

**FORMING A VISION COMMUNITY THAT FOSTERS A HOLISTIC
SOLUTION TO ISSUES FACED BY AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH**

By

John O. Herring

Covington Theological Seminary, Pastor Care, 2014

California National University, Human Resources Management, 2004

Brenau University, Master Business Administration, 1996

Claflin University, BS Political Science, 1977

A Doctoral Project

submitted to the faculties of the school of

The Interdenominational Theological Center

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

at

The Interdenominational Theological Center

2018

**FORMING A VISION COMMUNITY THAT FOSTERS A HOLISTIC
SOLUTION TO ISSUES FACED BY AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH**

Approved by the Examining Committee

Advisor

Date

Accepted:

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

Date

In presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree from Interdenominational Theological Center, I agree that the library of the school make it available for the inspection and circulation in accordance with it regulations governing materials of this type.

I agree that permission to copy this from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, or, in his absence, by the director of the Doctor of Ministry program when such copying or publication is solely for the scholarly purpose and does not involve potential financial gain.

It is understood that any copying from, or publication of, this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without written permission.

John O. Herring

ABSTRACT

FORMING A VISION COMMUNITY THAT FOSTERS A HOLISTIC SOLUTION TO ISSUES FACED BY AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH

by

**John O. Herring
May 2018
140 pages**

The overall problem addressed in this dissertation was the increase of youth who are disconnected from the church. The Black church has historically valued fostering relationships and the part they play in developing the faith of the next generation and developing solutions to issues faced by African American youth. Many of the traditional youth leadership programs, though effective in the past, no longer address the issues of today's youth, the Post-Millennial generation. Fuller understanding of the reasons for the growing numbers of youth disconnected from church is required. This researcher determined that the Post-Millennials were the best ones to speak on the problems. This qualitative research project addressed the following research questions: (1) How does a Youth minister's leadership style impact Post-Millennial engagement in the Black Church? and (2) How will establishing a Post-Millennial advisory council impact church attendance and participation of the Post-Millennial generation in the Black church? Other sub questions answered by the participants were (a) What would Post-Millennials like their roles to be in the Black church? and (b) How will participants attract other attendees?

The study engaged an ethnographic research design. The target participants completed surveys and participated in discussion groups in ways that helped the researcher to understand the goals, cultures, challenges, and commitments that emerged. As a participant observer of the discussion groups, the researcher vicariously experienced the culture, the hopes, and aspirations of the Post-Millennials. The data evolving from the study showed that they are presented and evaluated as foundational. Young people must participate as leaders in the church, not just as observers. Their recommendation was that they be invited to serve in these roles for spiritual growth, formation of holistic solutions to their issues, and on planning committees to attract other youth participation in church.

DEDICATION

This D. Min project is dedicated to my soulmate, my wife, Deborah R. Herring.

Each time I look at you I am reminded of God's word, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22)

I am grateful that God has given us two children together, Jia and John.

I love you and thank God that He chose you as my helpmate.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the people who have supported me both practically and spiritually on my journey towards the Doctor of Ministry degree and in completing this dissertation. Special thanks to my cohort leaders Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly and Dr. Edward Wimberly, to my colleagues who traversed the Doctor of Ministry training with me, and my family for their ongoing encouragement and patience. Finally, my highest regards and appreciation go to Dr. Donald Earl Bryant, pastor at Friendship Community Church, as the source of much personal inspiration in my own church. Thanks, also, to Pastor Antonio Proctor of St. James Baptist Church, the venue used for research. Thanks to those who encouraged me and made suggestions for moving forward. They are: Dr. Julia Frazier White, Dr. Toni Morton, Dr. William Chappell, Dr. Michael Johnson, Minister Daryl Pipkin, and Dr. Elliott McGlory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
DEDICATION	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Call for Response: Personal Memoir and Motivation	4
The Bears in My Life	5
A Personal Journey Toward the Call: Learning Outcomes from Personal Memoir.....	6
Some Guiding Views: Definitions.....	6
A Framework for Response: Mirroring Success	11
Method and Methodology	13
Significance of this Project.....	15
Limitations of the Project	16
Conclusion.....	18
CHAPTER 1 DISCERNING THE NATURE AND CHALLENGES OF MINISTRY ...	21
LITERATURE REVIEW	21
Introduction	21
Discernment Applied to the Literature Review.....	22
Prophetic Discernment	23
Biblical/Theological Aspects of Discerning Ministry with Post-Millennials	24
Social/Ethical/Psychological Discernment.....	28
Births Underlying Each Generation	30

Isolationism	33
Theories	33
Value of Theories	36
Operational Discernment - Voices of Youth	37
Conclusion.....	41
CHAPTER 2: DISCERNING A WAY FORWARD	43
Introduction	43
Research Method Used.....	44
Methodology.....	45
Planning Strategies	46
Implementation Strategies	49
Implementation Strategies	49
The Ministry Leader Coordinator.....	49
Ministry Leader of Participant Recruitment.....	50
The Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation	50
The Ministry Leader of Operations	52
The Ministry Leader of Transportation	52
Evaluation Strategies	53
Concluding Reflections	55
CHAPTER 3 ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGE OF MINISTRY	57
Introduction	57
Key Discoveries.....	58
What Was Learned?	58

Why was it possible to learn it?.....	60
Who was instrumental in the outcome and how?	60
A Dialogue with the Literature Review: Impact and Challenges.....	60
Outcomes of Research Deviate from Much of Literature Review	61
The Setting and Demographics of Participants	62
Focus Group Cognitions about Research Question 1	63
Focus Group Cognitions about Research Question 2.....	65
A Post-Millennial Model for Ministry	69
Figure 1 A Model of Ministry for Post-Millennials.....	74
Toward Implementing A Model for Ministry.	75
Using a Model	75
CHAPTER 4 MAKING MINISTRY COME ALIVE	77
Introduction	77
A Vision for Ministry	79
Activating the Ministry	81
Post-Millennial Ideas for Ministry Activation	82
Figure 2 Forming a Vision Community: A Model of Ministry for Post-Millennials	84
Parts of the Model Explained	85
The Role of the Pastor and Leaders.....	87
Role of the Congregation.....	88
Youth Leaders	88
Measuring Success	89

What's In It For Post-Millennials.....	90
CHAPTER 5 FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS	92
Introduction	92
An Endeavor Built from Hope	93
Core Beliefs	95
What was not done in the area of ministry on which this project focused?	99
Further, an admonition for working as community states	101
What Might Have Been Done Differently.....	101
Envisioning the Future	103
Post-Millennial Hope.....	105
Concluding Thoughts	107
APPENDIX A Parental Permission for Participation of A Child in a Research Study	108
APPENDIX B Letter of Introduction to Participants.....	109
Youth Survey and Focus Group Discussion Questions.....	110
Youth Survey.....	111
Participant Survey Input.....	112
Focus Group Discussion Questions.....	113
APPENDIX D 15 Economic Facts About Millennials	114
APPENDIX E How Post-Millennials Differ from Millennials	115
BIBLIOGRAPHY	117

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: Matrix- Qualitative Design.....	46
Table 2: Participants’ Demographics: Race, Gender and Generation.....	62
Table 3 Participant Demographics and Survey Choices	62
Table 4: Focus Group Thoughts Shared.....	67
Table 5: Post-Millennial Church Ministry Necessities	73

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

One of the most challenging questions facing the church today is “What can be done to stop, or at least slow down, the exodus of Post-Millennials or Generation Z from church attendance?” The church must address this most pressing issue, because this question will determine the fate and future of the traditional church. Will the church as we know it morph into a different entity, or will it vanish altogether? Today, the traditional church is headed for a period when the questions surrounding the viability of maintaining the institution will occupy a lot of the pastoral leader’s time and attention as the loss of congregational members begins to reflect on the bottom line of the church. There has been a tremendous burden to compete for a shrinking market or to begin focusing on reaching new faith prospects through providing an engaging, relevant encounter with their faith. The key question is: Why has Generation Z been leaving the church and what kind of vision community is needed to attract them? Based on a five-year project, David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins (2016) show how the Christian community has failed to prepare young adults to follow Christ in the midst of great cultural change. The study refutes myths about young dropouts and shows likely consequences for the church and for disconnected Post-Millennials if the current trends are not recognized and changed.

Kinnaman and Hawkins (2016) expressed the same findings as Chan, Tsai, and Fuligni (2015) whose 4-year study looked at “developmental changes in religious affiliation, identity, and participation across the transition from adolescence to young

adulthood among 584 individuals from age 17.9 to 22.1 years; 55% female.” Like the Kinnaman and Hawkins (2016) study, the Chan, Tsai, and Fuligni study (2015) investigated many factors such as gender, ethnicity, educational, residential, and association between religion and well-being. The Chan, Tsai, and Fuligni study (2015) concluded that youth generally lose interest in religion as they move into young adulthood. The results of this study show important conclusions for how religion is perceived and incorporated into living by young American adults (Chan, Tsai, and Fuligni, 2015).

The following six responses from the research encompassed eight national studies, including interviews with teens, parents, youth pastors, senior pastors and young adults (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016). The study of young adults focused on previous churchgoers as teens who disconnected from church after 15 years of age both permanently and for an extended period. Here are the results:

Reason #1 – Churches seem overprotective. Much of their experience of Christianity felt confining and “deeply risk-averse” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 97).

Reason #2 – Teens’ and twentysomethings’ experience of Christianity is shallow. A second reason that young people depart church as young adults is that something is lacking in their experience of church saying, “church is boring” (31%), “faith is not relevant to my career or interests” (24%), “the Bible is not taught clearly or often enough” (23%), and 20% of young adults who attended church as a teen said “God seems missing from my experience of church.” “In our research, we find clear evidence that many parents and churches have expectations of young people that are much too low or much too driven by cultural ideas of success” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 120-123).

Reason #3 – Churches come across as being opposed to science and young adults feel disconnected from church or from faith because of the tension they feel between Christianity and science. “People of faith have a responsibility and an opportunity to speak positively and prophetically to issues of science, rather than responding out of hostility or ignorance” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 143).

Reason #4 – Young Christians’ church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic and judgmental; significant tension for many young believers is living up to the church’s expectations of sexual purity and “Neither traditionalism nor

individualism is working — nor are they biblical. ...We need to rediscover the *relational* narrative of sexuality” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 160).

Reason #5 – Young people wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity. They have been shaped by a culture that values open-mindedness and acceptance. However, “Passionate, mission-driven exiles seem to share the conviction that the North American church has somehow lost its heart for the very kinds of people Jesus sought out during his earthly ministry — the oppressed, the poor, and the physically, emotionally, and socially crippled” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 179). “Exclusion lacks love; the wrong kind of tolerance lacks courage” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 180)

Reason #6 – The church feels unfriendly to those who doubt. Young adults say the church is not a place that allows them to express doubts and get them cleared up. Kinnaman states, “I think faith communities have not done a good job creating environments and experiences where students can process their doubts. Our posture toward students and young adults should be more Socratic, more process-oriented, more willing to live with their questions and seek answers together. ...Dealing with doubt is a fully relational task” (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2016, 194).

If the research of Kinnaman and Hawkins (2016) and Chan, Tsai, & Fuligni (2015) had been known prior to the start of this project in 2013, perhaps it would have taken a shorter time for this researcher to realize the importance of listening to the Post-Millennials instead of looking to community leaders to examine causes of disconnection of Post-Millennials from the Black church. Instead, this doctoral project was started by using a discussion group to identify problems in the community that would possibly explain disconnection of Post-Millennials from the Black church. The group agreed to discuss the following subjects: (a) community violence, its impact and how it plagues our cities; (b) the importance of voting and how to prepare the community to make these important decisions; (c) providing quality community health care; (d) obtaining and maintaining quality education within our community; (e) millennial non-denominational transition; and (f) the lack of K-12 parental involvement in the community schools and how to revive this participation.

Although all of the topics were of great importance, we narrowed our focus to fostering a holistic solution to issues faced by African American youth. There are other initiatives that have the same or similar goals. However, most of those initiatives depend on the youth seeking inclusion in those initiatives. An example of such an initiative was The African American Youth Leadership Conference. This research project resulted in forming a vision community that fosters a holistic solution to most of these same initiatives.

The discussion group mentioned in this paper stayed on task by my providing several comments on the role of the church and the critical role it must have in the life of the community. I informed the group that the community must maintain a firm relationship with the church because the church provides the foundation for the community's physical and spiritual growth. I reiterated that everything must be done in accordance to the will of God.

In short, this research project started as an opportunity to assess the impact of a vision community that fosters hope and commitment to address spiritual, socio-economic, and educational issues for African American youth. It was believed that the vision community can address many issues because we dare to dream. Therefore, the study of what was happening with Post-Millennials in our community gave attention to past trends and future hope. I entered this study because I am called to this ministry to Millennials and Post-Millennials with heavy concentration on Post-Millennials.

Call for Response: Personal Memoir and Motivation

The motivation for this research project was personal. Members of the discussion group pointed out several things that they understood to be critical needs of the community and the urgency to get involved. A group member stated, "We need a call to action plan."

This showed that they realized the community had too much at stake to continue to be silent and non-active. The group discussion took me back to my childhood and young adult years. My youth was like a roller coaster ride – sometimes exhilarating and sometimes very scary. There were some highs and too many lows to count.

The Bears in My Life

We were constantly living under the threat of devastation because of the lifestyle choices of my mother and father who reminded me of bears. They had some of the same bear-like characteristics. Bears are wonderful animals that roam the territory of their domain and control with brute strength like my father. The paws of a bear are naked soles, possibly an adaptation for better tree climbing. Bears are usually solitary animals except when females have cubs. A pair may come together for several days during the mating season and in time of abundant food; several bears may feed closely together with little interaction. Male bears maintain large territories that overlap smaller ranges of several females. Bears will leave territorial signposts both through scent and by leaving long claw marks on tree bark.

I have first-hand knowledge of how territorial bears are because my family was marked like a territory of bears throughout much of my young life. I was introduced to the life of bears through the destructive lifestyle choices of my mother and father. These bears took the forms of violence, drugs, adultery, despair, disrespect and lack of self-confidence; consequently, applying a deadly grip on our family that threatened to prevent my escape to a better life. Escaping from bears is not easy, especially when the bear is multifaceted: adultery, family abandonment combined with substance abuse and violence. To make matters worse, fire destroyed our home!

I believed the fire was the beginning of the end for our family. My father began to see other women in the neighborhood and my mother decided to act in the same manner. We children were left to fend for ourselves, just as a ship's traveling through rough waters without a rudder to guide it through to safer waters. We began to live wherever we could; some of us went with family members and others went wherever. After living as nomads for a while, my parents decided to play family again. We moved back into public housing and things went downhill once again.

A Personal Journey Toward the Call: Learning Outcomes from Personal Memoir

My early family life did not follow the model for a healthy family as described in the Bible. In the Bible, the writings of Paul in Ephesians describe a family where both husband and wife are submissive to each other - willing to do what the other wants and needs (Ephesians 5:21). It goes on to say:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:22-30).

