost as a grandfather figure, and he had authority to speak into my life and that relationship was really great. (Jon)

This dynamic carried over into the staff at Jon’s church. He explained, there are “a lot of friendships. You come to work, you want to be there. I like the people I work with, we support each other, we pray for each other, we walk through life together.”

Many others expressed the value of a personal relationship with leaders. Sam explained, “In regards to leadership and now with my pastor, we make it a point to have a relationship, we make it a point to connect with each other, make sure we’re talking to each other.” He acknowledged a sense of his responsibility in the relationship. “I have realized that it is my job as a staff person to seek that out and follow my leader. I take him out to coffee. I’m like, Pastor, can I buy you coffee, let’s go out to coffee.” He realized the value of pursuing a relationship with his pastor outside of just work, as “more of a mentoring.”

Kris discussed the value of a relationship with leaders and colleagues outside of work as well. He valued his leaders “just checking in on me and building a friendship with me. We knew things about each other’s personal lives and we hung out with each other outside of work...not all the time, but it was just a good, healthy balance.” He felt valued because they made a “personal investment, they cared about me, about my marriage, about my finances, you know, am I spiritually, emotionally, physically full. Can I minister out of a full tank?” He saw their impact on his life as long-term. “I think...in developing me as a pastor, they helped me to fulfill my life-long call to do ministry. That was huge.” Similar to Jon’s experience, this sense of personal connection carried over into the staff. Kris explained, it “did feel like a big family amongst our staff and I think that was a very cool thing.”

Crystal and Carly both reported on a sense of family and connectedness on their teams as well. Crystal explained, “I haven’t experienced anything else, so I don’t know, but our staff really enjoys being together...our lead pastor is extremely relational...for him, if we don’t have fun doing ministry together, we should not be doing ministry

together.” Carly described, “We treat each other like family.” Her pastor also had strong relational tendencies and encouraged that on their team. “Every morning, when we first come in, we try to take like ten or twenty minutes in there and socialize with the office staff and connect then.” She explained her pastor was very accessible, “he’s just very available, I see him often.” Throughout the study, participants expressed the benefits of close, personal, encouraging relationships with leaders and mentors. Relationships with invested leaders contributed to a sense of effectiveness in ministry roles.

Effectiveness in Role

Leman and Pentak (2004) discussed strategies of effective management and servant leadership. They promoted understanding the SHAPE (strengths, heart, attitude, personality, and experiences) of people on a team and empowering them in their areas of skill and passion. “Make sure each person has the skill to do the job. Sometimes they can learn it on the job. Sometimes they have it on the day they arrive” (p. 33). Not only, though, must their skills be a fit, but their heart as well. They proposed, “put them in areas that reflect their passions, they’ll arrive to work like they’ve been shot out of a cannon” (p. 34). The following section contains experiences participants related regarding effectiveness in their roles in ministry.

Expectations and responsibilities. Participants often encountered unexpected responsibilities once in their ministry positions. If these did not fit with their skills or heart and passion, it produced anxiety or frustration. For others it proved an exciting challenge. This was more likely the case when accompanied by supportive and invested leadership. Dana explained after a year in her position, “I don’t have a job description yet, we’re still working on one.” However, when encountering something unfamiliar, her

pastors helped, “Dana, this isn’t a scary thing and so they’ll walk me through and show me how.” Others were often left to figure out the role on their own.

Levi explained, “I really had no idea what to expect. I had really only preached twice before...I really didn’t have any idea what I was doing.” He described reading a book left by his predecessor. “I just read and did everything that book told me to do.” Besides receiving little guidance in his new responsibilities, he found many things added to his job that no one had communicated when he interviewed.

There were a bunch of things that came up for which I was responsible, things that obviously were never discussed during the interview. I was in charge of the church website, which I had never done before. I was also in charge of all the media related to the church...I don’t know if it was assumed I would know how to do all that, but I literally had no idea. So, I spent a lot of time reading tutorials and manuals, going online and finding products, calling the website people, asking them how to do things...I spent a lot of time just learning the first little while. Another thing, I was also responsible for watering the church lawn, so every hour I had to go out and move the sprinklers.

In the winter, he found he was in charge of shoveling the many sidewalks surrounding the church building. During heavy snowfalls, he often spent many hours shoveling snow rather than doing other aspects of ministry. “I felt like there were a lot of things that were not communicated up front, so then it was just the expectation I would learn how to do it.” He felt as a salaried employee, his time was not his own. “They could call me at any time and ask me to do something and it was expected I would say yes” (Levi). Not only did he feel unprepared and unsupported in his role, but also mistreated.

When Sam entered his first ministry role, he made a big transition from another full-time job outside of church. “I finished that job, the next week I started as youth pastor, so the next week I’m in my office, I’m sitting there, I know what I’m supposed to do with youth ministry, but...I don’t have like specific tasks, it’s kind of like, here you

go, here's the youth ministry, have fun.” He explained it took him a couple of months to figure out the specific tasks in his new role. While there, he also acquired additional tasks. “I took on the church website...it was terrible, and I was like, this needs to change and I'll be the one to do it.” He described learning how to do a website and graphics. “I became kind of the marketing, graphics guy.” He also found himself in charge of young adults. He explained, “I was the youth pastor, and then playing on the worship team, all while having the expectation, just do it [young adult ministry], without a lot of guidance, without a lot of weekly, even ministry accountability, like, how's ministry going?” The support he needed to feel effective was lacking.

Sam was not the only one who found young adult ministry in his portfolio. This area often surfaced in the job of the youngest staff member, regardless of other responsibilities. Levi expressed feeling pressured to grow the young adult ministry and echoed the frustrations of others at the lack of resources and support. “They were really on my case about starting a young adult group, but wouldn't provide anything for it. Financially there wasn't anything there. They weren't willing to change anything in the service to attract younger people.”

Some participants took on young adult ministry because they saw it as a need. Sanders reported, “I also took over the young adult ministry because there wasn't one...I bit off a little bit more than I could chew. Sometimes that's just what you have to do in ministry...better it's there than non-existent.” Ester described trying to start a relevant program for young adults at her church. She said the senior pastor then tried to seize control of the program and it “became the exact same thing it was 20 years ago which the

young adults were not connecting with...so it just died.” None of the participants reported effectiveness in efforts to minister to young adults.

Media was another responsibility often assigned to young adults. A number of participants discussed finding themselves working with the church’s media or website. Sometimes this was an expectation that was part of their portfolio, at other times it was something that was important to them, so they took it upon themselves to improve the quality of what the church had. In both cases, it seemed somewhat expected a young person would be proficient in various aspects of media and technology.

Randy discussed working with media when he first started interning at his church, “being younger and kind of tech savvy, that was really the area I worked on the most, so I did a lot in that year, just to improve things in a pretty old-fashioned church.” Now, as full-time staff, he continues to work with the media. He described one day a week being “a technical day where I do video, website, that type of thing...graphics.” Nina explained her church was redoing its website. “I’m the spearhead for that because I care.” This added a lot to her work schedule, but she explained she works with the graphics person closely “and basically delegate as much as I can.” Jon described when he first started working at his church, “I was the only person on staff that was young. I was...troubleshooting all the media, but my main responsibility was the youth ministry.” Carly explained entering her first full-time position, following an older staff member. “There was so much to do just because, especially as a young person going into position where someone older was before me, technology wise, tons needed to be done.”

Young adult ministry and media often emerged as job responsibilities once the Millennial was working at a church. In other cases, participants took jobs doing a

ministry role with additional tasks such as cleaning or maintenance to create a full-time job. This could sometimes create confusion. Jesse explained doing some maintenance for a while and then transitioning to a full-time ministry role.

I think that was kind of the blurred line sometimes...after the transition...something would break in the church and instead of hiring somebody to go do it, or asking...it was, oh Jesse can do it because he was doing maintenance stuff for a little bit. (Jesse)

Those expectations added onto what had become a full-time job of ministry responsibilities were difficult. “I’m here to be a pastor and...it felt like the mentality was, Jesse should stay late to pick up trash and reorganize the chairs because...he knows how to do it.”

In Gavin’s experience, his job responsibilities changed after he was hired. “It was different than what was initially advertised...my job, little by little became less about small groups and more about other events...so the position slowly became something different than what it was advertised as.” When changes to responsibilities occurred without communication and support, participants often felt ineffective. In many cases, their passions and skills did not match the additional duties and requirements, compounding their frustration.

Personalities, gifts and passions. Kris reflected on attitudes regarding personalities, gifts and passions in his generation. “It’s very trendy right now to categorize yourself as a certain personality type...a lot of people use that as crutch and they say...I can’t perform this job function because that’s not my personality...it’s deterring my natural gifts.” He related this attitude or approach among young adults to work ethic saying, “I think work ethic is maybe a lost art in our generation.”

Nonetheless, he indicated the importance of passion and fit in empowering Millennials.

“We struggle to find ourselves really pouring into something...I think once we can find our niche...we really invest into it, but if we don’t find that, then we just kind of hang back and really don’t invest.”

Several participants referenced personalities in their self-reporting of staff investment and effectiveness. After taking a personality assessment at a staff retreat, Nina indicated she understood her senior pastor much better. “I feel like there’s a lot more understanding there too, for me to see his strengths and for him to see mine.” Gavin, who was very relational, referenced personality differences as a challenge in his relationship with his pastor. “He has developed skills in his ability to listen to people...but whenever you met with him there was an agenda and he would act very inviting, but at the same time...there needed to be a purpose.” Randy described his team as having a lot of different personalities. “I’m the peacemaker kind of type...our senior pastor is really right out front, what you see is what you get and ah, he isn’t shy at all.” He acknowledged benefits in these differences. “We’re a very different group of people and we think through things very differently and see things different ways so it’s really good we have a lot of perspective.”

Sanders also indicated the value of diverse personalities and gifts on a team. “You need the people who work with structures and form and all of those things, because you need them to do your bills, you need them to plan your events, you need them to do a lot of things.” He explained churches also, “need the people who can communicate and express God’s heart and the vision of the church and can have empathy and understand people...they need to be the ones who are the faces of your church.” He expressed the

importance of people being in a place where they fit. “You need all those different people, but they have to be in the right places.”

Several participants shared experiences that indicated the fit of their personalities, skills, and passions in the ministry position where they served. Nick said his job was to “make videos and produce, which I had done, do worship, which I had done so I knew how to do it, lead small groups, which...I knew how to do...do all the graphics, which I had done.” While his skills fit the expectations of the role, he felt disconnected from his passion.

It was cool and I was a tech guy and I loved to play with that stuff...but I always felt like we just got done doing the best thing ever and we had to start over and I’m like, whoa, when am I going to get to be a pastor? (Nick)

He discussed a desire to be able to focus more time and energy on developing relationships with the people in his ministry.

Young adults found it disconcerting with their personalities or passions did not coalesce with their positions. Jesse explained, “It was always very creative. So, whether it was a creative sermon, creative type of worship experience, those were always kind of fun...yeah, it was a very fast-paced youth ministry, a very fast-paced church in general.” He told his pastor, “I feel like the church is going 300 mph and I am going 150mph, and this is as fast as I can go, and yet I am still falling faster and faster behind.” In working with his colleagues at the church, he “felt like all these guys were way more creative than me. So, for me to have top-notch, great quality stuff all the time put pressure on me.” He finally determined he could not stay at that church. “I think God has gifted me in certain areas,” but they were not being maximized in his position. He revealed his passion for future youth ministry opportunities. “I know I’m very much a shepherd and relationships

are a big part of the youth ministry. It's not going to be an event-driven type youth ministry, it will be a lot more just relationships...we're going to build memories together."

First ministry positions sometimes provided opportunities for young adults to learn what was important to them and how they wanted to minister. Sam explained, "That first church, my first job...was a huge refining process. It's very valuable to me, that time, it wasn't great, it wasn't a good fit." Although he learned a lot, "It didn't turn out to be a great fit for me and my personality and for my style and my vision." Being in a more traditional church, when he wanted to be part of "an attractional church," he explained, "I didn't fit in that aspect." Sam contrasted that experience in his first position with his new role in a different setting. "It's an environment where I'm working in my strengths, I'm being challenged...I'm working in a driven environment, and I'm working in a healthy environment." He explained, "We always have to do things we're not good at...things we don't like to do, that's just the reality of life, but when you're doing that with the majority of your time" it can be hard.

Those who did utilize their gifts and passions regularly found the experience very fulfilling. Kris described being in a position where he was able to engage in activities he really enjoyed. "One thing I really loved to do was get kids outside...from just making a game of dodge ball cool and getting a lot of people involved on a regular night or at an event...just playing and games and interacting." He related having "a couple of chances to take students camping on what I termed wilderness adventure ministry; that was a really big thing for me." Being able to implement his personal passions into his work was meaningful. In defining leadership, he expressed, "Good leadership is being

somebody who walks with people...I think it's recognizing people's strengths and abilities and being able to...then plug them in where they'll be most successful."

Other participants echoed the importance of recognizing and empowering people in their gifts. Kate explained, "I believe everyone has a gift, everyone has lots of gifts, everyone has lots of callings at different times in their lives and the Lord wants people who can do those things because they benefit." Dana emphasized valuing all gifts and ensuring people do not feel "like they have to look like a certain thing or have certain gift." She expressed appreciation for her pastors' ability to affirm others. "God has given them this ability to see the gifts God has given you. In everyday interactions they can see specific things God has put there and call them out...they help to foster that and help you grow." Dana described her development as a young minister, "God has just blessed me so abundantly by giving me the opportunity to work here...they've deposited so much into me, things to be a church leader." Investing in the growth of Millennials as they discover and practice their gifts and passions can contribute to a life of meaningful service. Possessing a sense of meaning and fulfillment in their work proved important to many participants in this study.

Meaning and Fulfillment

In reporting on Millennials, Elmore (2010) wrote, "This generation wants meaning to come with their work. Young job seekers today want to work for organizations they believe in, to be a part of a company that matters" (p. 133). In the next chapter, I examine an emerging vision this generation holds for the church and ministry. In this section, I highlighted experiences demonstrating the meaning and fulfillment young ministers derived from their work. In many cases, this came from the

aspects of their ministry dealing directly with people in the specific ministry for which they were hired. Sam explained, the “stuff I got hired initially to do was the best. I loved Wednesday nights, I loved the students.” In most cases, the greatest fulfillment in ministry corresponded with relational aspects of the role.

Making a difference in people’s lives resonated with Millennials in ministry. Jesse explained, “Every Wednesday night, I felt not that these students need me, but I’m connected with these students and I want to do more.” He was energized by “just planting seeds in students” to take with them wherever they might go. “Maybe they are going to be working at corporations and they’re going to have access to people I’ll never reach...or maybe it’s a teacher...I’ve kind of thought for me, I want to train other people to do great things.” Jesse described wanting to be “like a launching pad for other people...I would love nothing better than to hear students that were in my ministry say, I’m a construction worker and I’ve led ten people to Christ and I just want to thank you.”

Randy echoed a similar sentiment. “I think the thing that makes me the most happy is when I see a student who has graduated our youth ministry and is still serving the Lord.” Understanding the hurdles many young people have to overcome, Randy explained, “Knowing I had a major part in getting them to that point. That probably brings me more satisfaction than anything else.” He contrasted that with “seeing the students that...aren’t serving God anymore, that’s pretty devastating.” Although many aspects of pastoring can be difficult, he said, “Nothing really compares to that as far as...it crushes you and thinking about how much you poured into those students lives and now they’ve rejected that, that’s hard.”

Young adults in ministry expressed dedication to the people in their churches and communities. Levi explained, “I absolutely loved my kids in the youth group, I still think about them a ton, and pray about them a ton...I just genuinely loved them and loved my interaction with them.” Levi discussed how he managed his interactions and priorities with the youth.

I spent a lot of time making sure people were talking to each other from different worlds...older students were talking to the younger students and we would do events to learn to care for each other...I value family and I think your youth pastor needs to be cool enough you want to bring your friends, but safe enough and family enough where you can bring questions...and, so I did a lot of things that I valued as a youth and then also things I wished I had seen or heard, and so, I would talk about tough things, that I hadn't really heard people talk before and I think the students really appreciated that.

This brought a sense of accomplishment for Levi, “I don't know that I was a good pastor in general, but I was a good youth pastor.”

Success and fulfillment corresponded consistently to growth and changes in the lives of the people Millennials worked with in their ministries. Nina explained, “When I see growth...people developed and actually using their giftings that makes me excited!” She appreciated seeing people step out of their comfort zones and be challenged. “You are like, oh my word, this is so good for them as a person, they are trusting God...it's just really neat.” She described getting her leaders all together in a room and asking, “what is God doing? That I love!!”

Crystal also reported fulfillment in “just seeing lives changed.” She told a story of one couple who came and gave their hearts to God and “got involved really quickly and just really understood, if I'm going to follow Christ, I'm going to do it with everything I have...it's just true transformation and I think that is the most rewarding thing to see.” She enjoyed seeing people who have a genuine faith. “It is real passion,

[people] saying, I don't want to do things like this because look what God's saved me from, look what God's done in my life! And so, it's... just incredible to see people really changed."

Some participants enjoyed seeing their efforts effect change in the places where they were serving. Nina explained, "I think seeing progress in things makes me really excited. Seeing changes for the positive." Another participant said, "There were so many times of great success. I mean, worship at that place was totally different when I went there...there were some times of awesome freedom and just different things were huge success stories for that church."

For some participants, the process of finding meaning was a journey and required effort in the midst of challenges or uncertainty. Gavin explained, "The thing that kept me going was I knew there were...leaders who I was ministering to...and who came every week looking forward to me coming in, just saying hi to them and that did something for them." He emphasized the need to "find that aspect of the ministry and pour yourself into that because that's what keeps you going...find things that energize you, the reasons you are in ministry...even if it is not part of your job description." Dana acknowledged, "Even though it's difficult and even though it's challenging, and even though I don't know what I am doing most of the time, there's this deep part of me being fulfilled and confirmed on a regular basis." Kris believed this fulfillment occurs when young adults finds those elements of ministry they can do without a paycheck. Empowering Millennials in this discovery produces meaning in their work for years to come. The following section reflects some of the lessons and perspectives participants will take with them from their first ministry positions into future ministry and career opportunities.

Reflections on Experience and Lessons

Siedman (1991) discussed the role of reflection in the interview process. This aspect of the practice “addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life...making sense or making meaning requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation” (p. 12). In the following examples, participants offered perspectives on their experiences and meaningful lessons learned.

Reflecting on his first ministry experience, Sam explained, “I feel like my position there was to transition the youth ministry out of what it was, because there was a lot of dysfunction.” That was not an easy process, though.

It was a great learning experience for me. I learned a lot about myself, I learned a lot personally, as a pastor...as a leader of people, but, it was hard, because I went there based on this church having so much potential, [thinking] I can come in and do so many great things here. Then you realize, I can only do so much, and that’s kind of the bright eyed, bushy-tailed, head in the clouds, so excited, dreams come smacking down to reality and that’s hard to deal with...I came out of college thinking I could just take on the world, and I was just awesome, and I went to this church and just got humbled like crazy, and just kind of taken back to reality.

He admitted moving into another position, “I miss the students...but I know for me, and for the health of my career and calling, it was necessary to move on...at the same time, that first church, my first job was something I think I had to go through.” He also emphasized the importance of learning about hard work and professionalism. “Talent will get you places; hard work will keep you there. Don’t rely on your talents.”

Dana also referenced the transition from idealism to reality in her first ministry position. “God is bringing me through a season of showing me I don’t know everything. I think I came into college thinking I pretty much knew everything.” She explained growing up in church you just get comfortable with things the way they are. In her first

ministry role, she experienced a period of really learning what it meant to be a pastor. She admitted, “I love it. It’s just fun, as much as it’s challenging...every week I am learning something new about myself or about the people I love or about God or about what it means to do church.” She explained learning about the value of vulnerability and authenticity in pastoring or “shepherding.”

It’s bringing the term “church family” to this whole new level. I do feel like these people are my family, my brothers and sisters, my mom and dad, my grandma and grandpa and uncle...and to be honest, these people know me at a deeper level than most of my family members do. I think God brought me here because he didn’t want me continuing on just thinking being a pastor is all about preaching because that is such a very small part. I am realizing you can have a greater effect shepherding through a car ride to the grocery store than you may have from the pulpit week after week.

Referring to her senior pastors, she said, “I will model them, not just because it is them, but because I believe they are really living out the way Jesus wants us to live in every part of our lives...they’ve earned a special place in my heart.” After delineating other lessons including the value of listening, appreciating the ideas of others and supporting the vision of her leader, Dana took a long, reflective pause and stated, “I’ve learned, oh my gosh, I’ve learned how to pray.”

Many participants learned from pastors they respected. Jesse explained modeling his own ministry after his mentors.

I sat in their office and I’d pick their brain about something or we would just talk about life or I’d share what’s going on in my life and they would come down on me and say, you’re being an idiot right now...I feel like I got a wealth of knowledge because I surrounded myself with great people. That was a huge win for me. Everything I learned from them, it comes back, you know it’s like, oh yeah, when I talk to a leader, I want to make sure I convey this to them.

In reflecting on advice he would give to someone preparing for ministry, he said, “I would say, find a mentor. I definitely needed a mentor badly. And not necessarily just for youth ministry, but just in life in general.”

For those without mentors or supportive leaders, lessons often came through experience or a personal spiritual journey. Kate explained, “Probably the biggest thing I learned was...the difference between serving the church and serving God, and sometimes that is the same thing and sometimes it is very different.” She realized, “When it comes down to it, when I am dead or something, I want to be able to say, I served God the whole time.” She also talked about her relationship with God. She stressed the importance of recognizing, “it’s a relationship with a person, a real person who has something to say about your life. It’s an adventure with him...spending time in a thankless type of role is worth it, because you develop the depth with the Lord.”

For Kris, much of his learning related to understanding and growing in his abilities. “I learned I definitely like to do tangible, hands-on things...I learned how to be good at being firm with students...and also showing grace and loving on them.” He explained, “I was definitely able to grow in my speaking ability and being able to communicate with students. I think I learned sometimes vision casting can be draining for me, but also fulfilling.”

Several participants referred to important aspects of looking for and accepting a ministry position. Levi said, “Under my lessons learned section here, I think asking more specific questions in the interview process is so valuable...just ask so many questions.” He spoke regarding pressure on many young graduates to find a job, and cautioned the attitude of viewing one’s first position as simply a stepping stone. “I think there’s that

pull towards wanting something and I think a lot of people have the expectation this isn't where I am going to end up, this is just kind of the first step." He warned of the danger in this approach. "There's more at stake...you can get pretty roughed up in a year or two so. I would say ask a lot of questions and then if it is possible to interact with people from the church, ask candid questions."

Jon referred to being careful and thorough in the application process as well. "Find the right fit, find the right place." He explained the need of doing "the research to know I'm going into someplace healthy, where I will grow as a leader, I will be supported, I will be nurtured and I will be able to expand in what God's calling me to do." Carly echoed this advice. "When you go [to interview], know the right questions to ask about the health of the church...do your research." Gavin cautioned those going into ministry to seek divine direction. "If it's God, do it, but don't do it if it is not God because it will destroy your life." He explained ministry is "not like a different job where you can just go and make money for a couple of years and leave it and not care about whether the business is good or bad or if you helped it or not." Gavin summed up the reflections of many participants regarding lessons learned in ministry when he stated, "the church...is all about people, or should be all about people, so you need to make sure it is God [leading you]. That's it."

Summary

The phenomenological lens in this study sought to respond to the question, "What is the lived experience of Millennials in ministry?" The data collected provided valuable insight into the experience of young adults in their first ministry roles. Several factors emerged as important themes in their experience. A sense of calling proved essential to

retention in ministry, especially amidst challenges and discouragement. Feelings of effectiveness and fulfillment in ministry roles were also crucial to job satisfaction. However, relationships with leaders and peers had perhaps the greatest effect on the daily experience of young staff members and their long-term retention.

A distinct difference in perspective emerged between those who experienced positive interactions with leaders and senior pastors and those who did not. Of the fifteen participants, eight reported constructive relationships with leaders and seven reported negative or frustrating relationships with leaders. Of the seven who reported negative experiences, all had left their first ministry positions. Thus, the behaviors, attitudes and responses of senior pastors working with Millennials proved essential to their success and retention in ministry.

Healthy relationships experienced by Millennials with supervisors and peers resulted in trust, empowerment, and friendship while unhealthy relationships led to isolation, frustration, and discouragement. Those who experienced healthy leadership were more likely to feel effective in their roles and find meaning and fulfillment. Effective leaders provided clear communication regarding job responsibilities, support in new responsibilities, and mentoring for growth and success. This resulted in a positive experience for Millennials. In the following chapter, I examine additional findings and present a grounded theory of Millennial job satisfaction and retention in ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS ON SIGNIFICANT FACTORS AFFECTING JOB SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

My study examined the generational values held by Millennials with regard to their faith journey and involvement in church, ministry and employment as church workers, and their experiences with church leaders. In this chapter, I present a grounded theory of Millennial values, describing a shift in the Millennial view of the church as family rather than church as business. For young adults in this study, working at a church that embraced their values proved important to job satisfaction and retention.

In this chapter, the methodological lens used to examine the data shifts from a predominantly phenomenological approach to a grounded theory approach. Creswell (2007) explained, “A phenomenology emphasizes the meaning of an experience for a number of individuals, the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory” (p. 62). Strauss and Corbin (1990) described, “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon...one does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (p. 23).

Within the grounded theory methodology of qualitative research, distinct strands exist. Charmaz (2006) contrasted the constructivist and objectivist approaches. She explained, “Constructivists study how—and sometimes why—participants construct meanings in specific situations” (p. 130). This differs from the objectivist approach that “resides in the positivist tradition and thus attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the process of their production” (p. 131). This study followed the constructivist approach to grounded theory adhered to by Charmaz. Whereas the

objectivist approach of Strauss and Corbin embraced the study of a single process or core category, Charmaz looks to learn about the experience within embedded situations and relationships (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenon of Millennials in ministry is evolving. As a result, constructivist grounded theory provides the greatest flexibility for observing and understanding themes emerging from this experience. The following discussion presents the themes that developed in my study regarding Millennial values and views of the church and ministry.