If my family had followed the model laid out in the Bible, we would have been a healthier family – loving each other and caring for each other's wants and needs. We would have had more love and security. The point here is that my family life had a great impact on my interest in young people and my engagement in this D. Min project.

Some Guiding Views: Definitions

It was necessary to understand key terminology used in this research project. Some terms look familiar, but in context, the meanings or connotations may need explaining in

relation to ministry to Post-Millennials. Those terms are:

African American Youth. Although a subset of all American youth, African American youth must be recognized apart from white youth because of racism. All statistics and presentations that do not recognize African American youth as a group apart may miss the importance and negative impact of racism. Therefore, this study expresses this key terminology as important to understand the disconnection which may be caused by lack of self-worth, marginalization of the race, and the challenges and issues associated with negative social stigma. The emphasis of church youth leaders must be focused on preventing disconnection by understanding issues of African American youth who have left the church.

From the standpoint of child development, youth is a time when children begin to discover and define themselves. Influences on identity development in African American youth can be positively mediated through a strong family foundation and community ties. However, boys and girls growing up African American in 21st century society face the covert reality that they live in a nation entrenched in a long history that has marginalized the race into which they were born (Singleton, 2015). Integration of a positive adult identity can be a unique challenge for African American youth because they learn from an early age, that at different times in American history, their race has carried a negative social stigma based on the color of their skin (Singleton, 2015). Racism remains a powerful presence in American society. Although overt acts of racism have shifted since the early decades of this country's history, the impact of privilege based on one's race persists as a prevailing construct in American society (Singleton, 2015).

Post-Millennials. This group includes young people born after the Millennials and most generational experts use start dates of 1995 – 1996. They are Generation Z. Sometimes called youth and sometimes called Generation Edge or Generation Z, this is the youngest and largest generational cohort on the planet, so this means that Post-Millennials will have a profound impact on culture (Merritt, 2017). In the Religion News Service article, James Emery White (2017), author of *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post Christian World*, shared his thoughts during an interview and noted that it is pressing and of prime importance to study Generation Z (Merritt, 2017).

Generation Z has been characterized as true social changers. Born between 1995 to present, aged 18 and younger, Generation Z or Generation Edge is larger in size than Millennials. They number over 72 million (Pierpoint, 2016). Generation Edge, Post-Millennials, was the focus generation for this research project. Known as game changers, this was the generation we must listen to, learn from, and lead spiritually if we are to halt the disconnection of youth from the church. It's a complex generation and complexity was not new to them.

Complexity is where they thrive. Whether it's in the form of technology, social media, or deciding what to do after high school, they've been dealing with too much versus too little information their entire lives. It means they've had to learn to tell the good from the bad. It's allowed them to navigate the world with a degree of savviness far beyond their years (The Sound, 2016).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2017) defines an adolescent as a young person who is developing into an adult; this is the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence is the teenage years between 13 and 19. Today's youth of the

current generation in this age group are Post-Millennial and are adolescents (Williams, 2015). We must understand the cohort characteristics of Generation Z. This young generation is poised to take their place in the greater society where millennials are now. Millennials are the nearest in age to Generation Z and, as such, are role models and leaders to the Post-Millennials. For this reason, it was important to define who are the Black millennials, compared to Post-Millennials.

Millennials. Millennials are the generation born just prior to the Post-Millennial generation. Post-Millennials and Millennials are so very different in many ways (Appendix E). The New York Times article describes the two and gives insight as to why they are so different:

Millennials, after all, were raised during the boom times and relative peace of the 1990s, only to see their sunny world dashed by the Sept. 11 attacks and two economic crashes, in 2000 and 2008. Theirs was a story of innocence lost. Generation Z (Post-Millennials), by contrast, has had its eyes open from the beginning, coming along in the aftermath of those cataclysms in the era of the war on terror and the Great Recession (Williams, 2015, Page ST1).

To know the economic environment of Millennials (Appendix D) is, therefore, only important because it was one factor which distinguishes Millennials from Post-Millennials.

Disconnection. According to Lewis and Burds-Sharps (2013), disconnected youth are young people ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school and there are over 5.8 million young people not connected to either of these anchor institutions. Another major anchor institution is the church and according to Wimberly and Farmer (2015), Black teens' disconnection from organized religion are called "disconnected youth" and "unchurched youth" and these researchers challenge youth ministry leaders to reconnect these young people by creating a positive vision and addressing the issues of African American youth.

Non-denominational transition. Millennials and youth in Generation Z show a trend of questioning Christianity and moving away from the traditional church (Jones, Cox, & Banchoff, 2012). According to writer and activist Christian Chiakulas (2015), Millennials are not interested in the traditional Jesus depicted in beautiful pictures and statues. Further, millennials would flock to churches that presented Jesus as the man, the prophet, and the person who overturned the tables of the money changers for making God's house a den of thieves. Further, Millennials would flock to learn more about the man, Jesus, who challenged the establishment, defended the poor, and marginalized, and paid for his actions with his life (Chiakulas, 2015). The trend of this thinking continues among Post-Millennials (Merritt, 2017). In our ministry, we must be able to relate to the youth in order to address this tendency (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013, 67).

Vision Community. A vision is the big picture of the way things ought to be for the community (Build Initiative, 2016). Once the vision was shared, communicated well, and it touched a chord with many people, persons would join in reaching towards the articulated goals (University of Kansas, 2016). Those people will be the vision community. Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson (2013) refer to this vision community as the "hope-building village" (p. 193).

Holistic solutions. Consideration of the whole, not just parts. Krishnamurthy (2008), in a *Harvard Business Review* article on holistic problem solving summarizes by advising that it may help to consider a wider scope of solutions when stuck on a problem; this may result in improved problem solving and satisfaction (Krishnamurthy, 2008). A holistic solution considers all factors, not just one or selected ones. It means dealing with or treating the whole of something or someone and not just a part (Cambridge Dictionary,

2017). We are interested in engaging and developing the whole person - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. In disconnected youth, often the spiritual development has been ignored or minimized.

A Framework for Response: Mirroring Success

I have been called to minister to young people – not just the youth and young adults whose families are strong. I want to reach disconnected Black youth. Therefore, I set out to do extensive research in my further ministry on behalf of young people. I experienced several times in my young life where I was a disconnected Black youth.

An Angel in My Life. There was a woman who gave me hope and taught me to dream of a better life. She was my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Emily Jackson, from Charlton, South Carolina. Mrs. Jackson did not play. She stood about five feet two, with heels. She could play the piano better than Ray Charles. I was in her class and she made sure my homework was completed each day and my clothes were washed and clean just as she did for her own three children. Every weekend she would go shopping at the food market and would drop off food items on Monday morning for our family. She was a good woman whose sweet spirit and abiding faith in God touched my life in so many ways. She was a woman who never asked for anything in return. Whenever she purchased cloths for her kids, I would get the same thing. She never seemed to purchase material things for herself. She would talk to me all the time about life and how to be successful in life. She instilled in me the art of saving money. I think she could talk the wind out of blowing; she was a talker! Prior to being in her class, I never went to school on a regular basis. Once she was introduced into my life, ten years passed before another day of school was missed. I cannot thank her enough.

The Dare to Dream. I want to reach disconnected children just as Mrs. Emily Jackson did for me. What a framework! Mrs. Emily Jackson taught me to dare to dream. “Daring to dream is the stuff that youth ministry is made of” (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013, 211). I want to look beyond what I see in the disengaged or disconnected Black youth and dream because, “Dreaming allows us to reach beyond what is going on right now in our youth ministry. Dreaming releases our imagination that enables us to see in the future the most amazing ministry that flows from our minds and hearts” (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013, 211). The dream on which this project focuses is a vision community that fosters a holistic solution to issues faced by African American youth. If a vision that recognizes challenges and the need to move beyond them.

According to White (2017), a recent Pew Research Center survey found that Christians have continued to drop in numbers. The generation being shaped most significantly by this trend to disconnection was Generation Z (White, 2017). Young people are leading the exodus. However, historically black denominations have held on to a steady percent of members during that same period. It may be different with Post-Millennials as “Generation Z will be the most influential religious force in the West and the heart of the missional challenge facing the Christian church” (White, 2017, 11). This Post-Millennial generation reflects the most significant cultural challenge facing the Western church (White, 2017).

With regard to Black Post-Millennials, some reasons for attending church are not all theological because some are institutional, social, and cultural (Lee, 2015). There are many reasons why people attend church and they are not all theological; some are social, and cultural (Lee, 2015). According to Lee (2015), integration has put some Blacks into

white churches, but many “still feel on the outskirts of community,” said Bryant Parsons, a Trinidadian American MDiv student at Westminster Theological Seminary. Lee (2015) states the position that the church provides a safe place where Blacks do not feel like outsiders. Also, according to Bryan Calvin, Assistant Professor of Government at Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, there is an effort to understand why young people are disconnecting – leaving the church. Thoughts are being examined to see where the problem lies; is the problem with the young people, or with the message, or with the presentation of the Church itself (Calvin, 2013).

Several considerations for reaching and keeping young people in church are presented in the book *Youth Ministry in the Black Church: Centered in Hope* (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013). The book presents efforts that are “designed to see, reach, and hear our youth” (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013, 111).

Method and Methodology

“Method” and “methodology” are not interchangeable terms. These terms can be confusing if used incorrectly. Using “methodology” as a synonym for “method” leads one to confuse, misinterpret, and obstruct the proper analysis that would go into the designing of the research (Mannik & McGarry, 2017). According to Howell (2013), a methodology gives the basis for understanding the best method to apply to the study to get a specific result from the study. In other words, methodology justifies the use of a particular research method. Further, Howell (2013) defines and describes methodology as (1) the study or description of methods, not the method, (2) the analysis of the principles of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline, and (3) the systematic study of methods that are, can be, or have been applied within a discipline.

The method used and the methodology to get there were planned according to the goal of the project. Specifically, the method used by this research project was qualitative. It was understood that a qualitative method is: “A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involved emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants’ setting, analyzing the data inductively, building from particular to general themes, and making interpretation of the meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2014, 4). Questionnaires were used to gather information from each Post-Millennial participant so as to get individual responses to the questions around reasons for the disconnection of Post-Millennials from the church. Also, part of the process used to carry out the study was the focus group discussions which were planned with analysis in mind. The plan included creating conversational questions that could lead to producing valuable insights with common sense thoughts about reporting the results (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Open-ended questions that began with words such as ‘what’ or ‘how’ were used so as “to convey an open and emerging design” (Creswell, 2014, 140).

Qualitative research is also used when we don’t know what to expect and one of the common data collection methods is the use of focus groups (Creswell, 2014). The focus groups were planned with conversational questions that led to producing valuable insights with common sense thoughts about reasons for youths’ disconnection and what to do about it (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Based on this understanding, administrative processes were put in place to ensure the functioning of the focus groups. Part of the discussion led to the conclusion that the focus group participants were the core members of a vision community that fosters a holistic solution to some of the issues of Post-Millennials in the church.

Significance of this Project

As stated earlier, there seems to be a decline of Black Youth in church attendance and participation in the Black church, because they are disenchanted with organized or traditional religion. What has caused Black Youth to become disenchanted with organized or traditional religion? As this researcher came to understand, the problem was that there needs to be an understanding of this new generation. Not only do Post-Millennials represent a large number of disconnected Youth, action must be taken now to improve the holistic impact for Post-Millennials.

This research project was important because of the need to address some identified problems. For example, there is the need to think critically while appreciating the traditions and cultures of their past (AAYLC Leadership Institute, 2016). One of the main reasons we needed to educate our Black youth was to dispel ugly untruths and contrived stereotypes that affect their self-esteem and their ability to be successful. We must tell our history! Our youth must be able to discern truth so that when authority figures in their lives are defining or describing them, discernment will let our youth receive or reject those descriptions. White historical figures such as Andrew Johnson, who became president when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, tell very negative stories. An example of this was told in an essay by Ta-Nehisi Coates. The impact of this sort of disregard for humanity hurts everyone – the target of such hatred and the greater society who may have benefitted from the contributions of that target. Our youth must be aware. President Andrew Johnson said,

The peculiar qualities which should characterize any people who are fit to decide upon the management of public affairs for a great state have seldom been combined. It is the glory of white men to know that they have had these qualities in sufficient measure to build upon this continent a great political fabric and to preserve its

stability for more than ninety years, while in every other part of the world all similar experiments have failed. But if anything can be proved by known facts, if all reasoning upon evidence is not abandoned, it must be acknowledged that in the progress of nation Negroes have shown less capacity for government than any other race of people. No independent government of any form has ever been successful in their hands. On the contrary, wherever they have left to their own devices they have shown a constant tendency to relapse into barbarism (Coates, 2013,13).

Unfortunately, remnants of this racist ideology remain. The desire to make the necessary changes must be embraced by the church community. Improving conditions must begin with welcoming Post-Millennials into our congregations by listening, including them in roles of leadership. The Post-Millennial generation is highly educated compared to past generations.

There must be an embrace of education as the road to life setting the pace for future generations. Also, there must be a willingness to revive the values of those who have paved the way. It was because of those forerunners, who took risks laying paths for us to achieve in ordinary life situations, that many are where they are today. We must desire a life where our communities focus efforts on direction and understand the shoulders of giants that came before us, because many of them risked it all. Are we willing to do the same? There can no longer be an excuse for communities to do nothing or very little about young people's disconnection from the church. Too much was at stake to continue to be silent and inactive while children are literally and physically dying all because of the lack of a lack of vision community with the involvement of Post-Millennials.

Limitations of the Project

There are many issues faced by Post-Millennials today. However, this project cannot address all of these issues. At most, this project can learn about the Post-Millennial population – how they think, outlooks for success, socio-emotional growth, political participation, and spiritual development. So many are disconnected and left to their own

devices as far as evangelical strength was concerned. According to Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson (2013), young people must be evangelized and transformed into disciples for Christ as this is the purpose of youth ministry. Therefore, it was necessary to reach a broad youth population. However, one of the main populations not addressed by this project was incarcerated youth even though it was recognized that this group of young people has very small chance of social, economic, or spiritual growth after incarceration unless youth incarceration has declined; however, there are still large disparities in youth confinement rates by race (Casey, 2011). In fact, Casey (2011) notes that while youth confinement rates are at a 35-year low, African-American youth face almost five times the likelihood of being confined as the whites. We must not forget these young people and must encourage the Post-Millennial participants in this project to be leaders who help transform all Post-Millennials into disciples for Christ. Hopefully, this transformation will prevent some incarceration.

Even with the limitations of the project, this project responded to this call for vision. It was thought that the vision would be an important and necessary way of setting the pace for future generations. It was expected that the older generations would form the vision community for the Post-Millennials. However, the lack of understanding of the Post-Millennials by older generations was a limitation and may create roadblocks to needed action in other settings. As a result of the focus group discussions, it was soon realized that the Post-Millennials would actually lead the way to becoming the vision community and that they must be heard.

Conclusion

Historically, the Black church has been the foundation of the Black community, a place of salvation, hope, refuge and spiritual healing. It has been a place where important issues are discerned and addressed locally and nationally. Today we find the Black Church standing at the crossroads of life. The crossroad where the church and community leaders find themselves as the voice crying in the wilderness because of their response to the cries of Black adolescents. Black adolescents have long been left off the agenda of the Black church, ignored in a largely patriarchal system, even justified by scripture, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:1-12). God has given the church and humanity a public response to the concerns of the Black adolescent:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divided his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matthew 25: 31-46).