Defining and Valuing Family

Research indicates the concept and experience of family is very important to Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Rainer & Rainer, 2011). How Millennials define, understand, and desire family, however, may differ drastically from other generations. This has broad implications for churches hiring or ministering to this generation. As a result, it is necessary to understand the source of this value as well as its diverse manifestations.

Understanding Parental Culture and Roles

The connection of Millennials to their parents is well documented (Howe & Strauss, 2007). The *helicopter parent* phenomenon has received widespread media attention and changed the way many institutions, such as schools, conduct business. Twenge and Campbell (2009) hailed it as a “new parenting culture” where parents strive to be their children’s friend, support them emotionally and financially, defend and protect them from anything that could cause them discomfort. This trend contributes to Millennial expectations of older adults being friends, mentors or confidantes and always protecting and promoting the young adult’s best interests.

Howe and Strauss (2007) described the reemergence of this doctrine of *in loco parentis* (in place of parents) and its projection onto professors, bosses, and other authority figures in the young adult's life. Millennials are extremely responsive to the caring, supportive, parental role in leaders. Jon explained his relationship with a senior pastor,

I took the effort of maintaining that relationship and...it became a friendship, and I felt close to him in that there was more of a relationship there than just I work for him. He was my friend. I looked at him almost as a grandfather figure, you know, in my life and he had authority to speak into my life and that relationship was really great...there's that bond there.

Randy described a similar experience with his first senior pastor. He "was a very grandfatherly type guy. You just can't help but love him...he has an amazing heart. When you talk to him for five minutes, you think, this person cares about me...it was very easy to work for him." In her relationship with her pastors, Dana explained she was "working with two people that have a special part...we have a very deep, unique parenting/child relationship going on and so it doesn't even feel like I am at work, going to a job...I just feel safe here."

Parenting trends experienced by many Millennials, however, do not fully capture the whole experience. Close relationships with parents or families do not always create a sense of stability or strength. Many young people have homes affected by divorce, separation, or other difficulties. Even where there is a close connection to parents, the relationship may be lacking the depth, truth, or discipline that can provide emotional stability or a sense of family. If they do not experience family brokenness themselves, young adults still feel the effects of this reality in the world around them. Nick expressed, "My dad taught me," but in ministering to young people at his church he

realized, “nobody even had dads, they didn’t trust dads...this is going to hell in a hand basket, you know, what are we worrying about in the church?”

The intense cultural focus on children in America today often places them in the spotlight with parents and adults watching as they play sports, sing in choirs, or perform at academic and church programs. Millennials sometimes have little opportunity to watch adults and learn life skills from that experience. The chance to learn this way can prove very valuable to the young adult. One participant described learning from his senior pastor after a death in the church. He explained, I “got to walk through that whole process. My senior pastor had me tagging along at all of the meetings to set up the funeral...I’ve had a lot of those experiences that have really helped give me confidence as a pastor.”

Another participant explained the difficulty of not learning some lessons earlier in life. “Everything has been spoon fed for the Millennial generation and then you get in the job and...we need to have mentoring and direction.” He explained that they should not be spoon-fed, but sometimes young adults benefit from extremely practical advice, like “when you’re in your office you need to make sure you’re doing this, this, this and this, and you’re not just on Facebook and Twitter all day...I think sometimes you just need to learn that in experience.” As the most programmed generation in history, Millennials seldom experienced free time and are used to direction regarding what to do (Howe & Strauss, 2007). As a result, they often struggle to create structure for themselves without assistance or modeling from adults.

For many young adults, their interactions with others often occur virtually. Nonetheless, they value meaningful conversation with leaders in person, without a

specific work-related agenda. Many participants mentioned getting a meal or coffee with their leader or visiting his or her home, placing value on a relationship outside of a strictly professional role. Kris echoed others when he appreciated his leaders, “checking in on me and building a friendship with me...we knew things about each other’s personal lives and we hung out with each other outside of work...not all the time, but it was just a good, healthy balance.” This communicated to him they cared about his wellbeing, his marriage, and his future.

Embracing Family as a Priority

Investing in one’s personal family unit is a priority to young adults entering ministry. Many Millennials have seen the toll arduous jobs and long work hours have taken on their parents or families of origin. They have witnessed adults in their lives laid off from companies after years of faithful service. Entering the workforce during an economic recession, many of them have seen organizations make deep cuts, eliminating many jobs. This has been as true of the church as it has been of corporations. As a result, dedication to the company, organization, or church rarely outweighs dedication to one’s family. For Millennials, life comes before work (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). Family is part of life viewed as more important than a job or career.

For those who are married, decisions regarding one’s church job are often contingent upon how ministry is affecting one’s spouse. When the spouse is happy, engaged, or supportive, retention in a ministry role can be much easier. One participant described how her church helped make the families of staff members feel engaged. “A lot of the pastors’ wives and their kids stop by. When a pastor’s wife and kids come by, we usually drop everything and chat for a while...when people come in they are the

priority.” Jon described the value of a supportive spouse in ministry. “I am blessed with an amazing wife...she’s loving, she’s caring, she fills in the details I sometimes miss, which is what you want in a spouse.” He explained she is an excellent asset to the ministry and views herself as a pastor as well. “She sees her role as vital and she sees herself as vital to the church...she’s so willing to serve and to help and that’s where the good combination for ministry is.” Randy explained,

When I was single, I would work 80-100 hours a week and I would love every minute of it...in the time I have now, with my wife being so involved in the youth ministry, that’s way more of a benefit than me being able to work a few extra hours because she gives me the connection to those girls in our youth group I never would have had, so it’s a very good trade off.

He also commented ministry is much easier when one’s spouse and family are involved and supportive, which was not always the experience of many of his peers.

When ministry conflicts with a spouse’s satisfaction, desires, or goals, retention becomes much more difficult. Two of the seven participants who left their ministry positions did so to allow spouses to pursue educational or career opportunities. In both cases, the young minister reported satisfaction in the ministry role prior to leaving. In other cases, dynamics at the church created a negative experience for the spouse. One participant reported a number of factors that made it difficult for his spouse. Demands on his time made it impossible to make plans in their free time. Furthermore, his wife received unrealistic expectations. He explained the paradigm of the pastors was based in the fact they were both on staff full time, “so they’re always at the church doing things and they’re unfortunately very much like a typical pastoral family where the church comes before family, or before a lot of things.” He remembered feeling at times like his pastors should be at home with their own family. He explained if he had been single, “I

would have felt more the tension of toughing it out...it was more important for me to get my wife out of that situation than for me to stay there.”

Sam echoed the sentiment of many participants regarding family. “I learned you protect your relationship, your family time; that always takes precedence over ministry...that hasn’t been something we’ve struggled with because from the get-go we wanted to protect that.” Nonetheless, he explained the dysfunction at their first church had taken a toll on his wife. Now they are no longer there, “a lot of stuff is healing inside of her, and a lot of passions she had that died are igniting again and so, it’s really, really good.” He described part of the difficulty in his first ministry role was “working for a leader that didn’t have a great healthy home life.” That reaffirmed the importance of prioritizing family. “The healthy family dynamics in the pastors...overflows into the healthy church staff...if you have a healthy home life, it does nothing but help relationships in your churches, on staffs at churches.”

Family and relationships play a significant role in the satisfaction of single young adults in ministry. It may be even more important for time with family and friends to be encouraged with those who do not have the demands of a spouse or children to dictate work life balance. The words of one participant illustrate this well. “I think doing it single was another big hard thing. I went home and didn’t have anyone to talk to about it. I went home and things just brewed inside.” Pastors can play an important role in encouraging important friendships for young staff members in new ministry roles. Carly explained, “For the first year, your relationships are a mile wide and inch deep, there are so many people.” She described her pastor saying, “Let me help you in developing deep relationships because I know people who will want to go deep with you, but they are not

going to be life-giving to you. So, he really helped me a lot.” Crystal explained how her pastor really encouraged her to spend time with important friends when the church was going through a difficult time. This type of encouragement can help the young staff member navigate the challenges of ministry life.

Young staff members also benefited from connections to families at the church or having time and freedom to visit or invest in relationships with their family of origin. Crystal described the connection with her pastor’s family. “I spend a lot of time with their family and I’m just kind of part of the family and that’s huge for him to have staff members as part of his family.” Carly explained the flexibility she experienced. “When I need to take a day off, I get a day off...especially since I am single and living far away from my family, for every Thanksgiving and every Christmas, I’ve been allowed to go home.” She clarified the impact her pastor’s approach has on staff retention. “He wants people to stay for the long haul, so he treats people in a way they want to stay. If you keep them from their family they are going to burn out.” Dana indicated the importance of investing in family relationships. She said if you are in ministry and “don’t have good relationships with your family, then you shouldn’t be focusing on relationships with other people...it’s ironic so many people are in church leadership and their relationship with their actual family is secondary to their church family.” Millennials understand the importance and benefits of maintaining strong relationships with their families.

Desiring and Practicing Church as Family

The value Millennials place on their families of origin, personal family units, and deep familial-type relationships carries over into their vision for the church. They desire to be part of churches that not only embrace and empower families, but also behave and

function like a healthy family. In many instances, this vision of the church as a family collides with an existing practice of church as a business. As a new generation steps into leadership in many American churches, a shift in the fundamental functioning of the church may be in order as it struggles to respond to a changing culture.

As Millennials enter leadership of church cultures defined largely by Boomer values, it is important to remember what factors are at play. Kimball (2007) explained Christianity was born as a faith or religion and as it moved through history. At times Christianity took on characteristics of a philosophy in Greece, a legal system in Rome and a culture in Europe (Kimball, 2007). Arriving in America, Christianity took on many characteristics of big business. Boomer sensibilities have often reinforced this business model of conducting church (Roof, 1993). Kimball (2003) explained by the 1980s not only did titles and positions change within hierarchical church structures to resemble those in the business world; church leaders began applying business principles, language and metaphors to the church. “Furthermore, similar to the business world, the modern church often counts the three B’s (buildings, budgets, and bodies) as criteria for measuring success” (p. 15). Kimball (2003) also argued in adding the words excellence and relevance to church value statements, the focus of church leaders naturally shifted to quality of music, sound system, and bulletins.

In many instances, the younger generation is responding not simply to what may be important business-like aspects of the church, but rather the valuing of the corporation of the church over its people. Haas (2008) termed this idea “corporate subservience.” He defined the principle of corporate subservience, “the moment the corporation becomes equal to (or greater than) the spiritual body in terms of focus, or energy that is the

moment the church begins to die” (p. 25). He explained the corporation of the church, for example programs or buildings, should serve the spiritual body or people of the church.

The moment the people become essential in maintaining the corporation of the church and decisions reflect what is best for the corporation, the church has become subservient to the corporate aspects of its functioning (Haas, 2008). “For example, many churches attempt to build facilities or hire staff they cannot yet afford. As a result, their mortgage payments become a stranglehold on their church income. Thus, they spend all of their time...trying to squeeze every last dollar out of God’s people” (Haas, 2008, p. 25). One participant explained what this looked like at her church with her pastor. “It was all money oriented...after church, I’d be finishing stuff up in the office, and I’d be like, that was a great sermon...I’d say something about the service. He’s like, yeah, what was the offering. First question.” She described feeling as though the pastor was in denial. “The truth was, we couldn’t pay the gas bill, we couldn’t pay the electric bill, and we couldn’t pay our mortgage. We refinanced.” She reported feeling like these situations represented irresponsibility on the part of the pastor and church leaders.

Young leaders do not deny the value of some corporate or business aspects of the local church. However, they do respond strongly to those aspects of church taking precedence over the needs of people. In the following section, I will discuss how Millennials in ministry understand and respond to aspects of church that possess a business-like quality. I will then look at the emerging trend of Millennials desiring church as a family and how this interacts with current church philosophies and practices.

Experiencing Church as Business

Entering the workforce during an economic recession, Millennials are well aware of the financial challenges facing local churches. Many have experienced staff and budget cuts within their first ministry position. How churches decide to allocate resources communicates the values of the church to these young leaders. One participant explained the main priority of the church where he served was the weekend service. “It was even described in that way, that during this tough time...we’re just going to focus on the weekend service and we have to cut something so things are going to get cut outside of the weekend service.” Although acknowledging the excellence of the programming, he explained, “It was not a problem to spend several thousand dollars on a weekend service for a prop they were going to use one time.” Job cuts at the church communicated the value of programming over people or business over family.

Kimball’s three “Bs” of business—budgets, buildings, and bodies—that so often define current philosophies of church ministry, fail to capture the heart of Millennials. One participant explained, “When we did the Wednesday night classes...the success of it was measured by how many people showed up to the event.” His frustration arose out of a differing view on success. He believed the true measure of success should be transformation in people’s lives, creating relationships and a support network, and empowering everyone in the church to reach and encourage even more people.

Another participant described the counting of bodies at his church. At weekly staff meetings, the whole staff would go through a member roster to count exactly how many people had attended the past weekend. He explained the purpose of this was “to make sure our numbers were good. Make sure our numbers were right.” Even though

someone counted on Sundays, they reviewed the list “to bolster the numbers we had counted. So, if while we were counting someone was in the children’s ministry or someone was going to the bathroom or something, this would make sure our numbers were as good as possible.” He did not know of any purpose for this other than for the pastors and board to know the numbers.

When churches conduct business in ways that conflict with the young leader’s values, it can produce frustration and, at times, affect job retention. One area where this can occur is in how money is spent. One participant explained,

So, there was a disconnect in the resources...it was all about show...I mean we dropped fifteen grand to go and get some lights and...I was stirred up when I heard that, even though I knew it was cool and I was a tech guy and I loved to play with that stuff. As long as its strategic and its fitting in somewhere where the other resources are being used wisely, I can stomach that kind of a purchase, but...I always felt like we just got done doing the best thing ever and we got to start over and I’m like, whoa, when am I going to get to be a pastor? So, that’s where I felt we just didn’t put our eggs in the right baskets.

Other participants also expressed frustration with the amount of money spent on expensive technology and facilities. Jesse asked, “Is it wrong to have nice couches and nice whatever...there were just specific times when I wasn’t always sure we were...being the best stewards of the money people sacrificed for, people worked overtime for, people trusted God” to give to the church. One participant explained a major technology purchase at his church was “the biggest thing that kind of pushed me over the edge and really kind of started the process of us feeling like I don’t think we can support this vision.” He could not justify the expense in light of other values. “It looks so cool, but we spent how much money to install this...when there are missionaries we could maybe give a little more to...that’s money we could give to a homeless shelter.” Millennials want to see financial investments that reflect their values.

As a generation, Millennials have experienced rapid advances in media and technology, and yet they can recognize its limitations. They seem unconvinced bigger and better services and nicer facilities will meet the real needs of people. A desire for simpler, more intimate forms of ministry is emerging. Jesse described how he wanted “to run our events through the small groups because that would take a lot of pressure off of us, coming up with events, spending money, going into the budget to do these events, when really students are fine with having a spaghetti dinner and watching a movie” together at a leader’s house. His leader denied this request and he was required to plan a large-scale event instead.

Not only are young ministers frustrated in witnessing what they deem exorbitant spending, some also hesitate to ask for money. In cases where fundraising was required, they expressed hesitation. There was a discomfort in asking for money from people. Levi reported starting a new ministry. “Financially there wasn’t anything there...there was no budget, so I had to raise budget. I am an awful fundraiser. I hate asking people for money.” As a result, he ran the ministry without a budget. Sam expressed similar hesitations. “I hate fundraisers. I don’t want to do a fundraiser and ask people for money for youth ministry.” While they appreciate the need for money, they are hesitant to connect the collection of money to their ministry efforts.

Sometimes the business culture of churches today is subtle, other times it is overt, yet it seldom goes unrecognized by young leaders. One participant described a long-time staff member at his church saying, “We’re going to run it like a business.” He acknowledged that to “a certain extent you do have to run it like a business because if you don’t have money to pay the rent you don’t have a church, so there was definitely a

business side of the church and it wasn't something that was hidden." He explained his leaders defining success as whatever would keep the doors open. This hinted the importance of facilities over the needs of people.

The aversion of Millennials to business principles in the church carries over into leadership roles. They usually want the role of a pastor to resemble that of a shepherd rather than a businessperson. One participant shared, "I wasn't questioning the spiritual role of the pastor, I was questioning the institution's implementation of that role, and it felt like a business." He expressed his strong aversion to this, "I'm like, you want to be a business leader, go make some money, but don't screw up God's church." He acknowledged business is valuable, and "we can take some cues from that and not call it ungodly, but we have to be very, very, very careful." Leaders and churches seeking to empower and retain young staff members need to recognize corporate subservience and business models of church governance may fail to motivate, energize, or retain Millennials in ministry positions. The following section reveals data illustrating the desire of participants for the church to function relationally, more like a family.

Desiring Church as Family

Dana echoed the sentiment of many when she said, "We use that term church family so loosely, but I think if...our churches functioned like families, then they would be so much more healthy and effective and so I just want to be a part of churches that look like families." In talking about church, Millennials often define church as people, relationships or family juxtaposed against the idea of church as programs, processes, or business. The emerging generation is unlikely to remain satisfied with a church culture that continues to function largely as business. As a result, understanding how churches

can begin to adapt to current needs in their practices is important. In this section, I explain a theory of church as family as represented by participants in this study.

Perhaps the words of one participant in contrasting his perspective with that of his pastor best represents the differing approaches to church that exist in our culture today.

I know for him things are just black and white, but for me, there's just a lot of gray, and there's a lot of personal judgment and personal taste and personal conviction...for him, everything is black and white and for me, it's just not.

Growing up in an increasingly postmodern culture, many young adults do not see the world structured and defined to the same extent as adults influenced primarily by modernism perceive it. While this definitely presents some dangers for the younger generation, it also holds some great potential. Millennials tend to be more willing to embrace the uncertainty and imperfection a family model of church accepts and most business models reject. One participant described her church, "They focus on the people and not the processes and so, everything is messy...but, people's lives are being changed. I mean, if you go into our building right now, things are messy and crazy." The messiness is acceptable not only in the building, but in people's lives.

In a family, individuals often see one another's weaknesses, struggles, and pain. Millennials desire greater authenticity from their leaders and pastors, a level of intimacy that allows for a sense of family. One participant said, "I feel like my pastor was so structured, he couldn't be in front and behind that pulpit without being structured. He couldn't communicate relationally, he couldn't tell a story of his own life." Dana explained her education prepared her for traditional ministry, not for a relational church. "I know how to preach a sermon...but I don't feel like that is intimate at all...nobody

really told me the way you disciple people is you personally grow with Jesus and then you let people see that growth.”

In discussing their philosophies of ministry, Millennials consistently reiterated the concepts of authenticity, intimacy, and safety characteristic of healthy families. Jesse explained, “We’re going to have fun, we’re going to laugh, we’re going to cry together...this youth ministry will be a family. So, part of my vision is just bringing students where...they can be themselves.” Levi described, “I always strive for family. When I lead a small group...I always try to strive for family and that is not obviously a perfect group of people, but I think it’s valuable and I think it’s worth it.” He defined what this looks like. “With that would be safety, I think it would be accountability...it would be loving, but also stretching...and I think it needs to be fun...if it’s all business all the time...I wouldn’t find it as valuable.”

Jesse and Levi represented the views of many of their peers when they emphasized the importance of relationships in ministry. Levi explained ministry “could be the place where you have some of your deepest relationships...I value family and I think your youth pastor needs to be cool...but also safe enough and family enough where you can bring those questions.” Jesse reiterated, “I know I’m very much a shepherd and relationships are a big part of the youth ministry.” He reaffirmed the importance of people over programs. “It’s not going to be an event driven type youth ministry, it will be a lot more about relationships. Maybe it won’t always be the coolest event...but, it’s going to be fun, and we’re going to build memories together.”

For some young adults entering ministry, working through their philosophy of ministry is a process. Balancing conflicting priorities and making choices to invest time

and resources in people or programs presents challenges. Carly explained her pastor's philosophy, "His motto always is people first. We don't run programs...we're about blessing people...I expect you to do a good job at what you do, but people come first." Nonetheless, the pressure to perform is overwhelming. She described making a list of priorities and acknowledging a 12-foot backdrop was not going to lead people to Christ. "The more you put people first...they respond both to love and relationship. I'm still going to put the time into it, but my lessons are not as bells and whistles as when I started, because...it doesn't really matter much" (Carly).

The appeal of a church that builds relationships and behaves as family is strong for young people today. One participant described how she decided to accept a position at her church. "They had all the staff over for a meal so I could see how I gelled with them and that's when I was like, okay, because I saw how they interacted and they were like a family." In the same way, a church that does not have family elements will struggle to satisfy and retain young adults. One participant described his church. "The finances of our church are impeccable. It's organized very well. But, that doesn't make a church...it was a church that felt like a church, not like a family, nothing was relational, nothing had a personal touch to it."

Sanders summed up the perspective of many young adults in America today regarding the church.

Church to me is religion and it is a set of rules and a structure and a tradition...how things function, like how it all should work is the church, to me. And a family is little bit more...it's relational, it's built on trust, and built on love, and built on experiences, and built on what you've learned and the relationship you have with those people and with the Lord. It's far more journey oriented than strict rules and systems and guidelines and all of these things I feel like people think church is. Not that church isn't those things, you need guidelines and you need structure and you need things like that, but I want to go to a church and be a

part of a church that focuses more on the relationship aspect and helping people right where they are, not conforming them to this perfect little thing and not worried so much about how they're going to transform, but that they're transforming. And that's what's important to me.

Churches full of the structure, regulations, and pressures inherent in a business model will struggle to draw young adults. Many Millennials in ministry roles echo the perspective of Sanders when he said, "So, that's the difference for me, I would have tried to focus the church to be more of a family."

Viewing the church as relationships or family may differ from models where church is more about programs or business. However, the perspectives of young adults can prove valuable in helping churches evaluate their vision for the future. Parks (1986) believed, "It is unfortunate when the energy of the young adult life is simply resisted and feared as counter to culture rather than prized for its potential as prophetic power" (Parks, 1986, p. 97). The questions and ideas of young adulthood can encourage consideration for potentially positive changes. The Millennial approach to church as family represents one area where this consideration of changes in church culture can take place.

Practicing Church as Family

Millennials expressed a desire for church to function more like a family, but what does that actually look like in practice? Repeatedly, participants discussed the importance of small groups, discipleship, mentoring, and community. These aspects of church often facilitate the family dynamic they long to experience and share with their hurting world.

Doing life together. The concept of doing life together surfaced repeatedly in interviews. Individuals experienced this dynamic in various ways. One participant discussed living in the community where her church was located and seeing many of the

same people regularly. “Seeing people every day and getting to know them on a deeper basis... and being known at a deeper level...I have grown in my relationship with God more than I had my entire life.” This depth meant looking at root issues in each other’s lives and asking, “How can I help you and how can you help me...and allowing Jesus to bring healing to those deep parts, like mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.” She explained, “I don’t just want to be a pastor that feeds the mental part of people...I think there are parts of you that can’t be shepherded without deep, deep, doing life together.” Deep relationships and vulnerability provided a sense of connection and encouraged discipleship and growth.

Ester explained, “For me, discipleship is...modeling Christ to other people...letting God’s light shines through the cracks of my brokenness...and allowing you to be strong in Christ in your weakness as well.” She emphasized the importance of doing life together as discipleship because “life continues on when you leave a building, so I would say, going to games and coffee, and making supper and cleaning the house and watching kids...those places are really where discipleship happens.” The conversations arising out of natural settings and situations where people are simply doing life together provided unique opportunities for growth.

Participants described other definitions of “doing life together.” Levi said, it is “being more strategic about connecting people with what they like to do, and if you want to create lasting change, I think helping people interact with the material that is being offered.” He explained, “So you’re talking about X on Sunday morning, then connecting that in your small group and interacting with that material and challenging each other.” He also emphasized the importance of accepting the good and the bad that comes along

with really getting involved in each other's lives. Nick said, "People always say, 'share life,' what does that mean?" He believed it entailed people "actually confessing things and holding each other accountable." He saw this need in the culture around him. "That is our need, we don't know how to do that, we are so isolated and so self-sufficient, we just need to break down sometimes," admitting the areas where help is needed. For participants, these various ways of doing life together represented ways of practicing church as family beyond services inside church walls.

Being and growing in community. Millennials are tired of church where people attend on Sundays and maybe Wednesdays and just listen to someone talking at them (Kimball, 2003, 2007; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). Too often, people's lives continue as usual the rest of the week. They long for true life change and transformation in the people to whom they minister. They also desire to see those individuals empowered to continue ministry wherever they go throughout the week, rather than relying on pastors to do the bulk of ministry. For many, small groups and intentional community where discipleship and mentoring are occurring is a way to help facilitate this growth and empowerment of the entire body of believers.

One participant explained what happens in small groups at her church. "They revolve around simply getting together and talking about the 'kairos' moments people have each week, because we believe God is speaking to us continually and every week God is doing something new in you." Without intentional community, however, "we don't take time to process through or really evaluate those...they don't affect our whole lives."

Participants often felt the tension between time and energy invested in large group settings or the more traditional church service setting versus investment in small groups or personal mentoring and discipleship. Nick explained, from “my experience growing up...I realized how much...I learned just in proximity to great people.” In talking about ministry at his church, he said, “I would have gone a more organic route...if it was just me starting this thing off, if I didn’t have to work within a system already designed, I mean I would have started with small groups.” He acknowledged, “There is an absolute need for the big, the large group, and there’s an absolute need for small group and the mixture of that is dependent upon a lot of variables.”

Another participant explained, “We’ve shifted to much more of a small-group focus for the youth ministry.” He related the benefits of this model.

We deal with issues in the small groups and I think that’s probably the thing the kids look forward to the most every week, is spending time in their small group because they really build tight relationships there and I think when visitors come in, they are shocked at what a community it is and everybody is longing for that.

In his ministry, they are seeking a balance between the large group and small group components. “That’s really been a change from a more traditional, what would be more like a Sunday morning service...we still do all that stuff, but it’s a lot more condensed and then we spend time in small groups every single week.”