With this mandate and charge to keep, humans have not lived up to the standards God has set before humanity; therefore, Black adolescents have begun to cry in the wilderness of life and have disconnected themselves from the church. The church must now begin to address or respond to their concerns or continue to foster the disconnection. It's important for youth to engage with the congregation and community leadership. The church's mission was to serve their respective communities in which Black adolescents live. There are many scriptures that support the mission of the church and its importance. Jesus made it abundantly plain that the reason he wanted his people to develop and serve in communities was "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). This is the ultimate goal. There is no doubt that when the church most clearly lives out the gospel in the relationship of its members and Black adolescents, it becomes the most powerful force for attracting disconnected youths. The church is the place where God's people meet Jesus in word and Spiritual growth. A church that addresses the concerns of Black Post-Millennials and welcomes them in participative roles can foster their spiritual growth. The church must make sure that Black Post-Millennials serve along with older adults. When Post-Millennials feel welcomed into the church's congregation as full-fledged members, they are more likely to identify as a member of the church and community.

In addition, the church must take advantage of Black Post-Millennials' youthful energy and vision in church activities. Post-Millennials have a great deal to offer church ministries, and when they can express their faith through meaningful roles, they develop a spirit of commitment to Jesus, to the church, and to the community. The only way the church can be credible to Post-Millennials is when this youthful generation sees the

congregation passionate for Jesus and the love of Jesus is reflected in the congregation and its actions (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013).

The goal of this project was to move the church in the direction of bringing together a Generation Z focus group that would discuss being passionate for Jesus, the love of Jesus, and ways to share that with other youth in their community, assess the impact, and create a model to proliferate in other communities. Our approach was to start small (this research project), think big (the vision), and grow (proliferate). We needed a vision community made up of Post-Millennials that would foster hope and commitment to solving important issues. It was a very important research project. It was of vital importance because Post-Millennials represent a generation of large numbers of disconnected Youth.

CHAPTER 1
DISCERNING THE NATURE AND CHALLENGES OF MINISTRY
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The nature and challenges of ministry must focus on the nature and meanings of discernment that address the importance of a vision community for the lives of African American youth. In short, one must first consider the meaning of discernment. According to Richard R. Osmer (2008) in his book, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, discernment is the activity of seeking God's guidance amid the circumstances, events, and decisions of life. Further, this means one must sift through and sort out right from wrong as parents must do when their children find themselves in trouble. A parent must sift through, listen, and weigh the circumstances surrounding the event before making a decision that impacts the family unit. Therefore, it is incumbent upon parents to seize upon the discernment that God has provided for in His precious truth! With discernment, all parents have the opportunity to "... henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). The advice given in this scripture can be used as a guide in life to use discernment because it is the ability to think biblically about all areas of life.

Discernment must be shared, via testimony, with all, but especially with the younger generations. It helps develop faith in the one who shares their experience and in the person who witnesses another's discernment in action. The Black church has historically valued fostering relationships and the part they play in developing the faith of the next generation. Youth leaders in particular have understood the mentoring functions to be extremely important in the mandate of 1 Timothy 4:12. As a result, youth leaders have organized programs to teach, train, and listen to Black youth. Many of these traditional youth leadership programs, though effective in the past, no longer address the issues of today's youth. More than programs that may or may not encourage today's youth to seek spiritual growth through the church, it was important to use discernment to understand the needs of today's young people.

Discernment Applied to the Literature Review

The Literature Review is a written approach to examining published information on a particular topic or field. The researcher used this review of literature to create a foundation and justification for research or to demonstrate knowledge of the current state of youth disconnection from the church and what it will take to form an effective visionary community. Discernment was critical in the life or development of the Literature Review. It was important to discern sound doctrine and understand scholarly papers which are essential elements of the literature review. Sound doctrine, Paul said to Timothy, is to be preached, it is to be guarded. It is to be kept as a treasure and passed on to the next generation. The application of discernment must never lack in this modern evangelical world. Whenever doctrinal clarity and conviction are not present, confusion may begin to infuse itself into that doctrine and this may tilt the foundation or justification of research

truth. Only discernment can assure us that we are working with sound doctrine and good scholarly input for the literature review.

This qualitative research project focused on Post-Millennials and sought to address the manner in which their unique worldview has shaped their ministry preferences. Thus, the problem this study sought to address was how to understand Post-Millennials in order that a vision community is formed that can foster a holistic solution that meets their needs. Discernment was a must. As part of the research report then, current literature on the Post-Millennial worldview was reviewed and related to the practice of youth ministry.

Prophetic Discernment

When seeking God's guidance, discernment will guide one through life's events (Osmer, 2008). In this project, it is needed to guide all that is done for a holistic solution to issues faced by African American youth. Prophetic discernment will help one to know if their biblical and theological principles and teachings have been violated. Every aspect of the solution must come under the scrutiny of knowing the right and good actions and ways: social, ethical, and psychological discernment. Therefore, discernment helps in the selection of literature that provides important insights to that solution. A literature review was a written approach to examining published information on that particular topic. As a researcher, this review of literature was used to create a foundation and justification for my research or to demonstrate knowledge on the current state of a field on youth and a vision of ministry for them. Not just any resources will apply but discerning the appropriate resources will yield in a stronger case for belief of the outcomes of that research.

Overall, discernment was critical in the life or development of this literature review. Knowing sound doctrine and scholarly papers are essential elements of the life of

a literature review. Sound doctrine, Paul said to Timothy, is to be preached, it is to be guarded. It is to be kept as a treasure and passed on to the next generation: “Hold fast the pattern of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). The application of discernment must never lack in this modern evangelical world. Whenever doctrinal clarity and conviction are not present, confusion begins to infuse itself into doctrine and this may tilt the foundation or justification of research truth. Paul again teaches the importance of good practices in the establishment of discerning actions: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (2 Timothy 4:3). This scripture teaches the importance of good practices or operational discernment. Discernment is important because it is the process by which we as Christians make decisions between right, wrong and our thinking about truth. Further, discernment gives us the ability to think in harmony with our ability to think biblically.

Biblical/Theological Aspects of Discerning Ministry with Post-Millennials

Discernment is important in the ministry with Post-Millennials because it is the process by which we as Christians make decisions between right and wrong in our thinking about truth. Our thinking about truth must be based in the fact that the, “Ultimate of life is to worship, remember, God while you are young and still can determine the course of your life, holding off the effects of age and unwise decisions” (Keehn, 2012b). With his observations about youth ministry as mandated in the Old Testament, Keehn (2012b) describes the benefits of a discerning spirit to be used to lead young people on a clear path to spiritual, emotional, and social growth.

Further, discernment gives us the ability to think in harmony with our ability to think biblically. Without discernment, we cannot address many of the issues brought to our attention. We must rely on Biblical scripture to teach us the importance of using discernment and how to use it in relating to Post-Millennials. For example, in Malachi 3:18, we see the value of discernment in dealing with disconnected persons: “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not.” Further, First Kings 3:9 tells us to, “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad.” First Thessalonians 5:21-22 teaches that it is the responsibility of every Christian to be discerning: “But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.” The apostle John issues a similar warning when he says, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). According to the New Testament, discernment is not optional for the believer-it is required.

According to Peter, God “has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3). You see, it is through the “true knowledge of Him,” that we have been given everything we need to live a Christian life in this fallen world. And how else do we have true knowledge of God but through the pages of His Word, the Bible? In fact, Peter goes on to say that such knowledge comes through God's granting “to us His precious and magnificent promises” (2 Peter 1:4).

The key to living an uncompromising life lies in one's ability to exercise discernment in every area of his or her life. For example, failure to distinguish between

truth and error leaves the Christian subject to all manner of false teaching. False teaching then leads to an unbiblical mindset, which results in unfruitful and disobedient living—a certain recipe for disconnection.

John McArthur (2007), noted pastor and president of The Master's Seminary in Los Angeles, California presents discernment as crucial in every aspect of life and essential to good practices. If we accept that discernment is crucial in all aspects of life and essential to good practices, then we must consider the intentional development of our discernment. It is discernment that guides us and provides a rational contextual framework of why these scholarly references were used in the development of this literature review. The journals and books referenced in this doctoral project include the current knowledge including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to the topic: *Forming a Vision Community that Fosters a Holistic Solution to Issues Faced by African American Youth*. For example, the literature review contains information gleaned from Blanchard and Stoner's book titled *Full Steam Ahead! Unleash the Power of Vision in Your Work and Your Life* (2011). Blanchard and Stoner (2011) offer steps to creating the vision community: (1) See the significant purpose for the vision; (2) Honestly describe the current reality – disconnected youth; (3) Develop some strategies and actions to move forward such as the focus groups; (4) Develop the plan for involvement and communication – the communication team at St. James Baptist Church, the venue used for research; and (5) The personal commitments necessary to live out the vision.

Books such as *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture* by Dean Borgman give us an up-to-date look at youth ministry. Though we have discerned some differences and complications from the past, Borgman lets us

know that, “Youth, their families, and their peer groups are complicated because of their individualities, their localities, and their associations. Combinations of digital and face-to-face relationships add to the complexity” (Borgman, 2013, 5). Although influenced by modern day technology, the fact that there is complexity is not new as shown by Dave Keehn (2012b) in his blog on youth ministry. Dave Keehn, Professor of Christian Education at Talbot School of Theology in Biola University, has served for over 20 years in youth ministry in both large and small churches (Biola University, 2018). Keehn steps us through time with his presentations on youth ministry in Ancient (2012a), Old Testament (2012b), and New Testament (2012c) times.

Ministry to Post-Millennials is powerful for sustaining this group or any group of people as moral and socio-economic agents for change. “Perhaps the greatest picture we have of the desired result of a healthy and effective youth ministry is the one given to us in the Gospel of Luke when describing Jesus as a young teenager. Luke 2:42 states that when Jesus was 12 years old he went to the Temple in Jerusalem with his parents” (Keehn, 2012c). In this account, Jesus was conversing and teaching elders and the elders were listening in amazement (Luke 2:42). Jesus was a teen, a Post-Millennial. Today’s Post-Millennials have a lot to offer and want to be heard, too; youth ministry to them may be most effective with approaches such as described by Keehn (2013c) or as outlined below by Osmer in *Practical Theology* (2013). In each of these three references, it becomes clear that Post-Millennials must be heard.

Historically, religion has been among the most powerful agents for changing human attitudes and behavior. Religion has historically told what it means to be human, and it has defined the nature of our goals and relationships. Ministry to Post-Millennials requires a

different approach than the old hierarchical clergy approach where the pastor was the highest authority in the congregation. Post-Millennials want to be heard as they take participative roles. Approaches such as Osmer (2013) outlined in his *Practical Theology* book are more suitable for ministry to Post-Millennials because of the guiding questions that help in situations that occur, especially new situations. Post-Millennials present many new situations which may be addressed by asking the four guiding questions of Practical Theology: (1) What is going on? (2) Why is this going on? (3) What ought to be going on? (4) How might we respond? These four questions make up the basic structure of Practical Theology, a chance to apply Biblical truths to a generation likely to present actions so different than recent generations (Osmer, 2008). This is operational discernment in action because practical theologians focus on matters important to the common good and not simply the church (Osmer, 2008). More will be included later on operational discernment.

Social/Ethical/Psychological Discernment

Post-Millennials, also known as Generation Z, is the demographic cohort after the Millennials. Post-Millennials are not known as well as is necessary to understand this young generation. Appendix E compares Millennials to Post-Millennials to show the characteristic differences between the generations (Beall, 2016). There are no precise dates for when the Gen Z cohort starts or ends; demographers and researchers typically use starting birth years that range from the mid-1990s to early 2000s, and as yet there is little consensus about ending birth years (Horovitz, 2012). Although many groups use other names for this generation, “Post-Millennial” is a name given by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services and Pew Research, in statistics published in 2016 showing the relative

sizes and dates of the generations (Fry, 2016). “Millennials are quickly becoming yesterday's news, and media companies are trying to figure out just what to call the next generation” (Baysinger, 2016, 1). According to Baysinger (2016), the Time Warner company, Turner, is trying to figure what to call this generation -- Becomers? Founders? iGen? Post-Millennials? And Turner has decided they should be called Plurals (Baysinger, 2016). So how does Turner describe Plurals?

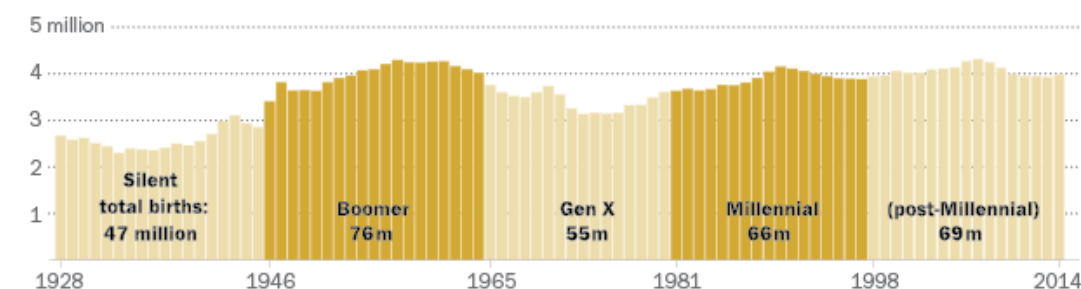
Plurals are born after 1997. They are the most diverse generation in U.S. history. They are digital natives and “entertainment omnivores” who likely think VHS stands for Virtual High School. Plurals are perfect consumers for an entity like Turner, with its young-skewing networks and programs. Jeffrey Grant, senior vice president of research for Turner's Emerging Consumers division credits research to know and understand Millennials and Post-Millennials as key to the success of the company (Baysinger, 2016). Further, it is noted that a strong understanding of who these generations are and how to best connect with them is a very important resource for Turner and Turner's business partners (Baysinger, 2016). Although Turner and other sources use names that they think best describe this generation, this researcher will use the name “Post-Millennial” because it was given by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Baysinger, 2016). From the beginning of the 20th century, generation identifications start with the Greatest Generation, born before 1928; the Silent Generation born between 1928-45; the Baby Boom Generation, born before 1946-64; Generation X, born between 1965-80; Millennial Generation, born between 1981-97; and Post-Millennials, born since 1998 (Willoughby, 2015). The chart (Figure 4) graphically displays the large number of people in the post-millennial generation, which is second largest cohort after the Boomer (69 million)

generation. It has often been said that there is power in numbers, so projections (76 million) about the impact of this generation are staggering as the number of births is second only to the Millennials, but their numbers are still climbing.