For some, a strong large group approach to ministry without the supporting family or discipleship component seems irresponsible. Levi echoed the sentiment of others when he commented about strong weekend services without a strong discipleship component. “It is fine to bring them in, but if you don’t have anything for them while they are there, then why even bring them in in the first place, are we really doing them a favor?” Dana explained, “The Bible studies and the great sermons and the choir all play

a part...but I think at the same time it's just missing a huge part because if you don't have intimacy, then it's just so surface.

The difficulties for some Millennials with relying simply on a service to produce growth is those settings are effective in conveying information, but not always in developing intimacy and practical application of the information in one's life. One participant explained,

I think you can gain information without actually growing as a person. So, if you are going to have a discipleship class it is not going to be about giving people information, it is going to be facilitating...their lives and actions changing. So, information can be part of that, but information has to be put into some sort of practice...discipleship is people growing, the process of facilitating growth in people and that would probably happen within the context of relationships. I would define growth as people changing, not people gaining information.

Nick described an approach to ministry, "focusing from the ground up rather than the top down, instead of the old school where we are just going to preach it in you and we are going to get you saved and the Holy Spirit will come and fix it all for you," focusing on personal growth. He argued, "We have to be offering what people need and they don't need to get taught as much as they need to get shown and so...I was just looking at where we spend our time...wondering if that programming was meeting the needs."

Some participants thought larger churches could face greater challenges in creating a sense of community and discipleship. Explaining how she enjoys equipping people by just meeting one on one with them, Kate lamented, "The church could meet in a 7000-person church and you could leave not knowing anybody...for years at a time." She acknowledged, "It's not all about community, but community is important, so you've got to have that. And if I look at my life, the relationships with other Christians are the

things that have kept me on track.” She felt it should not be as difficult as it often is for Christians to find meaningful relationships in their churches.

One participant who served at a large church explained, “I think with the larger church, the main downfall was a lack of community and you could easily get lost in the crowd.” He related, “That’s one of the biggest complaints I heard from people who were in the church and who had maybe attended the church and left. I think even being on staff I could say I sometimes I felt like a bit of a number.” Large churches may struggle even more than small churches to achieve the sense of family so essential to growth and connectedness. While values of family and community are vital to establish within the church, they extend beyond the church walls. The next section explores how these values relate to communities outside of the congregations where Millennials serve.

Relating to Community

Millennials possess a strong sense of responsibility not only to their families, but to their communities. Greenberg (2008) reported high volunteerism and commitment to collective social action among this generation. He explained they are “deeply concerned about the common good. They also believe in social change—and they are ready, even eager, to play their role in making positive changes happen” (pp. 31-32). When young adults take positions in church leadership, they often bring community-minded expectations into the church setting.

Crystal explained how her church believed and practiced the value of their local community.

The vision...is just to see our community saved. In our city, like 6% of people go to church...we want to be a church that is prominent in our community, not just because we have the best show in town, but we want to truly be known as a church that serves our community.

She explained the multiple venues through which the church and staff serve community members and organizations on a regular basis. She enthusiastically told of recognition they had received from prominent members of the community and reported 80% of their church consisted of new converts. Jon described, “We’ve got a very high focus on outreach and community service and different things...we’re serving downtown once a month, we’re serving at a trailer park at least every other month, if not once a month here in the area.” He also described ministries the church was providing to single moms. This model of ministry resonates deeply with Millennials.

Other participants corroborated with this concern for the community around them. Nina explained, “We’ve been talking a lot about just getting outside of the walls of our church and really making an impact with our neighbors and that whole mentality of the church is not about coming here.” Though this represents a shift in thinking for her church and is slow to gain momentum, some are really focusing on finding ways to make a difference. She exclaimed, “I can get on board with that...people on the staff do things where they just use their giftings to really be out in the community, which I love!”

Efforts to serve the community around them really resonated with participants. They expressed frustration when this aspect was lacking. Ester explained her philosophy of ministry differed from the church in the area of community development. “Going into the church...it became very evident...the community was not being reached...the vision for the community was really non-existent.” She described, “When I would talk about things we could do in the community to reach people or reach out it was very clearly said, that is not what our purpose is.”

Millennials are uncomfortable with the growing economic disparities they see, and witnessing these ignored or exacerbated by the church can produce frustration. One participant, in describing efforts his church made to reach out to low-income populations, made the following observations.

So, if you live in a trailer house that is 40 years old, in a trailer park with all these other houses, and you are living paycheck to paycheck and trying to figure out if you are going to be able to pay your light bill this month, to go into this massive building that is beautiful is probably going to make you feel uncomfortable...you are not used to that. And...well, you are definitely not going to tithe to this church because they don't need your money, you're going to come asking, "what can they give to me?"...because they have the money to build this beautiful building and I live in a trailer house. I don't know if I am going to be able to pay my grocery bill this month.

He felt the church's efforts to provide programming to low-income populations in their city were futile because they failed to take the time to understand the perspectives and needs of the people and respond effectively.

Collaboration and acceptance are components of community involvement of great importance to Millennials. Whereas many churches in the past have operated independently of other churches or institutions in their communities, the younger generation, raised on teamwork in schools, believes in the value of seeing these entities work together to improve the common good (Greenberg, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007). Levi described wanting to see more "inclusive type events not just to proselytize, but just bringing people in for the sake of bringing them in, also connecting to other churches in the area...it is a shame there is so little of that." He tried to do some joint events with other youth groups while on staff and believed "that probably would have continued and hopefully on a bigger scale if I had stayed...so I tried to do some of that and maybe that just wasn't...a value of the church."

Nick described his vision for the church. “There are a couple of huge things on my heart. One of them is unity. I honestly don’t know how that’s going to happen. That’s going to have to be a work of the Lord.” His perspectives echo the frustration of a younger generation with the politics and disunity among churches and denominations that reflect poorly on the church. “If we are at all going to stay alive as America, we have to show America Christians are Christians, not bloodthirsty bigots. The church in America will survive if we claim the name of Christ first.” The culture of tolerance is also evident in his response. “The only way that is going to happen is...the leaders of our church, coming together and saying, ‘I am okay with being different, because here are the four things we unite on,’ and then supporting one another in love” (Nick). Nick felt strongly the necessity of collaboration and unity among churches and denominations. “If that doesn’t happen...I am saying because that is the backbone, that is the backbone of the church, it has to happen.”

In the church setting, the Millennial passion for their communities accompanies a sense of responsibility to model the love and unity of Christ to the world. Churches that fail to acknowledge and empower this heart in Millennials may find it difficult to retain them. Carolyn Martin explained, “I’ve seen organizations whose contributions to the local community and opportunities for employee volunteerism are more attractive to Gen Yers than those who offer more money but less involvement” (Fields et al., 2008, p. 34). While Millennials greatly desire connectedness to family and community, these needs reflect a deeper value of meaningful relationships, especially with mentors and leaders.

Expecting Relational Leadership

Leaders play a significant role in the retention and success of young adults in the workplace. Fields et al. (2008) reported, “I’ve heard Gen Yers complain that their bosses don’t know how to manage them, and they’re so frustrated that they seek opportunities elsewhere” (p. 35). As reflected throughout the experiences presented in this study, Millennials desire and expect relational leadership from their senior pastors and other leaders. In the next chapter, I analyze more fully the needs of Millennials in regards to leadership, but it is worth noting briefly here as a value for young adults serving in the church.

A couple of representative perspectives will help reiterate the importance of relational leadership. Jon explained, “I know this guy believes in me...I’ve got a pastor that supports me and cares about me. And that...more than anything has probably helped me to stay and continue. Because I’ve had their trust and I’ve trusted them.” Talking about her pastors, Dana described, “I’ve just never met anybody like them, and never had a relationship like I’ve had with them and it’s changed who I am and the way I live and the way I view things.” In contrast, those who felt misunderstood, unsupported, disregarded, or disempowered by their leaders expressed frustration and discontent in their positions. Relational leadership can help ease the pain of generational differences by facilitating effective communication and maximizing the perspectives of all parties.

Summary

The findings discussed in this chapter reveal a different approach to ministry among the Millennials interviewed than what some churches practice today. Rather than concern over buildings, numbers of attendees, or quality programs, participants

emphasized the importance of personal relationships, family, and community. A grounded theory of church as family rather than church as business emerged from the data. For young adults in this study, working at a church that embraced their values proved important to job satisfaction and retention.

Engagement with and understanding of Millennials by pastors and church leaders can prove beneficial in their ministry experience and effectiveness. In this study, the two participants who left ministry positions for other job opportunities both went to ministry positions elsewhere. Job opportunities for the young minister outside of a church did not affect retention in ministry. Rather, satisfaction with the values, relationships, and leadership at the church significantly influenced job retention. Of the seven participants who are no longer in ministry, one was laid off in budget cuts, two left for a spouse's job or school, and four left for reasons related to frustrations with the pastor, leadership, or church culture. Of the six participants who remain in their first ministry position, averaging over three years each, all tell stories of their pastors practicing elements of servant leadership. In the next chapter, I analyze principles of servant leadership and how they reflect the leadership philosophy of Millennials.

CHAPTER SIX: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Millennials constitute an influential generation that is already shifting the way companies and institutions manage and conduct business (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). In the following analysis, I will delineate the leadership theories that encapsulate what young employees, specifically those working in a church setting, need and expect from supervisors and leaders as they enter the workforce. Fields et al. (2008), explained, “Gen Y represents a population of youthful, energetic people who believe that servant leadership is the norm” (p. 51). The principles of servant leadership theories capture the essence of Millennial expectations.

Servant leadership began to emerge as a theory in the 1970s. At that time, “Robert Greenleaf developed a somewhat paradoxical approach to leadership called servant leadership” (Northouse, 2007, p. 348). Since then, many other leadership experts have further defined the concept. “The biggest difference between a servant-leader and a person who wants to lead an organization is the servant-leader’s motive of putting the needs of others before his or her own needs” (Komives et al., 2007). Russell and Stone (2002) conducted a review of the literature on the topic and developed a preliminary theoretical framework depicting servant leadership, with a foundation of identifiable attributes of servant leaders. Participants in this study repeatedly affirmed these attributes. In the following analysis, I use these attributes to examine the perspectives, needs, and desires of Millennials in regards to leadership.

Servant leadership is a highly relational process, as is faith development. Fowler (1981) described, “Faith is a relational enterprise, triadic or covenantal in shape.” He presented a triadic pattern depicting faith.

Along the base line of the triad, we see the two-way flow between the self and others of love, mutual trust and loyalty that make selfhood possible. Above the base line, at the point of the triad, we see a representation of the family's shared center(s) of value and power...the triad, with its depiction of the structure of mutual trusts and loyalties, discloses the essential covenantal pattern of faith as relational (Fowler, 1981, p. 17).

As young adults seek to establish their identity and develop their personal faith, an environment facilitated by servant leaders provides an effective space to maximize growth and encourage success. Millennials in ministry positions are often in a development process themselves. They need positive support systems to maximize their growth in this season. In this chapter, I establish the importance of servant leadership traits in those seeking to lead, empower, and develop young adults in ministry. I also utilize developmental theories to illustrate how servant leadership supports young adult development.

Application of Servant Leadership Attributes and Theories

This section will analyze data regarding Millennials in ministry using Russell and Stone's (2002) list of nine functional servant leader attributes. These attributes are vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment. I also consider Russell and Stone's (2002) eleven accompanying attributes of servant leadership and components of developmental theories as relevant to the discussion of servant leadership and Millennials.

Vision

The first functional attribute identified by Russell and Stone (2002) is vision. They discovered servant leadership differed from management in the leader's ability to identify and communicate a shared vision of the future. Kouzes and Posner (2007) explained, "Exemplary leaders are forward-looking...able to envision the future, to gaze

across the horizon of time and imagine the greater opportunities to come....they are able to develop an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good” (p. 105).

Greenleaf (1997) described the servant leader as being able “to have a sense for the unknowable and be able to foresee the unforeseeable” (p. 22). Unfortunately, “less than one out of every ten senior pastors can articulate the vision for the ministry he or she leads” (Barna, 2001, p. 18). Composing a vision requires attentiveness on the part of the leader to those he or she is working with as well as patterns and the natural order of things in the world around him or her. Yet, imagining this vision is not the end. Communication of vision to others and empowering them to share in it is essential.

In defining leadership, one of the participants, Kris said, “It’s ordering, it’s delegating, and it’s being willing to recognize your vision and stick to it...and realizing the vision is bigger than just one person...I think is big.” He also emphasized the importance of hiring individuals whose vision lines up with that of the leader. “I think that is huge...making sure someone agrees with the vision of your church before you hire them...that they understand what it is you are trying to do...and if their own way of doing ministry lines up with that.”

Another participant discussed how she valued contributing to the vision process at her church. “When I first came in, they were going through our mission statement...reworking it, which was good for me coming in new I was able to be a part of all those conversations.” She described really advocating for certain ideas to be included. When her ideas received consideration, she was able to buy into the vision and take ownership. She explained, “It wasn’t just about a statement, but it was about what are we

actually doing and who do we believe we are supposed to be and what does it take to get there?”

Two accompanying attributes to vision are competence and credibility. These both suffer in the leader-follower relationship when the leader disregards the stated vision. Sam explained, “We always talk about...having vision and I think every pastor has a vision, but not every pastor is good at actualizing it and working to make it happen and making sure that...we’re doing this.” His church had a stated vision, but nothing changed to propel that vision forward. He differentiated, “there’s vision and then there’s diligence to make that vision a reality.” Sanders echoed similar frustrations. He described the vision at his church as great, but admitted, “They were not accomplishing it in the slightest... things weren’t being done with excellence, or with wholeheartedness or full commitment, so they weren’t accomplishing anything for our vision.”

Young adults want a meaningful work experience. When there is a vision and they can contribute to its construction and implementation, this need feels addressed. Leaders who fail to encourage and activate a shared vision lose credibility and may appear dishonest and undependable to young followers.

Honesty and Integrity

Honesty and integrity are similar. Both relate to being trustworthy, but honesty is most closely associated with telling the truth. Kouzes and Posner (1993) reported, “In virtually every survey we conducted, honesty was selected more often than any other leadership characteristic. Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership” (p. 14).

Participants expressed appreciation for leaders who were willing to tell them the truth,

even when it was difficult to hear. Followers welcomed honesty when it came from leaders who had demonstrated care and concern for those they led.

Young leaders benefit greatly from honest feedback. Carly explained her pastor's honest approach to leadership. He said, "If I ever have a problem with something you do, I'm going to tell you immediately...so you never have to worry I'm upset with you, or I'm disapproving of something, because if I am, then I'll tell you." She described relief associated with not having to wonder where she stood with her boss. Nina related a similar need. After attending a training session about candor and honesty, her pastor "asked if we need more feedback from him and I told him, yes...if I don't hear what you are thinking, I automatically go negative. If I don't get any words from him, I automatically think I've done something wrong." Kris explained his leaders would give him constructive feedback after sermons and programs. "There were a couple of moments...where I messed up and they let me know about it, but it was done out of love and that made all the difference" (Kris). As important as honesty is to Millennials, it transcends culture and generations. It is essential in servant leadership. "No matter the country, the benefits of honesty cannot be overstated. Employees must know where they stand—as they only can with someone who is honest with them" (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, p. 15).

Integrity is closely related to ethics which "has to do with what leaders do and who leaders are...the choices leaders make and how they respond in any given circumstance are informed and directed by their ethics" (Northouse, 2007, p. 342). Adhering to an embraced moral code can prove challenging to the young adult whose personal faith is still developing. Parks (1986) explained, "Mature adult faith composes

meaning in a self-conscious engagement in the repeated shipwreck and repatterning of one's perceptions of the fabric of life, the dynamic shifting of the assumed connections" in the world around them (p. 27). Many young adults, while serving in leadership positions at churches, experience the "shipwreck and repatterning" (Parks, 1986) process that will eventually allow them to act with integrity, but may make them appear inconsistent and unreliable in their perspectives and responses for a season. Honesty, patience, and support from trusted leaders and mentors in their lives can help encourage this process of growth and maturity in their lives.

Trust

As discussed in chapter three, trust plays a significant role in the relationship of Millennials with their leaders. Kouzes and Posner (1993) related trust is one of the most important attributes of credibility in a leader. They presented a credibility check that "can reliably be simplified to just one question: 'Do I trust this person?'" (p.24); the following example reiterates the importance of trust. In responding to some differences when working with her pastor, Dana asked herself,

Dana, do you trust them, do you trust I [God] am working through them, do you trust I am blessing them, do you trust even though you're gift is mercy so you see the things that are wrong? Is it okay if that is always there, if you don't have to fix those things, if they are not doing something to focus on those things right now, do you trust they are being obedient to me and you can follow them?

She discovered she could indeed trust them, was able to continue serving with them, and learned a lot from them in the process about ministry and leadership.

Trust can play a pivotal role in the composition of meaning in the life of a young adult. Piaget's cognitive structural theory focused on "how people think, reason, and make meaning of their experiences" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 41). Two key concepts in his

development model are assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation, information from the world around us is absorbed into existing structures of knowing. In accommodation, present structures must adjust to make sense of information received. The balancing of these dynamics dictates stages in cognitive development. “Piaget described development as an evolving movement from equilibrium through disequilibrium toward a new equilibrium” (Parks, 1986, p. 35). Parks explained (1986), “a potential strength of the Piagetian paradigm is its conviction that human becoming absolutely depends upon the quality of the interaction between the person and his or her environment. The human being does not compose meaning all alone” (p.61). Networks of belonging and communities around the young adult can factor in to their developing worldviews. Trusted adults and mentors contribute to this process significantly. A lack of trust in leaders affects not only work experience, but also potentially the young adult’s growth and development.

Service

Greenleaf (1977) explained, “The servant-leader is servant first...it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first” (p. 13). In this approach, the leader and his or her ambitions are secondary and the needs and growth of followers take priority.

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (Greenleaf, 1981, p. 14)

Several participants indicated the growth in their lives when leaders took the time to make them a priority and invest into their lives. The pastors who were servant leaders

had opportunities to instill wisdom, confront attitudes, and encourage servant hood in those they led. One participant explained, “Every situation is a learning process...I feel like I’m a little plant and they just constantly help prune me and water the soil and help me grow.” She described the impact of her pastors’ care for her. “As I am that baby plant...I’ll grow stronger until I’m able to go to a place where I won’t get trampled by other aspects of ministry because they’ve just really...deposited so much into me.

Russell and Stone (2002) indicated stewardship as an accompanying attribute to service. As stewards of the organizations and people they lead, leaders tend to manage the affairs and resources of others. Stewardship resonated with participants, especially in regards to how churches spend money and manage resources, as was discussed in chapter four. Greenleaf (1981) explained another test of servant leadership is “the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?” (p. 14). Social justice is a significant concern to this generation. Howe and Strauss (2007) predicted, “As social activism among Millennials grows in cohesion and effectiveness, it will increasingly target issues of class and income rather than gender or race” (p. 123). Stewardship may become more and more important in garnering the respect of Millennials.

As reviewed by Russell and Stone (2002), service and stewardship carry with them a moral imperative that requires a choice between self and others. As in some other aspects of their lives, when it comes to service and social justice, Millennials sometimes demonstrate contradictory values. They seem to span several of Kohlberg’s moral development stages simultaneously in how they view and practice service and stewardship. The expectations of Millennials for social justice often reflect stage four or

five thinking. In stage four, “individuals view the social system as made up of a consistent set of rules and procedures applying equally to all people” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 104). Stage five is when “laws and social systems are evaluated based on the extent to which they promote fundamental human rights and values” (p. 104). A discomfort with inequality and injustice reflects this level thinking.

While Millennials feel strongly about the moral imperative of service and stewardship, the culture many of them experienced growing up did not teach them well about sacrificing self for the sake of others. In this regard, they often reflect more of Kohlberg’s stage two of moral development. “Individuals at the second stage in the pre-conventional level follow rules if it is in their interest to do so...they maintain a pragmatic perspective, that of ensuring satisfaction of their own needs and wants, while minimizing the possibility of negative consequences to themselves” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 103-104). Twenge and Campbell (2010) discussed the rampant sense of entitlement and narcissism in America today. They reported, “In data from 37,000 college students, narcissistic personality traits rose just as fast as obesity from the 1980s to the present” (p. 2). Elmore (2010) explained while Millennials want to make a difference, “they just don’t have what it takes to accomplish their lofty dreams. When the work becomes difficult, they change their minds and move on to something else. The new term for them is ‘slacktivists’—they are both slackers and activists” (p.27). While this was not true of all the participants in this study, Millennials in general focus largely on what is best for them.

Millennials are in desperate need of servant leaders in their lives, individuals who are willing to overlook their current weaknesses, realize they are still developing, and

earn the trust needed to challenge and encourage them. Cognitive conflict is what helps propel moral development (Evans et al., 2010, p. 103). Daloz et al. (1997) identify two patterns important to developing responsible young adults who can lead in our current, complex world. These two patterns are trustworthy and transformational relationships...and hospitable spaces within which those relationships may develop and new forms of agency be practiced” (pp. 53-54). Leaders who are willing to serve young adults by challenging and encouraging them and creating safe places for them to wrestle with difficult questions about their own perspectives and the world around them, will have an opportunity to model important traits and help them develop into more competent, thoughtful, responsible leaders.

Modeling

Servant leaders embody the values, attitudes, and behaviors they request of others. In a culture that embraces *in loco parentis*, modeling provides a valued and longed for opportunity for young adults to learn from those who have more experience. Often modeling can take the form of mentoring. Daloz et al. (1996) explained, “People tend to be drawn to mentors who know and have experienced something that they sense they need to learn” (p. 45). They respect those adults and leaders who are consistent in modeling the ideas they espouse.

Although servant leaders need to articulate a clear vision, “the informal messages are the more powerful teaching and coaching mechanism” (Schein, 2004, p. 258). Informal messages are those conveyed through the actions of the leader. Kouzes and Posner (2007) explained, “Leaders’ deeds are far more important than their words when one wants to determine how serious leaders really are about what they say. Words and deeds must be consistent” (p. 16).

Carly shared a story of her pastor demonstrating servant leadership through modeling. “When he interviewed me, he said, Carly, you are so talented, you could go anywhere in the world, but I’m not looking for someone talented...I’m looking for someone with a pastor’s heart...I’m looking for a servant.” His vision of loving people and empowering their visions and passions appealed to her. She saw her pastor model for her in practical ways his vision of servant leadership and support of other people’s ministries. While working there, unforeseen circumstances forced her unexpectedly to take a month off of work. She described the response of her pastor. “That month I was gone, he led my classes himself...he said, I wanted to make sure it wasn’t a month of just filler movies. He prepared lessons and he preached for me” using the topics she had already prepared. Experiencing ministry under her pastor’s vision and mentoring, she explained, “Working here has set me in ministry for my whole life.” This story represents the power of modeling in the development and formation of future leaders.

Pioneering

Pioneering is the process of initiating or participating in change, taking risks, and seeking better ways of doing things. Kouzes and Posner (2007) explained, “All leaders challenge the process. Leaders venture out...leaders are pioneers. They are willing to step out into the unknown. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve” (p. 18). Unfortunately, the process of change can be difficult for churches. Barna (2001) reported, “Churches are among the most predictable subjects on which a researcher can focus. They change slowly—when they change at all—and they are famous for creating and retaining traditions for long periods of time” (p. 63). Participants

repeatedly expressed a desire and need for change and innovation when discussing leadership and ministry in the churches where they served.

Nick represented the perspective of many young leaders when he stated, “You’ve got to be willing to change!” He explained for most Millennials, “Everything in our lives has changed every four years.” His theory on change revealed the perspective of the emerging generation.

I have this theory...that our society is going to have to develop...no other people in the history of humanity have had to change like we’re going to have to change. We are going to have to be able to accept change repeatedly every decade, just think about ten years ago...how much has changed since then? I’m going to get to the age 50 and I’m going to have to be changing, I’m going to get to age 60 and I’m going to have to change...if the church can be committed to the vision and not how it gets done, so the pastor can hold loosely to the how, but provides the vision, that’s key. Because sacred cows are going die quicker and quicker, I mean, they’re going to become older quicker and quicker in our society.

Their place in history provides Millennials an agility and understanding that can help churches pioneer innovative ministry methods in a changing world.

Some participants had positive experiences with implementing change in their churches. Carly explained, “I had to change a lot of stuff right away...people can’t handle quick change and so I tried to change as little as possible. I explained to people why I was changing it...thankfully, a lot of people were excited.” It helped that she received the support of her pastor. “Because Pastor trusted me, and they trusted him, people did not question me in the things that I did.”

Crystal explained the flexible climate at her church that allowed for change. The “culture of a church plant is...let’s try something, and if it doesn’t work, let’s toss it and try something else.” She described how effectiveness over tradition allowed change to take place. “Nothing’s sacred. Anything can change at any point. If it means it’s going

to make things more effective, if more people are going to come to Christ, then let's do it.”

Other participants experienced frustration when it came to change in their churches. Ester explained her pastor's response to making changes was evident even in his body language. “When we would be in conversations where I would suggest a certain way of doing something or changing something...he would just sit up really straight and kind of push his chair back from the desk a little bit.” Sam explained a similar response. “You'd come up with a new idea, like, hey why don't we try this? And you'd get the vibe, we just don't do that, we haven't done that...and so then you're like, right, why not?” He expressed frustration with this mentality, “Obviously something needs to change, if nothing has changed in the last 10-15 years.”

Another participant explained the difficulties his pastor experienced when change occurred at their church. “We were trying to do a lot of new things and it was just too hard for him to change...but, what he's done for so long wasn't working anymore...it wasn't bringing in people that wanted to stay.” He described his efforts and corresponding burnout in trying to implement change. “I wanted to make things as young and contemporary as possible because I was told that's why I was brought there and I just always hit walls...and I just got very sick of fighting and I was exhausted.” He explained eventually a lot of people left the church. “I think people...left because they were tired of waiting for something to happen at that church and I totally understood.”

Sam's reflections illustrate the need Millennials have for leaders who possess the courage to engage in change as the world is rapidly evolving. He expressed appreciation in being at a church “where change is normal and they expect it because we're not

comfortable with where we're at right now, we always want to keep advancing." Many Millennials long for this type of servant leadership.