Figure 4

Births Underlying Each Generation

Number of U.S. births by year and generation



Source: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services National Center for Health Statistics

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

What fosters hope and commitment to socio-economic achievement in Post-Millennials? This question will lead one into a better understanding of what the future holds for Post-Millennials. Religious development, formation of families, employment ethics, participation in government, and civic duties may not be the same as the millennials, baby boomers, or other groups before. Following the momentum started by Millennials, Post-Millennials may be more prone to tackle issues left unsettled by previous generations, issues such as homelessness (Mago, Morden, Fritz, Wu, Namazi, Geranmayeh, Chattopadhyay, and Dabbaghian, 2013). As noted:

The forces which affect homelessness are complex and often interactive in nature. Social forces such as addictions, family breakdown, and mental illness are compounded by structural forces such as lack of available low-cost housing, poor economic conditions, and

insufficient mental health services. Together these factors impact levels of homelessness through their dynamic relations. Historic models, which are static in nature, have only been marginally successful in capturing these relationships (Mago et al., 2013, 94).

Specifically, what are the perceptions of the Post-Millennials about homelessness and what will they be willing to do about it? How this issue is addressed by Post-Millennials is a glimpse into how our society will be conducted in the future. We must understand them and still help guide them. At this point, all Post-Millennials are young and we must not leave them entirely to their own devices. We must also learn from Post-Millennials. Post-Millennials are our future. We must view them from many perspectives. This research will present essential lessons learned and summarize key principles to sustaining or reclaiming the Black youth as contributors to resolve socio-economic issues such as homelessness. Understanding, welcoming, listening, and learning from our Black youth is the job and calling of a hope-centered youth ministry (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013).

Today's young people face many social, ethical, and psychological issues that almost seem to meld into each other because of the speed of change which is faster than ever before (Marlow, 2016). The social, ethical, and psychological issues that are identified today are subject to change before even being understood. The issues may be based on a set of current understanding and current reality. The real focus should be on how we holistically tackle challenges. In order to do this, we must give our youth the tools to rapidly respond to a changing environment (Marlow, 2016). Today's youth need a vision community that can respond to rapid change. For that reason, we need to give Youth Ministers and youth the tools not just to address today's issues, but rather to lead in

such a way as to rapidly respond to a changing environment. Post-Millennials must actively use discernment to form the alliances necessary to have a healthy social, ethical, and psychological environment without isolationism (Stephens, 2014).

Isolationism

Isolationism is a policy of national isolation by abstention from alliances (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1986). Millennials will come of age just in time to benefit, change, or reap the devastation of isolationism. Regarding isolationism, Bret Stephens (2014) in the introduction of his book, said, "A world in which the leading liberal-democratic nation does not assume its role as world policeman will become a world in which dictatorships contend, or unite, to fill the breach. Americans seeking a return to an isolationist garden of Eden—alone and undisturbed in the world, knowing neither good nor evil—will soon find themselves living within shooting range of global pandemonium" (Stephens, 2014, xvii).

Post-Millennials must be connected to their environment in every way and be prepared for rapid change. As speaker at the national symposium on *A New Framework for Moral Education* as early as 1993, Dr. Farzam Arbab recognized this speed of change and transformation as being unparalleled in human history. Today's youth must be able to respond to rapid change. They need a vision community that can be rapidly responsive to their issues.

This project used questionnaires and group discussions to understand such a vision community according to our youth participants. First, however, Generation Z social, ethical, and psychological needs had to be discerned and the vision community had to be formed. A vision is a mental picture of what participants want their community to look

and feel like over time: this picture may be captured in a report, an illustration, a slideshow, a story, or a combination of these; but the important thing to remember is that its purpose is to capture a picture of the community's future. It is grounded in belonging, in understanding, and in plurality (Lambert, 2013).

Theories

As young people work together with others to form a vision community, all efforts must be consistent with the developmental theories for this age group. Theories can help guide the activities, understanding, and communication.

If theory cannot be analyzed and applied, it is still just theory. It is important, not only to learn theory and understand why theories are important but also to learn how to apply the theoretical frameworks in practice (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009). In working with today's Black young Post-Millennials, one must be able to make the transition from theory to practice with confidence and effectiveness. Theory and practice must be studied in ways that are relevant and meaningful so as to more closely associate the practicality of the theoretical concepts (Wrenn and Wrenn, 2009). Further, Wren and Wren (2009) cite several other professional researchers who make a case for integrating theory and practice:

It is imperative that students in professional programs be able to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. As Hutchings (1990) wrote, "What's at stake is the capacity to perform, to put what one knows into practice (p. 1)." To help students become capable and competent practitioners requires that they have training in self-awareness, knowledge acquisition, and skill building (Kramer, 1998). According to Shebib (2003), practitioners need to have skills in four areas: relationship building, exploring or probing, empowering, and challenging. An essential additional skill is the ability to gain and utilize knowledge from practice (Dorfman, 1996). Mendenhall (2007) says that in order for students to develop these skills, education at the master's level, as well as practical experience, is necessary and expected. What can we do in our classrooms to increase student success, not only in their internships but most importantly in work settings following graduation? How can we use classroom teaching to enhance the ability of students to put what they've learned into practice, and how can we use that

improved practice to enhance classroom learning (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009, pp 258-260.)

Integrating theory and practice can best be achieved when one understands the various types of theories and the impact of theory on practice. The types of theoretical frameworks that were considered with this project were: adolescent and young adult developmental theory; learning theory in relationship to prevailing social issues; race and social theory. Also, the voices of youth and implications for church and public response to Black adolescents must be analyzed and understood lest we bring together the correct theory with the wrong practice or the wrong theory with the ineffective practice. To understand the various types of theories and the impact of these theories on practice, we must know what the theorists have contributed to our knowledge about these aforementioned theories.

Child and Adolescent Development theory is focused on what's involved in making ethical decisions and policies that are related to children and adolescents (Gilman, Longo, and Emick, 2015). People who study children have created theories to explain how children develop through childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. These theorists have recognized general patterns children tend to follow as they grow up, and these patterns have been documented in their theories (Oswalt, 2013). According to three Capella University educational psychology professors, the field of child and adolescent development is a unique specialization, focused on research linked to development, and what's involved with making ethical decisions and policies that are related to children and adolescents (Gilman, Longo, and Emick, 2015). Theorists realize that children grow and develop in many different areas, but in four main areas or channels: physical, psychological and cognitive, social and emotional, and sexuality and gender identity (Oswalt, 2013). The

physical channel is most obvious as they grow in height and weight. They change in looks and develop certain physical abilities as they progress through adolescence toward adulthood.

Children also develop psychologically and cognitively. According to Angela Oswalt, a leader in child development, when their brains retain information and they learn to use that information, they grow cognitively as well as psychologically (Oswalt, 2013).

Literally, children have to learn how to think on purpose and to process or organize all the information that comes to them from the environment. They must learn how to solve problems, to talk, and to complete mental tasks such as remembering telephone numbers or using computers (Oswalt, 2013). While developing psychologically and cognitively, children also grow socially and emotionally.

Learning theory in relationship to prevailing social issues addresses why and how social issues get to be part of public school curriculum (Totten and Petersen, 2014). A few of the prevailing social issues are: (a) Feminism which makes a difference in approach to teaching girls vs. boys; (b) The “crisis” of 21st Century education as it affects our country’s strength in a global economy; and (c) Change in approaches necessary to address gender, class, and power issues (Totten and Petersen, 2014). In years gone by, schools studied the impact of the Industrial Revolution and child labor laws, a social issue of that time. There have been changes in the workplace that create new issues. According to Alana Semuels in the Totten and Petersen book (2014), “The relentless drive for efficiency at U.S. companies has created a new harshness in the workplace.” Alana Semuels (2017) also identified another set of social issues that spring from the diverging fates of American workers regardless of color, A growing earnings gap between those with a college

education and those without is creating economic and cultural differences throughout the country. According to Semuels (2017), this pressure in the workplace creates a growing list of social issues that need to be addressed in the early life of learners. This theory and the social theory of race must be taught correctly.

Race and social theory is a social learning theory that combines cognitive learning theory which posits that learning is influenced by psychological factors and behavioral learning theory which assumes that learning is based on responses to environmental stimuli (Plante, 2013). This psychologist further explains that behavioral modeling is such a powerful concept that leaders in such endeavors as business and government and all organizations should be educated to recognize its value (Plante, 2013). Those organizations include the church, so youth leaders must be aware of behavioral modeling, perhaps through discernment.

Value of Theories

Theories can be a starting point for observing phenomena. However, because of the speed at which today's young people develop, a keener eye for observation is needed so as to form a response. Adam Vaccaro (2014) a writer for *Inc Magazine*, gathered observations from several sources such as millennial expert Scott Hess. Vaccaro acknowledges that generational classifications are not scientific, but there are insights into the next generation to come. These insights are the theories upon which Post-Millennials were observed. These insights are discernment in practice. When discernment is applied to the theories, confidence of the observer increases.

Operational Discernment - Voices of Youth

The literature makes it clear that the church's youth ministry workers must have a significant and trusting relationship with young people so they will experience Christ (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013). The Church must teach Christ as the foundation, for "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). The foundational learning must be built on a relationship. The church must understand it will not be the "killer messages" that ministries give on sex or drugs on Sunday morning that youth will remember and be drawn into association. It will be the personal time the congregation gave them at such times as walking along the lake at retreats, or the late-night phone call when they are faced with a major problem, or they just wanted to talk. Adolescents and youth want to know and trust their youth ministry leaders (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013). While sports and leadership programs are not condemned, it is pointed out by Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson (2013) that such programs are not enough. The evangelization and transformation of the youth leaders into disciples for Christ is the purpose of youth ministry (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013). The church's old programs, used years ago, are not generally successful in imparting the essentials for spiritual growth to adolescents and youth. Program-based ministries do little to transform lives. They may keep teens busy, but don't always challenge them to action with the gospel. Youths today are looking for intimacy and maturation—they require sacrificial love, not parties. They require a challenge to action, not passive observation in church service (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013).

Finally, as a point of operational discernment, if parishes truly desire to become "youth-friendly", it is crucial to value adolescents (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013).

This means listening to them and responding to their spiritual needs, as well as providing them with facilities and financial resources to enable their growth as disciples of our Lord and Savior. Programs, curriculums and activities are of little value when adolescents don't know that they need their lives changed. The success of a church youth ministry must be evaluated on how well it is leading youth to an outlook of hope, a deeper commitment to Christ, and reconnection to the church (Wimberly, Barnes and Johnson, 2013). This is how disconnected adolescents enter the Body of Christ—not through activities, but through relationships with God and other Christian adolescents. Activities can be good as a way to get youth together where they can share their need for Christ, but the goal is not the activity—it is the relationships that are built.

Discernment is extremely important gift we must use to know and understand the Post-Millennials – Generation Z. What is Generation Z saying? How do we find out? There are many ways to learn what the youth are saying: (a) Listen to them in small group discussions; (b) Listen to them interact with each other in normal daily activities; (c) Watch market reactions to their demands. The oldest Post-Millennials are age 15-20 years old. As they come into their own, they must be recognized as a unique generation. A successful Youth Ministry must be able to discern what Generation Z is really saying in order to appeal to that generation. To appeal to them, it is important to know them.

In a *Mass Live Media* article titled “Marketing to the Post-Millennial Generation,” Ed Kubosiak (2016) summarizes key points to know when attempting to appeal to Post-Millennials: (a) Post-Millennials “live and breathe technology. They are the first to have ever grown up with social media accounts and smartphones from a young age, and they start creating their own “personal brands” during these formative years; (b) Since they have

seen things change so fast, they have a different relationship with developing new ideas than their predecessors; (c) They know what they want from a product or service, and [Youth Ministers] stay in touch with them, listening to them in order to keep up with them. (d) For various reasons such as recession and the threat of terrorism, Post-Millennials will stay close to home. Any message or ministerial program must keep the previous points in mind when attempting to engage this generation. To be effective with this generation, their voices must be heard (Kubosiak, 2016).

Post-Millennials are far more rebellious than the generation before them, the Millennials (Sound 3 Generation Edge, 2014). Millennials came of age at a time when the world was good and the system seemed to be geared up to work for them; they had no need to rebel, but Post-Millennials have rebellion and the desire for reform at its very heart (Sound 3 Generation Edge, 2014). Remembering the main thrust of this research was to look at the vision community that fosters hope and commitment to spiritual, socio-economic, and educational issues for Post-Millennials, one must understand where they are on these issues now. There are multiple characteristics of Post-Millennials which may be summarized in the following ways: “On the economic context, Post-Millennials have watched Millennials leaving University with big debts and poor job prospects and they’re asking themselves ‘is it worth it?’” (Sound 3 Generation Edge, 2014). On the social or political context, Post-Millennials feel completely disconnected from mainstream politics, yet care deeply about the issues that affect the world they live in from conformist to reformist. “They have also seen how Millennials’ conformist notions of life success have proved unrealistic - making them the most stressed generation yet - and they’ve asked, ‘is there a different way ahead?’” (Sound 3 Generation Edge, 2014). With regards to family

and social relations. Post-Millennials have Millennial generation parents who actively encourage them to “think differently and to challenge the status quo.” Post-Millennials have a decrease in trust as they have grown up watching banks getting bailed out only to pay themselves huge bonuses; they’ve seen big corporations paying no tax; they’ve seen their parents working harder while their incomes decrease. (e) On education, Post-Millennials have grown up in a world of infinite access to information (Sound 3 Generation Edge, 2014). The education system increasingly emphasizes the need to develop critical reasoning skills and construct strong arguments; however, Post-Millennials are equipped to eloquently challenge institutions, practices and legislation they don’t believe in because their mastery of social media enables them to make big noise about it (Sound 3 Generation Edge, 2014).

Perhaps the rebellion and disconnection of the Post-Millennials can be compared to the rebellion and disconnection of the biblical story of the prodigal son to give hope of re-connection (Luke 15:11-32). The Father in the story of the prodigal son ran to greet his son upon his return. It is a picture of love and grace which will be necessary when the Post-Millennials come into the fold. The church must respond to Post-Millennials with such love and grace. It may take an awakening like The Great Awakening for church to become more widely appealing to Post-Millennials. The Great Awakening was a revitalization movement that left an impact on American Protestantism. It resulted from powerful preaching that gave listeners a sense of deep personal revelation of their need of justification by faith. The Great Awakening got away from ceremony, rituals, and hierarchy. Post-Millennials have expressed disliking the ceremony, rituals, and hierarchy.

Christianity was made intensely personal to people by giving them a deep sense of spiritual conviction deep sense of redemption. Converts were encouraged to be introspective and committed to personal morality (Tracy, 2015). The Great Awakening was a movement which challenged authority and caused division between traditionalist Protestants who insisted that ritual and doctrine were of utmost importance (Kid, 2007).

The Black church was impacted also, as this revivalist movement increased the number of African slaves and free blacks who were exposed to and subsequently converted to Christianity by preachers such as George Liele, an enslaved preacher who was freed to preach on the plantations in Georgia. It was said that Liele preached in the fiery manner of George Whitefield (Shannon, White, & VanBroekhoven, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review summarizes the enlightenment provided by discernment, indisputable facts, creditable resources, and the constant desire to form a vision community that fosters a wholistic solution to issues faced by African American youth. With discernment based on Biblical truths, hope rules.