Appreciation of Others

Participants repeatedly expressed the importance of appreciation and feedback from one's leader. Characteristics in the life of a servant leader that communicate appreciation include being accessible, listening, encouraging, and knowing people personally (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Russell & Stone, 2002). In chapter three, I discussed the significance of accessibility, support and a personal relationship when leading Millennials. Leaders who exhibit these characteristics gain the respect of their followers.

Ester explained, "I think a good leader listens and hears what might not even be said, is able to be an active listener and able to hear through the conversation what's going on deeper in somebody's life." She recognized the learning potential for the leader who listens. They should "not be so quick to take what's being said personally or as an attack, but as a point of growth or to be able to really help people who are hurting or healing." This explanation of listening corroborates with a beautiful definition given by Greenleaf (1977).

I have a bias about this which suggests only a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening first. When one is a leader, this disposition causes one to be seen as servant first. This suggests a non-servant who wants to be a servant might become a natural servant through a long arduous discipline of learning to listen, a discipline sufficiently sustained that the automatic response to any problem is to listen first. I have seen enough remarkable transformations in people who have been trained to listen to have some confidence in this approach. It is because true listening builds strength in other people. (p.17)

Whereas affirmation from a leader can meet the deep Millennial need for feedback, listening can create a sense of accessibility, trust, and respect for the leader as someone

who seeks to understand and a serve. Young adults who feel understood and supported are empowered to be effective in their own leadership roles.

Empowerment

Komives et al. (2007) describe two dimensions of empowerment. The first is “the sense of self that claims ownership, claims a place in the process, and expects to be involved” (p. 90). For Millennials this often emerges as a desire to see everyone empowered to function in their gifts and talents and to see them taking action. Kate explained, “The Scripture the Lord gave to me...was ‘the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry’ and I believe everyone has a gift...and the Lord wants people who can do those things because they benefit.” Young adults are not afraid of the potential messiness of engaging the entire congregation in ministry. They appreciate leaders who are not afraid of empowering this process of involving everyone, even when it is imperfect!

The second dimension of empowerment is “a set of environmental conditions that promotes the full involvement of participants by reducing the barriers that block the development of individual talent and involvement” (Komives et al., 2007, p. 90). Unfortunately, churches do not always effectively empower their members. “Many churchgoers have no choice but to consume ministry because they are not invited and prepared to do ministry...millions of individuals, many of whom may indeed be gifted as potential leaders...settle for watching rather than engaging in ministry” (Barna, 2001, p. 29). This dynamic is contradictory to the Millennial value of collaboration and teamwork. Churches seeking to engage Millennials must empower everyone to use his or her gifts and abilities. This is an example of how Millennial leadership philosophy may

affect the way churches operate moving forward. The following section explores additional implications of changing perspectives on leadership.

Implications of Leadership Theories

In discussing generational differences, Elmore (2010) explained the approach of Millennials to leadership. Whereas other generations have respected, endured, replaced, or ignored authority figures, Millennials choose theirs. Young adults today approach leaders with a shopping mentality. They assess whether those in authority in their lives deserve their allegiance and commitment. The characteristics Millennials look for in their leaders reflect servant leadership theories and the attributes listed above. Churches and organizations seeking to engage and retain the current generation of young adults will be most effective as they practice relational models of leadership.

Barna (2001) reported, “Most pastors neither see themselves as leaders nor aspire to be leaders...only 12 percent said they have the gift of leadership. In contrast, two-thirds of pastors surveyed said they have the gift of teaching or preaching” (p. 17). Unfortunately, Millennials have a much greater need of servant leaders than they do of good preachers or teachers. Many of them download lessons from favorite teachers onto their mp3 player, or stream live worship and sermons from around the world on their computers. What they long for is the intentional, relational connection to their leaders, mentors and role models. The needs of this generation may dictate changes in how we approach church leadership and ministry preparation. Servant leadership principles resonate with the values, needs, and desires of the emerging generation of leaders. Servant leadership also facilitates an effective space for ongoing development, essential if

Millennials are going to be equipped to lead the church into a complex, ever-changing, and unpredictable future.

Implications of Developmental Theories

As I close this analysis of the experience of Millennials in ministry, I feel deeply moved by the potential, promise, and hope of an emerging generation. At the same time, I wonder about the effects of cohort weaknesses, cultural influences, and societal complexity on their future, and the future they will lead. As this generation hovers so briefly at the impressionable threshold of mature adulthood, there is a window of opportunity to encourage, challenge, and support them. Leaders today can influence their identity, perspectives, and effectiveness for years to come. Developmental theories help provide valuable perspective regarding the importance of young adulthood.

Developmental theories and references highlight the fluidity of young adult understandings of themselves, others, and the world around them. The window or space that exists for servant leaders, mentors, and other trusted leaders to engage in the process of young adult development and meaning making is powerful. Examples throughout this study revealed Millennials in ministry who found leaders and communities that supported their journey. Other participants shared stories of finding themselves in an isolated or unsupported position.

Developmental theories present two important reminders for those leading Millennials. The first is the reminder young adults are still defining their identity and identifying their values. “We have seen that the central task of young adulthood is to discover and to compose a faith that can orient the soul to truth and shape a fitting relationship between self and world” (Parks, 1986, p. 177). The premise of Parks’ work

is “young adulthood is the time when a person begins to self-consciously reflect on life’s meaning” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 202). Leaders can serve young adults on their teams by recognizing their questions, perspectives, and ideas are often part of this process of self-reflection and meaning making. For those Millennials who move into Fowler’s Individuative-Reflexive stage, their values and perspectives may evolve or adapt as they reach a more mature adult faith. Stage four “is particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes” (Fowler, 1981, p. 182). The support of mature adults helps make this transition more fruitful.

A second reminder developmental theory provides the leader of young adults is change is good. The seeming inconsistencies, doubts, questions, or fluctuations in young adult behavior, perspectives, or decisions can be frustrating for those working with them. However, this process of wrestling with one’s faith and understanding of the world is essential to growth.

Movement from one of these stages to the next is not an automatic function of biological maturation, chronological age, psychological development, or mental age. While each of these factors plays a significant role in the ‘readiness’ for stage transition, transition itself occurs when the equilibrium of a given stage is upset by encounters with crises, novelties, and experiences of disclosure and challenge which threaten the limits of the person’s present patterns of constitutive-knowing. (Fowler, 1981, p. 27)

Some individuals fail to engage in Piaget’s “evolving movement from equilibrium through disequilibrium toward a new equilibrium” and as a result reach a certain developmental stage and remain there the rest of their lives (Parks, 1986, p. 35).

The resulting challenge for leaders is to recognize, encourage, and facilitate young adult development in ways that will assist them in becoming mature, effective

servant leaders themselves. Parks emphasized the role of a mentoring community in the life of young adults. “It is the combination of the emerging truth of the young adult with the example and encouragement of the mentor, grounded in the experience of an ideologically compatible social group, that generates the transforming power of the young adult era” (Parks, 1986, p. 89). A community or network of belonging can help ground the young adult in a positive sense of place as he or she journeys toward a mature adult faith (Daloz et al., 1997; Parks, 1986).

Summary

This chapter delineates the value and importance of meaningful relationships in the lives of Millennials. They impact the young adult significantly in both professional growth and engagement and in personal faith development. Servant leadership resonates deeply with the perspectives, needs, and desires of Millennials in regards to leadership. As young adults seek to establish their identity and develop their personal faith, an environment facilitated by servant leaders provides an effective space to maximize growth and encourage success. The opportunity provided to those who work with Millennials in ministry is to be servant leaders who provide the example and support to young adults, to be partners in their journey toward mature adulthood, faith, and leadership.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I present a summary of the study, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for further research. I undertook this study with two goals. The first was to hear the perspectives of Millennials in ministry and to understand their lived experience on staff at local churches. In doing so, I wanted to understand their frustrations, ideas, and desires for the church. My second goal was to develop a grounded theory regarding factors that affect the job satisfaction and retention of these young adults in ministry. The phenomenological aspect of my research provided valuable descriptions of the lived experience of Millennials in ministry while the grounded theory component offered critical insight into the values and vision of this emerging generation of church leaders.

Summary of Study

Millennials entering ministry positions bring with them expectations and needs that differ from other generational cohorts. The phenomenological components of this study illuminated both positive and negative experiences. In some cases, leaders and church environments responded to needs of young staff members, in others they did not. The difference proved significant to job satisfaction and retention. Themes that emerged as important in the experience of participants included a *sense of calling, relationships with leaders and colleagues, effectiveness in their role, and feeling meaning and fulfillment in their work.*

Most participants expressed experiencing a sense of calling or having a call to ministry affirmed by others. Repeatedly, they indicated the importance of calling for retention in ministry long term. Perhaps the most vital element of the young adult

experience in ministry, however, proved to be their relationships with leaders and colleagues on staff with them. Positive and constructive relationships resulted in feelings of trust, empowerment, and connectedness. Negative or distant relationships generated feelings of isolation, frustration, and disconnectedness. I did not encounter a single participant in my study who remained in a ministry position where relationships with the senior pastor or peers proved consistently negative.

Another significant component of the Millennial experience in ministry was a sense of effectiveness in their role. Confusion regarding expectations and responsibilities produced frustration and at times resulted in the participants feeling ineffective. Perhaps most crucial to effectiveness was the opportunity to use gifts and passions in ministry roles. Even if some aspects of the job did not inspire them, outlets that provided meaning in significant ways helped produce a sense of fulfillment.

This study provided a grounded theory of Millennial values, illustrating the Millennial view of the church as family rather than church as business. It demonstrated working at a church that embraced and practiced their values proved important to job satisfaction and retention. Primary among the values expressed by participants were *family* and *relationships*. The value of family manifested itself in various aspects of ministry experience. First, young adults today often value a parental-type role in their leaders and supervisors. Growing up in a culture that embraces *in loco parentis*, Millennials expect and appreciate engaged leaders. They desire mentorship and personal relationships with mature adults who will encourage and support them as they navigate the uncertainties of young adulthood.

The value of family applies to immediate families and families of origin. Millennials prioritize their families and expect senior pastors and others to honor time and space to invest in those relationships. Many young adults have witnessed parents or other significant adults make huge sacrifices for a career or company, only to later lose their job or family. They are unwilling to sacrifice long-term relationships for work.

Lastly, Millennials want to relate to others in a familial or relational manner, that includes coworkers, friends, and the community around them. They value teamwork and collaboration and desire meaningful relationships. People are more important than programs. Relationships are more important than products. Conversations are more important than presentations. In many cases, however, young adults encountered church as a business, rather than as a family. This usually resulted in an extremely negative response from the young adult. Those who experienced characteristics of a family in their ministry position related a more positive perspective on their job.

The values and views of Millennials often represent a diversion from traditional church values and indicate potential changes in the way we experience church. Change is ambiguous and chaotic at times. As a new generation enters church leadership, they bring with them new perspectives, abilities, and needs that reflect changes in the society around them. Maximizing job satisfaction and retention in the midst of these dynamics is challenging. Those who hire, train, and supervise Millennials entering ministry cannot possibly fully understand and perfectly respond to every need and desire they bring with them. Nonetheless, this transition presents opportunities for coaching, correcting, and encouraging young adults. The generational change also provides the church an

opportunity to examine its values, vision, and practices in the context of a changing culture.

Greenberg (2008) argued moments of social change are facilitated by “a society ripe for change; a new generation ready to drive that change; the emergence of one or a few leaders to articulate the need and set the agenda” (p. 155). Millennials undoubtedly are a cohort driving significant social change. Within the church, they possess a vision for shifts in priorities, culture, and leadership. Some predict their weaknesses will limit their ability to affect our society positively, while others hold out great hope for their potential to affect the common good (Elmore, 2010; Greenberg, 2008). It may be years before we fully see the results of this generation’s influence. In the meantime, we have the opportunity to engage their ideas and perspectives in a way that can challenge current weaknesses in structures and practices.

The relationship between the cultures created by older adults and desired by young adults is reciprocal. Parks (1986) explained, “The central task of young adulthood is to discover and to compose a faith that can orient the soul to truth and shape a fitting relationship between self and world...we have seen that as they engage that task, young adults are dependent upon the mentorship of the adult world” (p. 177). While it could be easy for the adults working with younger staff to find their ideas and needs idealistic, entitled, or selfish, these young adults are desirous of mentoring and coaching from trusted and respected individuals in their lives who can help them identify a sense of purpose.

Millennials care about purpose and meaning. They are a generation that likes to understand “why?” While older generations sometimes view this questioning as

disrespectful, it typically emerges out of a genuine desire to understand. As discussed earlier, meaningful work is important to Millennials. They want to understand the purpose behind systems, processes, and relationships. Their questioning serves as a form of accountability. Millennials are asking why our churches function like businesses, why the church does not prioritize family life, and why there is a lack of collaboration and outreach in communities. Sincere responses to the questioning of this generation can help illuminate areas in need of change in the church.