Discernment helped this researcher look to the past generations (baby Boomers, and Silent Generation, for example, and without prejudice, compare characteristics of Post-Millennials to bring them the much-needed hope. The well-researched literature of Pew Research Center, and other scholarly writings lend to the credibility of the literature review. . Young people are struggling, according to researchers Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson (2013), because of social issues such as high cost of education, large numbers and threat of Black incarcerations, dysfunctional family units, social environment, and most importantly their disengagement with the Black Church. It is like a social wilderness and

these are issues of social justice. Just as God lead the Israelites through the wilderness for forty years (Bible: Numbers 10:11–12, 33–34; Exodus 3:17), our Black Youth are in need of leaders who engage them in an effort to prevent their wandering and being disconnected from church. The church must act immediately, to address this crisis in the black community. The dreams of future generation are in their hands and the church today must remember those yester years and reach out to our youth. The church must know that the challenge is real and with discernment and application of resources in this literature review, the vision community will be formed. The Black church must, with discernment, take a stance with regards to their public response and it must begin now!

CHAPTER 2

DISCERNING A WAY FORWARD

Introduction

To understand Post-Millennial thinking and behavior, one must ask the Post-Millennial generation because they are the ones this research paper must engage, inform, and persuade the value and importance of the Black Church in their hope for spiritual well-being and a healthy outlook in life. Therefore, the purpose of this doctoral project was to receive information directly from them.

An effective approach to help the Post-Millennial generation thrive in the Black church can be created from their describing their needs and goals. This project listened to the project participants. With the exception of some of the group observers, the participants in this research project were teens – all Post-Millennials. Most participants were underage, meaning younger than 18 years of age; so parental permission was needed (see Appendix A). This study was developed to collect information from answers to specific research questions and sub-questions using a qualitative research design. Small focus groups were used.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a compilation of the completed portions of the research, which were undertaken over the summer months of 2017. Attention will be given to the following questions:

1. What method was used?

2. What exactly was done to implement the research?
3. How was this done?
4. What was the outcome?

Research Method Used

The method used in this research design was qualitative in nature. There are many types of qualitative research methods, one of which is ethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The ethnographic method is a design of inquiry coming from anthropology and sociology in which the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time. Data collection often involves observations and interviews (Creswell, 2014). “Ethnography is a form of social research used by sociologists, anthropologists, historians and other scholars to study living human beings in their social and cultural contexts” (Moschella, 2008, 25). This method was ideal for this project because it opened the way for a variety of decisions.

Qualitative research is used when we don’t know what to expect and is one of the common data collection methods used in focus groups (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative methods are means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This method was important because it invited people into sharing open, honest, and unforced ideas. This is particularly critical for Post-Millennials (teens) who are often given to silence and the fear of being *cut dead* by the group in which they are members (Ellison, 2013). *Cut dead* is an idiomatic expression from the nineteenth century and the expression means to be “ignored deliberately or snubbed completely” (Ellison, 2013, 1). After being snubbed for so long, those who are cut dead

are relegated to a position of muteness and invisibility, as Gregory Ellison talks about in his book *Cut Dead But Still Alive* (2013).

This qualitative method is used because of the researcher's assumption that teens have been cut dead and must be drawn out. Of the five types of qualitative research methods described by Creswell (2014), the ethnographic method of inquiry seems best for drawing out stories and actions teens ascribe to social and human problems in their lives (Jansen, 2010). A qualitative research method was also used because the researcher wanted to use open-ended questions in the interviews.

Methodology

The research questions for this project were clearly defined to produce useful results. Specifically, it was expected that the research was likely to provide useful results if the most effective methodology was used. It was based on the understanding that methodology includes distinct procedures such as questions, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and validation (Creswell, 2014). The methodology used to carry out this ethnographic method included the use of surveys and focus groups. The researcher must be prepared to accept the findings of the research and not skew or change the results in any way as objectivity and truthfulness are critical qualities for trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014).

The methodology specifically included the formation of questions, the number and nature of subjects, data needed to answer questions, data collection sources, and when. These aspects of the methodology are identified in Table 1, the Methodology Matrix – Qualitative Design.

Table 1 Methodology Matrix- Qualitative Design

Questions	Subjects/Site	Data needed to answer questions	Data collection/ sources	When
1. (Qualitative) - How does a Youth minister's leadership style impact Post-Millennial engagement in Black Church?	*Students 15 s *St. James Baptist Church	*Student's attitudes towards their own personal participation *Student's attitudes towards interaction with youth leader	*Group Leader observations *Survey students on their attitudes towards attendance (observe student's enthusiasm towards participation)	*Observations during the group sessions *25-hour long observation *Beginning end of 2017 school year
2. (Qualitative) How will establishing a Post-Millennial advisory committee impact church attendance and church participation for the Post-Millennial generation in the Black church?	15 students in discussion group setting	*Define Advisory Committee *Establish organization of Advisory Committee * What would Post-Millennials like their roles to be in the Black church?	*One on one interviews with participant *Church interest surveys	*Meetings during 2017

Because there needs to be an understanding of this generation, the Post-Millennial generation, definite planning strategies were needed to carry out this methodology matrix.

These strategies are described in the next section.

Planning Strategies

Planning Strategies included many sessions with the Pastor of St. James Baptist Church. The importance of this project was discussed. We also noted the limitations of the project and decided that the limitations do not refute the importance of the project. It was possible to realize the gains from doing the project in spite of the limitations. However, it

was important to note limitations of the project so as not to create notions of panacea for all concerns of youth ministry.

Central to the discussions was the underlying premise that, at most, this project can learn more about the Post-Millennial population – how they think, their outlooks for success, socio-emotional growth, political participation, and spiritual development. Planning also moved forward based on the recognition that large numbers of Post-Millennials are disconnected - left out of the church. Therefore, it was considered necessary to reach a broad youth population including incarcerated youth. However, ultimately, incarcerated youth were not included in this project because of resource shortage. This limitation is not viewed as unimportant, however, because it is recognized that this group of young people have very small chances of social, economic, or spiritual growth after incarceration and it must be the focus of some other projects. The planning strategies for this project were narrowed to address the goals of this project.

The planning strategies also included dialogues with ministers and other Christian leaders who work with youth. This was intentional dialogue so as to be certain that this researcher was able to hear and understand the various points of view from the Post-Millennial participants. (Lipthrott, 2016). I talked with Dr. James H. Salley, a leader currently in mission and ministry, who gave a clear outline of how to engage young people (Africa University, 2017). I talked with Dr. Elliot McGlory, Adjunct Faculty Professor at Grand Canyon University, an accredited, private Christian university (Grand Canyon University, 2017). Dr. McGlory stressed the urgency of working with disconnected youth to make sure they learn about Jesus and to make sure youth are included in leadership roles. Both Dr. Salley and Dr. McGlory stressed the importance of not being critical of

disconnected youth and listening to disconnected youth so as to address the issues of disconnected youth. These intentional dialogues helped this researcher formulate the survey questions and construct topics for the focus group conversations.

The Pastor of St. James Baptist Church announced the research project during one of his morning services. A group of young adults led by the youth ministry leader was chosen to identify problems in the community and the church. This was a very diverse group of young adults; some were members and non-members of St. James Baptist Church.

Several other plans were undertaken to carry out the research:

- A survey was developed to address concerns discussed during the group meeting,
- A letter was developed to request participants and issued,
- Consent letters developed and issued,
- Surveys issued,
- Surveys retrieved and analyzed.

Several commercial tools for generating surveys were examined: Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, SurveyGizmo, Wufoo, MailChimp, and Constant Contact. These tools were aimed mostly at quantitative measurements except Qualtrics. However, Qualtrics required technological resources not available to us and a timeframe too extensive for us. It measured quality and was a driver for “Continuous customer experience improvement through closed loop feedback and strategic customer experience improvement” (Qualtrics, 2017). The researcher decided to develop our own survey based on an understanding of qualitative survey development from Creswell (2014) and Jansen (2010). Regarding qualitative surveys, Jansen recognized Creswell’s five types of qualitative research and

noted that, “It is, first of all, a simple research design, not for the study of social structures and processes but for the study of diversity in a population” (Jansen, 2010, 11). Armed with these insights, we developed our “Youth Survey and Focus Group Discussion Questions” (See Appendix C).

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies addressed the questions of how, when, with whom the focus groups were actually carried out. It was not about the outcomes but was to facilitate them. Implementation strategies evolved from the planning sessions between this researcher, the pastor at St. James, and several ministry leaders. As stated earlier, this research project began with a conversation between the researcher and the Pastor of St. James Baptist Church. During our conversation, he began to discuss the challenges he faced in two areas, including (1) youth ministry leadership, and (2) youth attendance and church involvement.

In order to be effective and efficient, the project required the establishment of several ministry leaders and positions. These positions were Ministry Leader Coordinator, Ministry Leader of Participant Recruitment, Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation, The Ministry Leader of Operations, and Ministry of Transportation. These leaders were chosen by personal observation, volunteers from another ministry and by the word of God. An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall (1 Timothy 3:6 NLT).

The Ministry Leader Coordinator: Many youths in the body of Christ are intimidated by or uncomfortable with, the thought of going to God’s house and meeting new believers in Christ. This ministry leader coordinator welcomed new members into the

body of Christ and explained the importance of the project. This ministry leader also recorded new member's information such as name, address and the number of individuals in the household.

Ministry Leader of Participant Recruitment: This research project was operated by ministry volunteers from the church membership and the local community. These God gifted servants were charged with recruitment efforts and were the leaders who managed the youth participants. They were responsible for the participant's contact information and scheduled participants for focus groups setting. The ministry leader also logged participant's contact hours and accomplishments so that the ministry project leader would remain aware of the participants' contributions.

The Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation: This server of God was a man ideally suited for the day-to-day operations and was the interphase and advocate for the participants. He responded to the participants in such a way as to not reflect his personal biases or what is called "our own stuff" (Moschella, 2008, 106).

This ministry leader ensured participants were in place daily and provided instruction with regards to the survey as well as other tasks as needed. The focus group was a very diverse group of young adults; some were members and non-members of St. James Baptist Church. The group was led by the youth ministry leader and Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation.

The setting for this study was a church located in an urban area of a major metropolitan city in northeast Georgia. Participants ranged in age from 13 years old to 19 years old – all Post-Millennials. During the summer of 2017, a total of 15 participants answered the survey questions and participated in the focus group.

All of the students were African American, 60% females and 40% males. Students were told about the project to the point of being willing to complete all instruments and be willing to brainstorm about church attendance and recruitment of other Post-Millennials to become connected. They were told that they may indeed become that “Vision Community that Fosters a Holistic Solution to Issues Faced by African American Youth” because of their leadership and willingness to share their insights with others.

The Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation instructed the Focus Group participants to be open with regards to their opinions and to be respectful of the opinions of others as well. Listening to each other was stressed and was based on the view that “A key element in using ethnography as a pastoral practice is that it becomes a form of pastoral listening. Pastoral theologians have long stressed listening skills as a critical dimension of care and counseling” (Moschella, 2008, 12).

The group agreed to discuss the following subjects: (1) community violence, its impact and how it plagues our cities; (2) the importance of attending church; (3) youth ministry leadership within the church; (4) obtaining and maintaining quality education within our community; (5) millennial non-denominational transition; (6) the lack of K-12 parental involvement in the community schools and how to revive this participation, (7) youth involvement in the church. Although all of the topics are of great importance, we narrowed our focus to two areas (1) youth involvement in the church, and (2) youth ministry leadership. There was intentional dialogue with participants so that their fears of muteness and invisibility would be diminished so that there would be open discussions and completion of the survey. During the Focus Group session, the focus group was observed by the Youth Minister, the Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation, and a note-taker.

Conversations were observed and there were some face-to-face interviews. The benefits of pastoral ethnography were gained as described by Mary Clark Moschella (2008) because the Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation who facilitated the discussions assumed a neutral attitude and the group participated with understanding the project and openly and honestly expressing their views.

The Ministry Leader of Operations. During each leadership training meeting, there was a great deal of value placed on openness and directness. These leaders also served as the link to outside organizations and service providers. On several occasions these leaders processed the God given gifts to effectively negotiate and use persuasion when necessary to ensure the success of the ministry leadership and project. At every level, through effective communication, these ministry leaders supported individual and team achievements by creating explicit guidelines for accomplishing results and for the success of other team members. These ministry leaders maintained their core values with their focus on Integrity, Wisdom, Motivation, Perseverance, and Service Before Self. Each core value was an asset to this project: (1) Integrity adherence to moral and ethical principles; (2) Wisdom discernment, or insight; (3) Motivation having a strong reason to act or accomplish something; and (4) Perseverance providing with a reason to act in a certain way (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017). These core values acted as guides for accountability to the project. Additionally, this would in turn lead an individual to establish a meaningful relationship and membership in the body of Christ at the house of God-that was the St. James Baptist Church in this case.

The Ministry Leader of Transportation played a very important role in implementation strategy. Because we were working with Post-Millennials, transportation

was a consideration. Many of them cannot drive yet. Their parents work and cannot get them there at the meeting time. This ministry leader coordinated with the transportation ministry of the church to transport members as well as non-members of the church to the focus group sessions. This ministry leader ensured appropriate transportation vehicles were able to accommodate requirements of the Post-Millennial participants. Signs were posted that indicated both the presence of the focus group locations and the date and hour of each event. The signs were clearly visible throughout the church and announcements were made each week before the event date and each Sunday during services. In addition, a message was placed on the church's marquee and poster board markers were used to indicate parking and event locations. Additionally, members of this ministry project went into the community distributing flyers that listed its location, telephone number for those needing transportation.

Evaluation Strategies

The process of research involved emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants' setting, analyzing the data inductively, building from particular to general themes, and making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Specifically, evaluation strategies emerging out of the ethnographic method centered on the uses of dialogue, content analysis of transcripts of focus group proceedings that were capable of revealing the worldview/voices of the youth. Actually, an ethnographic approach gave participants the right, an opening, the invitation to share what was inside them and find their place in church life. It leads to a final written report which has a flexible writing structure (Creswell 2014). Evaluation strategies also included expectations of numbers of participants, their ages, gender, etc. that were placed in a chart. This was a means of

determining the extent to which you have achieved a desirable marker of participation. The final section provided concluding reflections/summary statements about what was done followed the inclusion of any additional charts, graphs, etc. to illustrate the processes. The purpose therein was to highlight the research processes. Again, the process of research involved emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants' setting, analyzing the data inductively, building from particular to general themes, and making interpretation of the meaning of the data.

It would have been necessary for the researcher to inform the participants about what it means to worship as a committed Christian, but that would most likely have introduced unwanted biases into the data. This was not an issue in this study since, as the participants' responses indicated, all of the participants were Christians though some showed more commitment than others as evident in their discussions and reasons for attending. On the one hand, participants' responses were similar, 13 (86.66 %) gave responses of "to learn about God" or "to worship God" as reasons for attending church. Of those, several said they "...go with my parents" but also said they go to learn about and to worship God. One participant said they attended for "Other" reasons and one participant gave no response to say why he or she go to church. There were similar responses when discussing why go to youth group. Reasons were varied: (1) "To meet friends," (2) "To worship God," and "My parents ask me to go." Some thought the Church Youth Groups are "OK" for social activities and "OK" for encouraging people to grow spiritually. These "OK" responses were middle between "Very successful", "Successful", "Unsuccessful" and "Very unsuccessful" choices. Most were content not to make any suggestions for further advancements as only one participant made a suggestion: bus service should be

provided to pick up people to attend the Church Youth Groups. In the next chapter, more key discoveries and complete summary of findings are presented.

These ministry leaders came together and used those God-given abilities to negotiate, communicate, influence, and persuade others to do things as God would have them to do (Ephesians 4:3). Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. They did this by focusing on God the Father. These leaders understood that the most effective individuals are those who can competently organize the group and assist other believers to accomplish the goals and objectives of this ministry project.

Of course, these Saints of God had different values, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, cultural values, work habits, goals, ambitions and dreams. Because of this incredible diversity of God's given gifts, it has never been more difficult and yet more necessary for diplomatic leaders to emerge and form these Saints into high-performing teams.

Concluding Reflections

During our meeting and training sessions we discussed leadership traits: communications, integrity, enthusiasm, empathy, competence, ability to delegate task, cool under pressure, team building skills, and problem-solving skills. These ministry leaders were effective in their ministry tasks and were often described as having a vision of where to go and the ability to articulate their assigned task. These Saints of God thrived on change and being able to draw new boundaries. During one of the training leadership meeting it was said that a leader was someone who "lifts us up, gave us a reason for being and gives the vision and spirit to change." Additionally, these ministry leaders enabled believers and nonbelievers to feel they had a real stake in this ministry project. They allowed believers

of the project to experience the vision of the project on their own. Further, this researcher's paper attempts to show that ministry leadership and youth involvement are important, because, when individuals are involved in ministry and introduced to the word of God in a non-threatening environment, he or she is encouraged to participate in fellowship.

The overall theme of input from these Post-Millennials was that youth must be allowed positions of leadership. The focus of this dissertation project was to examine the decline of Black Youth in church attendance and participation in the Black church. Much was learned in the research. This researcher found that there needed to be an understanding of this new generation because the future of the Black church depends on the value of it as perceived by Post-Millennials. There has never before been a generation like the Post-Millennial Generation. More will said about the actual outcomes of the research in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGE OF MINISTRY

Introduction

This study was designed to address a great and growing number of disconnected youth. In this study, the term “youth” has been used interchangeably with the term “Post-Millennial” as that was the cohort addressed in this dissertation. To understand the thinking and the ways of the Post-Millennial age group, it became necessary to learn about the generation above Post-Millennials – the Millennial generation. Much more information was available about Millennials than was available for Post-Millennials, so it became necessary to know how the two generations differed. Dittmann (2005), an *APA: Monitor* staff writer gives some analysis of the importance of understanding the differences:

Patterson, a training director for the Louisiana School Psychology Internship Consortium, believes some of the differences may stem from generational diversity in the workplace. Every generation is influenced by its period's economic, political and social events--from the Great Depression to the civil rights and women's movements to the advent of television and advanced computer technologies--so it follows that generational context also may affect the way they work, Patterson says. Along with a number of other researchers, she is taking note of these generational differences--from the technological savvy of many younger workers to the play-by-the-rules approach of some older workers--in the hopes of better understanding how generational diversity may affect work dynamics. ...Patterson believes that taking note of generational diversity is still important, especially since intergenerational conflict in the workplace may keep plans, products and ideas from moving forward. ‘A lack of understanding across generations can have detrimental effects on communication and working relationships and undermine effective services’ says Patterson (Dittmann, 2005, 54).

Dr. Patterson's statement may very well apply to Post-Millennial disconnection to the church because a lack of understanding across generations can have detrimental effects on communication and working relationships and undermine effective church connection.

Key Discoveries

The challenge of ministry was recognized by Paul in 2nd Corinthians 2:16, "To the one we are the savior of death unto death; and to the other the savior of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Indeed, being sufficient for the challenge of ministry requires much preparation (1) to understand the challenge of ministry; (2) to understand to whom one is ministering; (3) to learn to listen without judgment; (4) to be truthful, discerning, and prophetic; and (5) to be flexible because things change from person to person and from generation to generation. In this research, each of these preparatory requirements was experienced and much was learned. However, the most important thing learned was that we must remain flexible because what we think we know may impede progress to learn from and about those we are attempting to bring into the fold – Post-Millennials. Moreover, in advance of the study the literature review helped the reader to know more about the post-Millennial generation and how to bring them into the fold, to help them become connected to the church.

What Was Learned?

The researcher learned the project design must be flexible. It changed as a result of research not turning out as expected, and subtle changes were made from what was initially intended. The greatest learnings came from listening to and gaining much respect for the options and opinions of the participants. It was necessary to use surveys and discussion questionnaire to learn from the Post-Millennials in this study. Also, it was

learned that the selected methodology was well suited for this research project. Further, this methodology was ideal for this project because decisions are based on this qualitative research methodology. The methodology used in this research design included qualitative methods. There are many types of qualitative research methods such as ethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The ethnography method is a design of inquiry coming from anthropology and sociology in which the researcher studies the sacred patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time. Data collection involved observations and interviews (Creswell, 2014). This research project used surveys and focus groups, an ethnographic approach. This approach allowed, for a period of time, to immerse ourselves, “In the life of a people in order to learn something about and from them” (Moschella, 2008, 4). In this project, the “people” are Post-Millennials. We learned that ethnography allowed the Post-Millennials to open up and freely give opinions and observations.

Additionally, what was learned was that this method was important because the open, honest, and unforced ideas are extremely important, but Post-Millennials are often given to silence and afraid of being “cut dead” by the group (Ellison, 2013). We chose the design wisely because the participants were very open and honest in their surveys and their discussions. Further, there must be concerted efforts that are “designed to see, reach and hear our youth” (Wimberly, Barnes, and Johnson, 2013, 111). This researcher also learned that trying to use a parallel or concurrent design, conducting content analysis alongside a survey or a survey alongside interviews, could have caused excess strain. It may be just enough strain as to undermine the project results of findings. Plan carefully.

Why was it possible to learn it?

It was possible to learn from these participants for two reasons: (1) It was clear from the parameters of the project questions what was needed, (2) it was possible to learn the information needed because the participants were well informed with regards to the project prior to data collection and instrument implementation, and (3) the ethnographic pastoral practice of listening helped tremendously as the Post-Millennials shared their own stories and a desire to seek God. The participants were willing to be open and honest about their church involvement and attendance on the survey. Surveys consisted of “a set of items, formulated as statements or questions, used to generate a response to each stated item” (Hank, et al., 2009, 257). Further, the focus group process began with introductions and thanking participants, explaining the logistics, electing a high-performance leadership team, and ensuring consent was obtained from participants and their parents (See Appendix A).

Who was instrumental in the outcome and how?

The selection of a high-performance team was key. As indicated in the preceding chapter, the team included a Ministry Leader Coordinator, Ministry Leader of Participant Recruitment, Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation, Ministry Leader of Operations, and Ministry Leader of Transportation.

A Dialogue with the Literature Review: Impact and Challenges

It was necessary to research several generations to understand and appreciate the information presented about Post-Millennials. This researcher came to understand Post-Millennials better and to know that they are not a lost generation as initially thought. Most of this learning was due to the depths of the literature review. The greatest impact of the

literature review was to help the researcher and the readers of this dissertation realize there is hope for the spiritual growth and the positive contributions to society that this generation will make.

Outcomes of Research Deviate from Much of Literature Review

The literature examined in this document pointed to several characteristics of Post-Millennials as depicted by the accounts of both scholars and practitioners. At the beginning of this research, it was assumed that much was known about Black youth and Black people in general. However, the outcomes of the literature review deviated from what was known in the past because Post-Millennials had to be viewed as a brand new, completely different generation, not just an extension of Millennials or any other past generation. Post-Millennials are a generation different from even its nearest generation, the Millennials. A comparison between Millennials and Post-Millennials enumerate some of those differences in Appendix E (Beall, 2016). Because of the ages of Post-Millennials, their story and place in history has not been written. It is a work in progress. This new information must be taken into consideration for every aspect of life going forward. It was important to know this generation if we were going to influence this generation to become or stay connected to the church. Marketing to or influencing this different generation cannot be effective when assuming Post-Millennials are the same as Millennials. According to a recent article, the difference Millennials and Post-Millennials is important to know in order appeal to the current generation, shift marketing, adjust the leadership style, and stay relevant for the future (Beall, 2016). Leadership and recruiting efforts of the church must take these differences into account to reach the disconnected Post-Millennials (Beall, 2016). Initially, there was a plan outlined for relating to the target of this research. The target changed in

characteristics. We must redesign the program, curricula, and action plan, but not without the input and creative skills of the Post-Millennials for which the program for connection or reconnection will be set up. The focus group must be expanded and leadership must be relegated to this Post-Millennial generation. The current group of participants gave us valuable information as a start.

The Setting and Demographics of Participants

The surveys were given and the focus group meetings were held Summer 2017. The participants were given very little instruction so as not to influence their answers. In the introductory material, however, thanks for their participation were extended in a brief statement: *“Thank you for taking a few moments to complete this survey about participation in a youth ministry. Please answer questions honestly and feel free to add additional comments at the end of this survey. Your input is needed to help us understand ministry with youth.”* The surveys were distributed without further input from the research team.

Table 2: Participants’ Demographics: Race, Gender and Generation

	Percentage (%)	Number (N)
Race / Ethnicity		
African American	100	15
Gender		
Male	40	6
Female	60	9
Post-Millennial Total	100	15

Table 3 Participant Demographics and Survey Choices

#	Age	M /F	Living With	Culture	Religious / Spiritual Backgrnd	Grade in School	Most Likely Attend	Least Likely Attend	Willing to Brainstorm ?	Focus Group
001	13	F	M	AA	C	8	SE	SE	Y	Y
002	14	F	M	AA	C	8	SS, W	-	Y	Y

#	Age	M /F	Living With	Culture	Religious / Spiritual Backgrnd	Grade in School	Most Likely Attend	Least Likely Attend	Willing to Brainstorm ?	Focus Group
003	14	F	M	AA	C	9	W	SS	Y	Y
004	16	F	FM	AA	C	10	SS		Y	N
005	19	M	F	AA	C	-	-	-	N	N
006	17	M	M, S, FM	AA	C	11	W	SS	Y	Y
007	14	M	BP	AA	C	9	SE	W	Y	Y
008	17	M	FM	AA	C	12	SS	W	Y	Y
009	17	M	M	AA	C	12	SS, W	SE	Y	Y
010	18	M	M	AA	C	F	SS	W	Y	Y
011	15	F	M	AA	C	10	SE	SS	Y	Y
012	15	F	BP	AA	C	10	W	W	Y	Y
013	14	F	FM	AA	C	9	SS, SE	W	Y	Y
014	19	F	BP	AA	C	-	SS	SE	Y	Y
015	13	F	M	AA	C	8	SE	W	Y	Y

Explanation of abbreviations in Table 3:

Living with:

BP=Both Parents, M=Mother, F=Father, FM=Family Member, S=Shelter, FM=Family Member other than parent, FC=Foster Care, O=Own

Most/Least Likely:

SS=Sunday School, SE=Sunday Evening Activities, W=Wednesday Evening Activities

Focus Group Cognitions about Research Question 1

The Focus Group was charged with helping the researcher understand the importance and impact of the youth minister's leadership style on Post-Millennial church attendance. And to offer suggestions that would make the youth minister more effective in getting and sustaining Post-Millennial membership in the Black Church. All participants were African-American (Black). They were assured of confidentiality. The purpose of

assuring confidentiality was to help the participants feel free enough to give their best, most considered open and honest answers. All information obtained from participants will be maintained in a secure lock-box in the researcher's office for a period of two years. After that period of time, it will be destroyed.

Research Question 1

How does a Youth minister's leadership style impact Post-Millennial engagement in the Black Church?

Through responding to the Focus Group Discussion Questions, posed by this researcher, the participants gave their insights and observations of current Church Youth Ministry Leadership and how they perceived the importance and impact. I learned that although they were not generally critical, the Post-Millennials suggested ways to better connect today's youth to church through Youth Ministry and the Youth Minister. One participant's perceptions shared were, "I would like to have a strong leader as the Church Youth Group leader and I would like to be part of the church advisory committee." Another participant shared, "Feels the leadership of the church has an impact in the attraction of youth." To that end, another participant, stated, "The youth program is very successful." The overall perception was that the leadership is engaging, but participants expressed a need for that leadership to be shared with Post-Millennial leaders. Brainstorming sessions were well attended and thoughts and perceptions were openly shared (See Table 3 and Table 4). I also learned that when Post-Millennials were engaged in the roles of spiritual growth, they wanted to be part of the church's advisory council and expressed the desire to do peer outreach. Further, as the Post-Millennials participated on the advisory board, they found new life in church ministries which lead to other Post-Millennials becoming

engaged with the advisory board. Therefore, the advisory board was the foundation and its role proved very important to the Post-Millennials as a platform for being heard.

Focus Group Cognitions about Research Question 2

The Focus Group was charged with helping this researcher understand the present Church Youth Group dynamics for the Post-Millennial Generation and to offer some suggestions for increased interest, outreach to other young people, concern for the spiritual growth of others, and establishing personal relations with God through Jesus Christ. They were assured of confidentiality. The purpose of confidentiality was to help the participants feel free enough to give their best, most considered honest answers. All information obtained from participants will be maintained in a secure lock-box in the researcher's office for a period of two years.

Research Question 2

How will establishing a Post-Millennial advisory committee impact church attendance and church participation for the Post-Millennial generation in the Black church?

- a. What would Post-Millennials like their roles to be in the Black church?
- b. How will participants attract other church attendees?

Through answering 8 (some multiple parts) questions posed by this researcher, the Focus Group gave their insights and observations of current Church Youth Groups and how they would suggest ways to better connect today's youth to church. The overall theme of input from these Post-Millennials was that youth must be allowed positions of leadership. Most Post-Millennials in the Focus Group thought direct contact with other youth through personal contact or social media will attract other church attendees

understand the importance of church connection for worship, learn about God, and fellowship with other youth. The youthful enthusiasm, concern for others, learning more about God, and bringing others to Christ were constant comments in the group discussions. These young people and the thoughts they shared were the findings this research project used without any editing from the researcher. This study used a qualitative method of research design. Small focus groups were implemented. This research design was developed to collect information from these Post-Millennials and was used to address the research questions stated above.

Setting: Research participants were drawn from local Black churches. These participants formed a focus group and the meetings were held in a classroom at St. James Baptist Church for conducting the observations.

Potential participants were found using the Internet as a search tool. Links to the electronic medium were emailed to the researcher's personal contacts as well as posted on Facebook and LinkedIn venues. In-person interviews were conducted and recorded in a quiet, location where the participants were not in danger and there was no intimidation or coercion. Parental permission was obtained for the Post-Millennial participants.