Creating space for questions and input from young adults can be intimidating and time consuming and requires a confident, humble, and caring facilitator or leader. Parks (1986) challenged if churches “are to offer leadership in the formation of a mentoring ethos for a young adult world, then the religious community must recognize that countless people have a sense of having outgrown religion in order to be truthful and faithful” (p. 198). This requires leaders or pastors who are willing to honestly examine processes and perspectives and acknowledge what is truth and non-negotiable for an important reason and what is simply sacred tradition or cultural norms. Leaders who are able to engage in this process with Millennials not only contribute to their job satisfaction, but additionally participate effectively in the mentoring and development of the next generation of leaders. Parks (1986) suggested a mutual benefit in this process. “Just as a consciousness of the needs of young adults may serve to renew older adults, the consciousness of the needs of a young adult world may serve to reawaken religion to its deepest vocation” (p. 199). Engaging with young adults holds potential for increasing employee retention and benefiting the church where the young adult serves.

Employee retention is currently a significant challenge for organizations and corporations across America. “People in the American workforce today are taking care of themselves...the young ones are on the move, watching and waiting for the next best opportunity...the number of years employees stay with a job continues to decline” (Raines, 2003, p. 113). The long-term influence of the economic recession on employee retention is yet unclear, but it is evident Millennials have different perspectives on jobs and careers than previous generations. Raines (2003) explained Millennials leave their job when it does not meet expectations, is repetitive or boring, and does not offer challenges and opportunities for development. Reasons they stay are because of professional growth and personal satisfaction. “If something doesn’t work for them, or if they are not permitted to participate in the process, they quickly move on to something that grabs them” (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 23).

Employee turnover is financially disadvantageous, but can also hurt the organization in other ways.

Companies usually calculate the costs involved in turnover by analyzing the amount of time and money invested in the employee. But they need to look deeper and think about the level of competence that is also walking out the door. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 239)

Losing Millennials on staff at churches can also cost the church in perspectives that can encourage new ideas for ministry, and opportunities to invest in future church leadership. If the values of Millennials as discussed in this study remain unacknowledged in the church context, their success in ministry long-term is uncertain.

Strengths

Several strengths of this study added specific value to the findings. The selection of participants for this study represented diverse perspectives. Six females and nine

males participated in the study. Six participants were single and nine were married. These ratios allowed for any differences based on gender or marital status to emerge. Variety in academic degrees obtained and types of roles held allowed for generalizable application of findings to Millennials in any ministry role. Participants served at churches in six states and three demographic settings—suburban, urban and small town. As a result, findings exceeded regional or demographic limitations.

The qualitative methods employed provided rich live data on the topic studied. In-depth interviewing techniques with open-ended questions allowed real-life experiences and perspectives to emerge descriptively. I typically asked very few questions in the entire 60-90 minute interview. This indicated the freedom of participants to speak candidly regarding their experiences and thoughts, without prompting or direction from the interviewer.

Another strength of this study emerged from the effective use of phenomenological and constructivist grounded theory principles of the researcher perspective as an instrument of and asset to research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). While doing my research, I applied my years of experience training, interviewing, and working with young adults to build rapport and ask questions that resonated with participant experience. Furthermore, a working understanding of young adults today contributed to my ability to analyze the data effectively. One participant expressed this in her feedback after completing a member check of my findings: “You are very gifted in reading between the lines [of interviews] to pull out major themes and connect the testimonies and other research. Even as a Millennial I was

reading this and learning a ton about myself.” My perspective as the researcher added value to the collection and analysis of data.

Limitations

While this study has various strengths, I acknowledge certain limitations existed as well. The sample of participants was very specific and somewhat narrow. This was intentional for several reasons. I was unable to find any prior research on the particular topic of Millennials in ministry roles. This project served, in part, as an exploratory study to identify if generational differences were influencing young adult job satisfaction and retention in church work. As an initial study in this area, I wanted to maximize the potential for relevant themes and categories to emerge. By examining a specific sample of participants with significant similarities, a greater likelihood existed of identifying common generational perspectives and ideas regarding ministry and the church. If these emerged, theoretical sampling could occur in future research to study additional demographics.

The size of the sample, while more than sufficient for the phenomenological component of the study, was somewhat meager in regards to the grounded theory component. Data saturation did occur in selected categories and therefore rendered credible findings. Nonetheless, a larger sample may have led to additional findings. As mentioned above, the participants were required to meet certain criteria which resulted in additional limitations. All of the participants graduated with a four-year degree from the same Christian university. They represented majority culture. All of them served in a Pentecostal church setting, primarily in suburban areas. Future research could explore participant samples not included in this study.

Recommendations for Research and Practice

This study confirmed the existence of generational influences on job satisfaction and retention of Millennials in ministry roles. Furthermore, I identified an emerging vision for the church that differs from some current practices and previous cultural values. Future research can augment these findings in several respects.

As mentioned above, additional research on the topic of this study with a broader sample could reveal more themes than those presented here. Subjects to include in future studies need to represent diverse populations, including members of minority groups, and individuals with different educational and socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, more diversity in the church settings could bolster or enhance the findings. Specifically, future research should include churches from various denominations, as well as more churches from small towns and rural areas. These changes to the sample would strengthen and further this research in meaningful ways.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for church leaders of all ages. Table 2 illustrates some of the significant differences in how the values of Millennials represent shifting views on the church. While many churches continue to function as

Table 2 <i>Shifting views of the church</i>	
As business	As family
Leaders as bosses	Leaders as parents/friends
Presentation/formality	Intimacy/informality
Programs	People
Success as number of bodies/members	Success as spiritual/personal growth
Buildings	Community/relationships
Budgets	Service/outreach
Ministry/job first	Family/friends first

businesses, young adults in this study expressed a desire to see church function as family. As a result, various implications exist for church leadership and ministry practices.

Developing mutual understanding of diverse views on church and ministry is essential to retaining the next generation of church leaders. Offering education for leaders on generational differences is an initial step towards maximizing the strengths of all generations. When hiring and training young adults for ministry roles, senior pastors who understand their needs and desires can provide structures, feedback and opportunities that allow them to develop and contribute in meaningful ways. Furthermore, Millennials who understand their strengths, weaknesses, needs and desires, can better articulate these and seek out the support they need. A mutual understanding of differences also provides opportunities for learning and growth by all parties.

The Millennial perspective requires an effective response from current leaders. Churches and denominations must consider methods of addressing and incorporating Millennial values into their ministry vision and practices. This response can target three areas. The first is the leadership style or culture experienced at the church, the second is vision and ministry practices of the church, and the third is the expectations and demands placed on the young minister.

Leaders of young adults need to evaluate their leadership style. Is it relational? Does it reflect servant leadership attributes? Millennials desire vulnerability and authenticity from their leaders, rather than formality. A sense of intimacy will supersede the influence of a flawless image. Changes to a church's leadership culture can help young ministers relate to their leaders. A leadership culture that encourages consistent

honest communication, fosters trust, and provides supportive correction and guidance is most effective in fostering job success for Millennials.

Churches seeking to retain young adults should examine how their current vision and practices reflect Millennial values. Stated values are not enough; churches must demonstrate an active pursuit of community service, spiritual growth, and genuine relationships. Programs implemented by the church need to facilitate these values. Language or behaviors that indicate buildings, programs, numbers or money take precedence over the needs of people will quickly disillusion Millennials. The vision of the church must serve people. As more Boomers approach retirement and the church turns to Millennials to fill critical leadership roles, additional research and understanding of the impact of these changes is necessary. Churches must be willing to consider adjustments that reflect the values of this rising generation of leaders.

Conclusion

This study fulfilled both of its original research goals. It gave rich descriptions of the experiences of Millennials in their first full-time ministry roles on staff at local churches. Furthermore, it identified themes that provided practical insight and direction for those seeking to understand Millennials and maximize their job satisfaction and retention in ministry. For those questioning the future of the church with a new generation of leaders, this study provided a glimpse of the values and vision emerging as they step into roles of responsibility. Analysis of the findings applied developmental theories and servant leadership theories that highlighted characteristics and qualities that empower and equip the young adult for successes.

Participant descriptions revealed Millennials offer new perspectives and fresh ideas for the church. They question the way things function, and at the same time, desire to learn from those with more experience and maturity. Intergenerational relationships, based in mutual trust and respect, provide a platform for effective church ministry in the midst of a changing culture. They also allow an opportunity for the wisdom of an older generation and the passion of a younger generation to complement and empower one another. The response of new and experienced church leaders to the generational differences facing us now will determine the church's legacy for years to come.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Intake Form

Name:

Age (born after 1980):

Degree:

Number of years in first full-time ministry (25+ hours paid/week) position:

Type of position:

Demographics of church:

Urban Suburban Small Town Rural

Number of staff (PT/FT paid):

Size of church:

Denomination/Affiliation:

Current status:

In same ministry position

In different church ministry position

In a non-church ministry position

In a non-church, non-ministry position

Other comments:

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. Tell me how you came to serve in a ministry position?
2. What or who contributed most to your preparation for ministry?
3. What were and are your hopes and motivations for serving in a ministry role?
4. What were your expectations coming into the position? How were things the same or different than what you expected?
5. How have you or your perspectives changed or grown since serving in a ministry role?
6. What has been most challenging about serving in a ministry role? Most fulfilling?
7. How would you define your leadership philosophy? How does that coincide or differ from the leadership philosophy in your church context? Describe a situation/Tell a story that illustrates this.
8. What would you say to a high school student considering vocational ministry as a career? A college student about to graduate?
9. What do you believe are the most important challenges or opportunities for the church in America today?
10. Why did you leave (or have you stayed) in your ministry position?

APPENDIX C

Letter to Participants

Dear (insert name of potential participant),

For the past decade, I have worked with the emerging generation of young adults and witnessed the unique and valuable perspectives and ideas they bring to the church and ministry. That experience has inspired a research study to better understand the experiences of Millennials in ministry positions and what factors affect their job satisfaction working at churches. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the experience of young adults in church leadership roles and the factors that affect their job satisfaction and retention in those roles. Intergenerational strengths or weakness of leadership teams will also be considered. Furthermore, the study will seek to better understand the vision of the Millennial generation for the church and potential needs for better preparation, leadership or mentoring, or resources.

Participation is voluntary and involves participating in at least one, and possibly three, in-depth interviews that will last approximately 60-90 minutes each and will occur in the next 6 months. Please note that all information you share will be held in strict confidence, and that pseudonyms will be used for all names and locations so that any published results will be completely anonymous. Should you choose to participate, you are free to decide to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts anticipated with this study. The benefits associated with your participation include the opportunity to discuss your experience and contribute to a study that can help inform institutions and leaders who influence the preparation and empowering of young leaders in the church.

Prior to participating in the study, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form. This study has been approved by the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board by IRB Number A11- 205-01. Please contact me if you are willing to participate in this study or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jolene (Cassellius) Erlacher
joerlacher@gmail.com
763-227-6014

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

The Experience of Millennials in Ministry IRB Number:

I am conducting a study about the experience of Millennials in ministry positions at churches. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because a staff or faculty member at North Central University recommended you as someone who fit the criteria for this study. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by: Jolene Cassellius Erlacher, doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas. under the supervision of Kathleen M. Boyle, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Leadership, Policy, & Administration, College of Applied Professional Studies, University of St. Thomas.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Millennials in their first, full-time ministry position on staff at a church and to determine the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction and retention.

Procedures:

Participation is completely voluntary and involves participating in up to three in-depth interviews that will last approximately 60-90 minutes each. These interviews will be recorded, but will be listened to only by the researcher for the purpose of transcription and analysis. Please note that all information you share will be held in strict confidence, and that pseudonyms will be used for all names and locations so that any published results will be completely anonymous. Should you choose to participate, you are free to decide to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks and/or discomforts anticipated with this study. The benefits associated with your participation include the opportunity to discuss your experience and contribute to a study that can help inform institutions and leaders who influence the preparation and empowering of young leaders in the church.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include intake forms, recordings of the interviews, transcriptions of the interview content, and documents or software programs with content from the

interviews that will be used for analysis. Recordings will be stored in a secure location in the researcher's home office and deleted within one year of the interview. Intake forms or researcher's notes will be compiled with interview transcriptions using pseudonyms and original forms or notes will be destroyed immediately. Transcriptions and additional documents will contain only pseudonyms and will be stored on the researcher's personal computer, laptop and external hard drive. As they will contain no information that will allow participants to be identified, they will be kept indefinitely for future research purposes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. Should you decide to withdraw from the study, you will have the option to request that data collected about you not be used in my findings. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Jolene Cassellius Erlacher. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 763-227-6014. You may also contact my advisor, Kathleen Boyle at 651-962-4393 or the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX E

IRB Form

Dear Jolene,

**Re: IRB Protocol #B11-361-02 –The Experience of Millennials in Ministry - Expedited
Researcher: Jolene Cassellius Erlacher
Advisor: Dr. Kathleen Boyle
Full Status Approval**

Your application for your proposed research involving human subjects has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of the University of St. Thomas and been given Full Approval Status. Your application has satisfied all of the criteria necessary for full status. This means that you may proceed with your research immediately. This is your official letter of approval.

Please place the IRB log number on all of your future correspondence regarding this protocol.

Please note that under IRB Policy principal investigators are required to report to the IRB for further review when changes in the research protocol increase the risks to the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in the study and /or I n the event of any adverse episode (e.g. actual harm, breach of confidentiality) involving human subjects.

Thank you for all of your work. Your work was quite well written. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Best wishes as you begin your research.

Eleni
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