Population: Participants were recruited by the researcher via email or enlisted in-person to complete a 20 -question interview that should take approximately 25 minutes. Demographics such as education and race are not variables of this study; however, they are noted. Familiarity with the interview participant is of limited concern. There will be no interview questions that delve into specifics about the organization that make the interviewee unwilling or uncomfortable about participation. This should create an atmosphere that allowed them to speak freely. The researcher had a population of 15

persons who met the criteria for this research study and anticipated a population pool of 50-100 potential participants. The researcher sought to interview 10 to 15 participants. Small participant research is the expected norm in qualitative research. Such small studies enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participant experience and to develop a thick, rich description of that experience (Creswell, 2014). Recruitment materials are found in “Letter of Introduction to Participants” in Appendix B.

Description of Participants: For purposes of consistency, in this project, Participants are called “Post-Millennials.” These participants are so young and generations do not name themselves. A lot of names have been thrown around, but when it comes to the teens and tweens of today — the youngsters who aren’t old enough to be considered millennials — the official generational title is still up for grabs. This study will refer to them as Post-Millennials as this is the name Pew Research Center calls this generation.

After the survey data (see Table 3) and the Focus Group findings (see Table 4) were collected from the participants, they were analyzed to address the concerns of the researcher. The findings were used to help form a vision community that fosters a holistic solution to issuers faced by African American youth and determine an approach to keep the Black church vibrant and growing.

Table 4 Focus Group Thoughts Shared

#	Thoughts of Each Participant in Focus Group
001	<p>I would like to have a strong leader as the Church Youth Group leader and I would like to be part of the church advisory committee. Participant stated, “I do want to see more activities in order to ask others to attend church.”</p> <p>I go to church to learn about God and to worship God. Social activities at church are OK. Encouragement to grow spiritually is OK. Outreach to others is OK. Issues in youth group: do more activities</p>

#	Thoughts of Each Participant in Focus Group
002	I would be interested in the advisory committee. Participant stated, "I enjoy fun things and in addition, I would tell them (other youth) to attend church more often in order to learn more about God." I go with my parents, to learn about God. I go to youth group to meet friends. Church is successful in providing social activities. Church is Very Successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. I tell other youth to come to church because it is much fun.
003	This participant was interested in ways to attract others to attend church and gave a recommendation that churches purchase buses or vans to pick up others since many Post-Millennial Generation youth cannot drive and must depend on rides. This participant would be willing to work with others on service projects. Church is Very Successful in providing social activities. Church is Very Successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. Outreach to others is Successful . Issues in youth group: do more activities such as Color Run. I tell other youth to come to church because it is much fun.
004	This participant was not very open. However, they stated, "I would be interested in the advisory committee, to meet others." I go to youth ministry to meet friends.
005	Feels the leadership of the church has an impact in the attraction of youth. Participant, stated, "The youth program is very successful ."
006	Wants to serve as a motivator; however, he stated, "he does not have time to participate in church activities."
	Observer's Note: This participant showed great leadership abilities in Focus Group sessions.
007	Would like to serve on the advisory committee and use social media to contact others. Go to youth groups to have fellowship. Church youth ministry leadership is Very Successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. Outreach to others is very successful . Would like the youth group to look at "family" as a topic. Participation in this project would make participants and group leader more understanding.
008	Wants to develop a youth group that will appeal to others. Participant stated, "would work with others to encourage them to attend other youth programs." I go to church to learn about God and to worship God . This participant rates church social activities as Successful ; spiritual growth Successful ; reaching others Successful .
009	Interested in the advisory committee. I go with my Parents to Worship God . I go to youth group to meet friends . Church is Very Successful in providing social activities. Church is Very Successful in encouraging

#	Thoughts of Each Participant in Focus Group
	people to grow spiritually. Issues or topic to look at in youth Group is “Youth Participation” and “More focus on teen activities.”
010	Interested in the advisory committee. Participant stated, “... would use social media to communicate with others.” Church is Very Successful in providing social activities but need to be “activities people are interested in.” Church is Very Successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. “The youth program is very successful .” Participating in this research, I expect growth.”
011	Would be interested in the advisory committee. Participant stated, “the leadership of the church should involve more youth.”
012	Would be interested in the advisory committee. “The leadership of the church is ok; however, more youth need to get involved.” Participant believes the “establishment” should listen to the young people and that will increase church attendance. As a result of participating in this research, this participant would like to see, “More interactive activities that are appealing to the youth.”
013	I go to church to Learn about God, to Worship God . I go to youth group to have fellowship . Church is Successful in providing social activities. Church is OK in encouraging people to grow spiritually. Youth Group is Unsuccessful in reaching out to others. Need a church bus to pick them up. Use social media.
014	I go to church to Learn about God . I go youth group to Learn about God . Church is Very Successful in providing social activities, but they need to be “activities people are interested in.” Church is Very Successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. “The youth program is very successful .” Participant stated, “I would be willing to bring other young people to “Help them understand God is in control.”
015	“I would be interested in being part of the advisory committee and to lead a youth ministry group to recruit others to attend church.” Participant also expressed strong beliefs that youth should have a voice in the church. “They will participate better.”

A Post-Millennial Model for Ministry

To understand Post-Millennial thinking and behavior, one must ask the Post-Millennial generation as they are the ones this research paper was trying to reach, inform, and persuade the value of the Black Church’s importance in their hope for spiritual well-being and a healthy outlook in life. An effective approach to help the Post-Millennial generation thrive in the Black church can be created from their own description of their

needs and goals. This project listened to the project participants. With the exception of some of the group observers, the participants in this research project are teens – all Post-Millennials. Findings from the surveys and focus groups indicate: (1) We must listen to our youth, (2) Ministry must become more inclusive of the participation of youth in all areas and services, (3) An effective youth ministry needs the pastor's support to help make it an effective and integrated ministry of the church, (4) Post-Millennials are thinkers and doers and deserve our respect, (5) Post-Millennials want to have more spiritual growth and more leadership responsibility for self and for the sake of teaching others, and (6) Post-Millennials want to be on a Post-Millennial Leadership Team. These six findings were a confirming revelation to this researcher as the project initially started with a focus group made up of community “experts” that contained no Post-Millennial participants. As the research revealed more about the characteristics of this generation, it became apparent to this researcher that there was never a generation that compared. The closest in age was the Millennial generation, but the differences between the two latest generations are many (see Appendix E). These differences were pronounced in the Focus Group discussions. Specifically, giving their input in the survey and Focus Group discussions, a model for ministry to and for Post-Millennials emerged as participants revealed:

1. **We must listen to our youth** – Every participant except Participant # 4 expressed a willingness to engage in conversation and to brainstorm for helping plan, lead or assist with activities in selection of discussion topics; building community, performing service projects, leading and participation of prayer and worship experiences; and being part of a Post-Millennial Leadership Team. Participant 012 believes the “establishment” should listen to the young people in order to increase church attendance.
2. **Ministry must become more inclusive of the participation of youth in all areas and services.** Several participants also wanted the church to help them with outreach to their friends. A typical response was from Participant 002 who said, “I enjoy fun things and in addition, I would tell them (other youth) to attend church more often in order to learn more about God.” Further, Participant 002

said, “I go with my parents, to learn about God. I go to youth group to meet friends. Church is successful in providing social activities. Church is Very Successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. I tell other youth to come to church because it is much fun.”

3. **An effective youth ministry needs the pastor's support to help make it an effective and integrated ministry of the church.** Participant 007 spoke about this point when stating that the church, “Youth ministry leadership is very successful in encouraging people to grow spiritually. Outreach to others is very successful.” However, their suggestion that they would like the youth group to look at “family” as a topic indicates the need for more integrative approach to ministry. They went on to say that exploration of such a topic would make participants and church leaders more understanding of each other.
4. **Post-Millennials are thinkers and doers and deserve our respect.** Participant 015 states the problem and proposed a very respectable solution. This participant said, “I would be interested in being part of the advisory committee and to lead a youth ministry group to recruit others to attend church.” Participant also expressed strong beliefs that youth should have a voice in the church. “They will participate better.” This participant, although not the only one who voiced the same or similarly-worded opinion of more inclusion, is a thinker and doer and deserves our respect. As Beall (2017) conveyed, we must listen because if the Post-Millennials don’t feel appreciated, they’re going to move on. It’s not about Post-Millennials being loyal to the organization (Beall, 2017) as much as it is that the organization (the church) must show loyalty and respect to Post-Millennials.
5. **Post-Millennials want to have more spiritual growth and more leadership responsibility for self and for the sake of teaching others.** This group of participants strongly stated these expectations. As observed by Beall (2017), Post-Millennials have higher expectations than Millennials. Participant 012 gave the leadership of the church an “OK” rating and stated that more youth need to be included. As a result of participating in this research, this participant would like to see, “More interactive activities that are appealing to the youth.” Participant 013 voiced a comprehensive opinion about spiritual growth, more Post-Millennial leadership, outreach, and the use of social media, saying, “I go to church to learn about God, to worship God. I go to youth group to have fellowship. Church is successful in providing social activities. Church is ‘OK’ in encouraging people to grow spiritually. Youth Group is Unsuccessful in reaching out to others. Need a church bus to pick them up. Use social media.” It should be expected that social media permeates all aspects of communication to this Post-Millennial generation. After all, “They were born social. In fact, nearly 92% of Post-Millennials has a digital footprint. Arguably as a result of the celebrities and media they follow, they seek uniqueness in all walks of life primarily through the brands they do business with, future employers, etc.
6. **Post-Millennials want to be on a Post-Millennial Leadership Team.** This position was echoed by many of the participants (see Table 4), but Participant

011 succinctly stated the position of many in the Focus Group. Participant 011 said he or she, “Would be interested in the advisory committee.” Further, Participant 011 stated, “The leadership of the church should involve more youth.” This generation is mature in their thinking and are global in their thinking. The world (including the church, of course) will hear from this global generation. Post-Millennials will become more global in their thinking, interactions, and relatability. 58% of adults worldwide ages 35+ agree that “kids today have more in common with their global peers than they do with adults in their own country.” Diversity will be an expectation of Post-Millennials (Beall, 2017).

When I reviewed these findings, some key themes of ministry necessities were identified by our Post-Millennial participants. From the survey and Focus Group discussions, a model for ministry to and for Post-Millennials emerged as participants revealed what they see as necessities in the church ministry and what the church ministry must do to carry out those necessities. These findings were taken as a directive to integrate current Post-Millennials into the church and form a welcoming holistic environment for future growth.

The holistic environment is an environment where the church integrates the growing interest or the concept of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of a person's life that must be viewed as an integrated whole. This leads to a broader concept of Post-Millennials and all members care in which their spiritual growth, emotional and social needs are dealt with as well as physical needs. The holistic environment espouses the concept that service to God is more than to do with a church altar, singing, reading, sacrifice, and the likes. The church now must consider the holistic environment or the whole concept of the Post-Millennials congregation as previously stated.

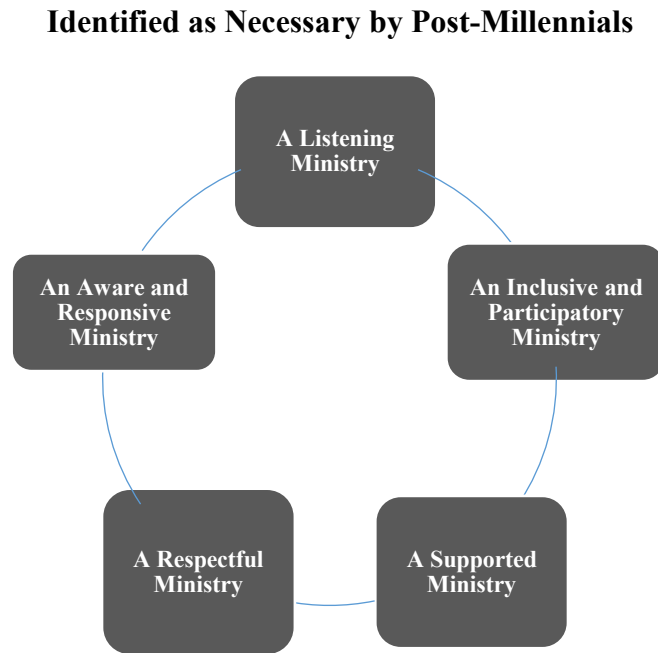
This simply means the church must change the faulty way or traditional way of thinking. They must expand their current vision of Post-Millennial ministry into a holistic environment that glorifies God and influences others. For example, this cultural preoccupation often dominates one's view of the way one makes a living. One often thinks

of their employment in terms of the financial benefits it provides for them and their families. This way of thinking is not necessarily wrong; however, one must also consider how one's work can be a benefit to others in their times of need. If the church is going to imitate Jesus and effectively develop a holistic environment, it must learn to look at life with an others-orientation in every aspect of one's life, the whole!

Table 5 Post-Millennial Church Ministry Necessities

Post-Millennial Church Ministry Necessities:	Church Ministry must:
1. Listening Ministry:	We must listen to our youth.
2. Inclusive and Participatory Ministry:	Ministry must become more inclusive of the participation of youth in all areas of service. They want to be on a Post-Millennial Leadership Team.
3. Supported Ministry:	An effective youth ministry needs pastoral support to help make it an effective and integrated ministry of the church.
4. Respectful Ministry:	Post-Millennials are thinkers and doers and deserve our respect.
5. Aware and Responsive Ministry:	Post-Millennials want to have more spiritual growth and more leadership responsibility for self and for the sake of teaching others.

These 5 necessities and actions consider the whole person where both the youth and the older members respect others, work in Christian community with each other, for spiritual growth and the reaching and teaching of others. That is the holistic approach. These 5 necessities and actions can be represented graphically as a holistic model for ministry to Post-Millennials as shown in Figure 1. The 5 church ministry necessities have come from the key themes derived from the Post-Millennial surveys and Focus Group conversations. It has been found that this is an entrepreneurial generation – they are prepared to do it themselves.

A Model of Ministry for Post-Millennials

According to Post-Millennials marketing strategist Deep Patel (2017), “the newly developing high tech and highly networked world has resulted in an entire generation thinking and acting more entrepreneurially” than past generations. With these entrepreneurial characteristics, Post-Millennials desire more independent work environments (Patel, 2017). They want to reach out to other young people, even suggesting the church provide a bus for getting young people out to the services and activities. Noting that many of these Post-Millennials cannot drive and their parents are at work, the thinking of several young people was that they want to reach out to others. For example, Participant 014 said, “Church is **Very Successful** in encouraging people to grow spiritually. The youth program is **very successful**. I would be willing to bring other young people to help them understand God is in control.” That’s quite a commitment, but these young people cannot carry out their commitments without a supported ministry. The Post-Millennials identified

what is necessary for the ministry model. Now, we must look at the model and decide what must be done to make it successful.

Toward Implementing A Model for Ministry.

A model for ministry is a design or description of that ministry. The model is used to help visualize what may be difficult to observe directly and will serve as a pattern for others to follow. It is a pattern for everyone working in the ministry. There are various parts that make up the model. A description of our model will indicate how the parts function to work interdependently and together to accomplish the purpose of the model. Interdependence means that a weakness in one component will be like throwing a cog in a wheel – it no longer will roll along smoothly. All must understand the theory and the practice for the most effective functioning of the model. All parts are important and the model is at its strongest when they work together than when they work separately. According to the Post-Millennials in this study, the model must address biblical teaching, peer outreach, leadership development, building Christian community, fun, and family. After the model has been used, had some success, modified or corrected, then it must be presented again. The model needs to be fluid and communicated to all.

Using a Model

To use a model, one must understand the model. The steps to understand this Model of Ministry for Post-Millennials with its various components which can operate independently or interdependently are: (1) Evaluate the model in terms of the stated goal. Our model contains the components identified as necessary by Post-Millennials, so the necessary components are included in this model. The desire to see the development of youth leadership is a component seen in our model. (2) Identify the various components

of the ministry for Post-Millennials and evaluate the effectiveness of each component in light of the stated goal. What insights does the model provide for strengthening the ministry for Post-Millennials? (3) Look at the interdependence of the components. It is possible to have all the pieces but have them operating quite separately. This has to do mostly with the staffing for total ministry. The best situation is to have a total staff for a total ministry because this leads to building deeper relationships. The staff for that component becomes an advocate for Post-Millennials in the congregation. (4) Examine the organizational structure supporting the model we have designed. The organizational structure includes, the pastor, youth leaders, and the congregation. Post-Millennials need to see that adults value their faith by putting it into action. The way the congregation expresses its faith and witness in life together and in the community influences youth ministry. The youth minister on staff needs to know the support of the congregation and the pastor (Anderson, 2008). We have seen that pastoral support and its positive effects in this project. The pastoral support contributed greatly to the Post-Millennial participants feeling welcome and open to share their input for the success of this project. The Post-Millennial observations can easily be applied to the model that resulted from the Post-Millennial research participant's input. After implementation of the model, there are many ways to determine the success of the model. Perhaps the best reason to declare success is that the Post-Millennial participants expressed a desire to bring others to church, to build Christian community as a result of peer outreach. We will use this model, keep good journal notes, and make changes if needed. We will start small, learn fast, and grow following this model.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING MINISTRY COME ALIVE

Introduction

This project started with a discussion to look at building a community of hope. The forum members were all established members of the community and the church. They were able to speak with authority on things of the past. However, it became apparent that much had to be learned about the youth of today. After all, these young people are tomorrow's leaders. What did we know about them other than the news reported more unsavory things than good things.

The discussion covered a broad set of topics and the researcher adopted a broad topic "Forming a Vision Community that Fosters a Holistic Solution to Issues Faced by African American Youth." This includes Commitment to Spiritual, Socio-Economic, and Educational Issues for African American Youth. After extensive research, we narrowed our focus to disconnected youth of the African American Community. We discovered that a large proportion of these groups were Millennial and Post-Millennial. They are the people we must know in order to have useful insights and direction about youth in our community and church. We needed to know their attitudes about church involvement, their outlooks on socio-economic climate, and what they had to say about disconnection. The information gained from current studies on Black disconnected youth, input from our surveys and the Focus Group discussions helped us understand some very important things: (1) We must

listen to our youth; (2) Ministry must become more inclusive of the participation of the youth in all areas of service; (3) An effective youth ministry needs the pastor's support to help make it an effective and integrated ministry of the church; and Post-Millennials are thinkers and doers and deserve our respect.

Many scriptural references are cited throughout this document. Biblical scholars cited have given us exegeses for these scriptures being cited so that there was better understanding of the events, concepts, and attitudes being explored. For example, we saw early in this dissertation the great need for public response and a good public response with regards to Black youth can be found in God's Great Commission where Jesus spoke, saying:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20).

As Black Post-Millennial come into their own, they must be recognized as a unique generation. A successful Youth Ministry must be able to appeal to Post-Millennial generation. To appeal to them, it was important to know them. In a *Mass Live Media* article, Ed Kubosiak (2016) summarizes key points to know when attempting to appeal to Post-Millennials: (a) Post-Millennials live and breathe technology. They are the first to have ever grown up with social media accounts and smartphones from a young age, and they start creating their own "personal brands" during these formative years; (b) Since they have seen things change so fast, they have a different relationship with developing new ideas, self-education and trend spotting than their predecessors; (c) They have a very clear vision of what they want from a service, and Youth Ministers will need to constantly

interact with them and involve them in a conversation in order to keep up with them. (d) Recession, technology and the threat of terrorism will keep this generation close to home. Driving will continue to decline as parents keep their Post-Millennials off the road, even when they are old enough to drive. Any message or ministerial program must keep the previous points in mind when attempting to engage this generation. To be effective with this generation, their voices must be heard (Kubosiak, 2016).

A Vision for Ministry

And the LORD answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it” Habakkuk 2:2).

The admonition found here in the Book of Habakkuk gives us some clear instructions about the vision: (1) Write the vision; (2) Make it understandable to the intended readers, and (3) Make it doable so that it can be implemented. Using this very basic model, we can see what happens without a vision. On a cold December Morning, a man by the name of John decided he wanted to build a house. He went to the local store and purchased materials for the house. Once he arrived home, he began to construct the house. After several weeks, he completed the house and noticed that the house had no windows or doors. It was not useable. The moral of this story is that John built a house without having a vision of what it would look like in the end.

God has a vision for us and has shared it with us by (1) Writing it in the Word; (2) Making it understandable through gifts such as discernment, the Holy Spirit, and Bible study; and (3) He made it doable so that we may implement it in our lives as He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and *are* heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28); and if we falter, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of *grace*, that we

may obtain *mercy*, and find *grace* to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). God had a vision for His people and helped us implement that plan in our lives through the ministry of His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus’s ministry was based the word of Truth.

A vision for ministry must be based on a firm foundation of Truth, biblical and theological teaching. This vision must be one that is shared with all members of the ministerial staff to ensure members never lose sight of its goals and objects. A worthwhile vision must inspire and motivate the congregation to take action and achieve the mission of the church. It must challenge the church to grow. Above all, it must always keep in mind the vision of God and God’s kingdom: “It is this vision of God and God's kingdom that addresses the full range of the integrated needs of humanity—that shapes the identity and animates the ministry. Rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ and empowered by the leading of the Holy Spirit, we seek to join with God in his work—coming alongside, embodying, announcing, acting, and extending invitations to experience, and understand the fullness of life to be found in God's kingdom” (International Teams, 2017, 7).

This vision of God and God’s kingdom is inspiration for ministry. As part of one’s vision for ministry the ministry should define and establish a vision statement, mission statement, and statement of faith. Every ministry needs to have a long-term vision of what they wish to accomplish, a mission for how to get there, and faith principles of core beliefs guiding this vision and mission (Malphurs, 2007). You will also want to revisit these often to ensure that the organization is still on-track and to evaluate how these core documental statements have changed over time. These reminders of where you want to end up, how

you'll get there, and what you believe, are vital to the ministry's effectiveness and efficiency (Malphurs, 2007).

A vision for ministry must be able to explain the church's principles and core beliefs. The vision ministry must ensure goals of the church are clear to those inside and outside of the church, which in part, will enhance the church's outreach ministry: "Over time, the vision must be renewed, adapted, and adjusted to the cultural context in which the congregation lives. The change takes place only at the margins of the vision, not at its core. The core—the Great Commission—does not change. The details of the vision and the words used to convey them will change. The vision provides us with a picture of what the mission will look like as it is realized in the community" (Malphurs, 2007, electronic). This vision will signal to the community that the church is committed to them, Christ, and God because all visions begin with relationships.

Activating the Ministry

A few decades ago, there was a popular song that asked many questions pertinent for achieving what has been hoped. The song asked:

**Do you know where you're going to?
Do you like the things that life is showing you?
Where are you going to, do you know?
Do you get what you're hoping for?
When you look behind you there's no open door.
What are you hoping for, do you know?
Do you know?**

"Theme from Mahogany" lyrics, 1976

Activating the ministry calls for the answering of the questions in this song. Activating the ministry requires a vision of how to get started, who will work in the ministry, what are their duties and qualifications? Who will be served by the ministry?

How will the ministry be sustained, and what are you hoping for? It is not enough to have passion without the vision to have the youth ministry.

Many ministerial leaders have a passion to help young people grow spiritually, lots of creative ministry ideas, fun programs and events, and cutting-edge technology. Many hold the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a Christian environment where spiritual growth and upward mobility are possible for everyone. To activate the Post-Millennial ministry and make it come alive, one must be able to transform Post-Millennial ideas and concepts into a plan of action.

Post-Millennial Ideas for Ministry Activation

As indicated in the previous chapter, the ideas given by the Post-Millennials in this research project through answering the surveys and participation in the focus groups revealed what is needed to activate a successful holistic ministry with Post-Millennials:

1. We must listen to our youth.
2. Ministry must become more inclusive of the participation of youth in all areas and services.
3. An effective youth ministry needs the pastor's support to help make it an effective and integrated ministry of the church.
4. Post-Millennials are thinkers and doers and deserve our respect.
5. Post-Millennials want to have more spiritual growth and more leadership responsibility for self and for the sake of teaching others.
6. They want to be on a Post-Millennial Leadership Team.

These directives form a vision or basis of what Post-Millennials would like to see in a ministry that includes them as being fully integrated into that ministry. Further, to activate and build a ministry that lasts requires a lot of holy determination

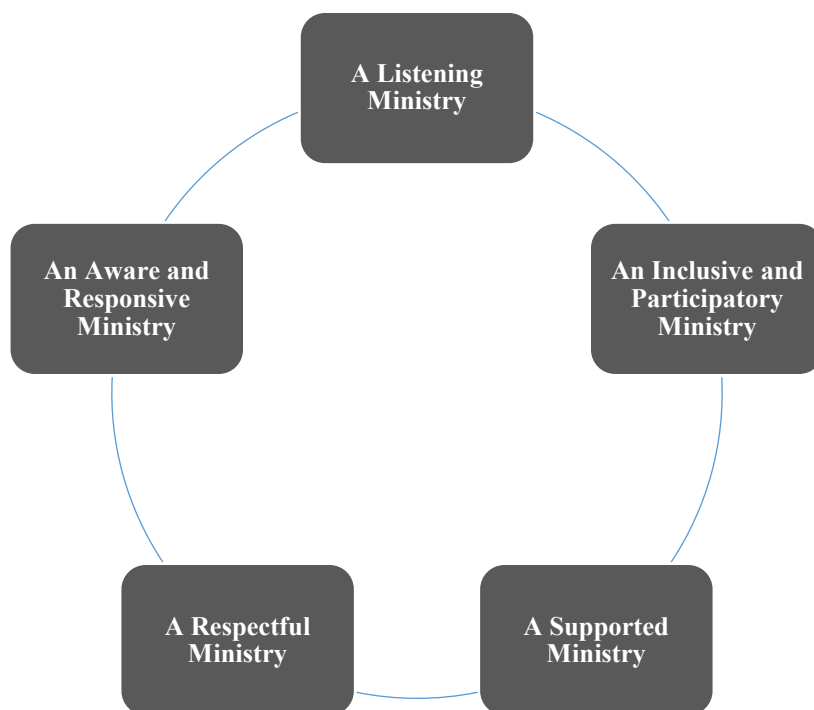
coupled with the right attitude which in time will grow the church. Participant 001 spoke the opinions of many, saying, “I would like to have a strong leader as the Church Youth Group leader and I would like to be part of the church advisory committee ... I do want to see more activities in order to ask others to attend church ... I go to church to learn about God and to worship God. Social activities at church are OK and encouragement to grow spiritually is OK. Outreach to others is OK.” This participant and others, too (see Table 4) have very sound ideas about ministry activation and growth both spiritually and in numbers through outreach.

The activation of the church ministry should be an exciting place to worship. In the activation of the church ministry, the membership of that church should feel that they have the best church in town (Mark DeVries, 2008). The activation of the church ministry program that creates passionate, life-long disciples of Christ who can go out and make other disciples is the goal. Simplifying matters, DeVries indicated that all it takes is desire and a dependence on the Holy Spirit (DeVries, 2008). When DeVries spoke about followers who were to “go and make disciples...,” he infused the intentionality of gospel advancement into the church’s DNA. This external focus of making disciples produces the unexpected benefit of accelerating the ministry (DeVries, 2008). Mark DeVries' book, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*, points out the need for having a long-term perspective, how a variety of social dynamics within congregations mitigate against consistent vision -- or any other form of longevity in youth ministry (DeVries, 2008). Activate the ministry with the directive, “Do you know where you’re going to?” Although this sentence is not grammatically structured correctly, we can answer

with confidence that we know the answer to the question because the research model generated from Post-Millennial input answers this question.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, the part of the model are represented in Figure 2. Post-Millennials have given this project the answer that forms a model for ministry activation for Post-Millennials. This model captures the heart behind the ministry and the heartbeat that keeps its ideas alive. It is encouraging that the concepts in this model resonate with this researcher, the pastor, congregation, youth leaders, other ministry leaders, and the Post-Millennials who are deep thinkers. Studying the input from the Post-Millennials, the researcher clearly saw this model. Five parts of the model must

Figure 2 Forming a Vision Community: A Model of Ministry for Post-Millennials
Identified as Necessary by Post-Millennials



be systematically implemented into a Post-Millennial ministry that would reconnect disconnected youth and keep the interest of those presently connected. We must take very deliberate steps to implement or make each one of the themes come alive in the church's ministry.

Parts of the Model Explained

(1) **A listening ministry**, the church must be able to invite the ideas and opinions of Post-Millennials. The church must defer to Post-Millennials' unique abilities and gifts. They desire and have the authority that matches our level of responsibility. The church's leadership and congregation must rally together for common goals of discipleship and bring others to the kingdom of God. The leadership of the church understands a body of believers is supposed to be closer than their own families (Matt. 12:46, Luke 14:26). This requires listening and respect for all regardless of age. Jesus said that "all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). He also prayed that his disciples would be so "perfectly one" that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus (John 17:20-23).

(2) **An Inclusive and Participatory Ministry** The church must be on one accord and believe that all members, including Post-Millennials, are on a journey of faith together. They must depend on the transforming power of God to include them in their service to God. They must trust the voice of God and allow Post-Millennials to serve at all levels. Jesus himself had his twelve disciples, and there came a time when he no longer called them servants, but friends (John 15:15). Paul also called the believers in his care to grow

up into the full maturity of faith in Christ (Eph. 4:13). This can only happen when Post-Millennials are fully integrated into the church's ministry.

- (3) **A Supported Ministry:** true believers build relationships therefore, the church must invest in the lives of Post-Millennials because congregations share each other's burdens and rejoice in each other's victories. The pastor and the congregation need to see themselves supporting what is more important than themselves. For true believers in a congregation, no one is left out. Every member's needs should be cared for (Acts 4:32-34), and the family takes it upon itself to care for its members. This is a kind of love that points people to Jesus. True believers understand that God requires real sacrifice and His Spirit every day speaks to us.
- (4) **A Respectful Ministry** is one where each member of the congregation is treated fairly, included in all aspects of the church regardless of ministerial experience or length of time they have been a member of the church, gender, cultural background or any other distinguishing factor. A respectful ministry understands this type of environment promotes healthy Christian values and positive working relationships between all members of the church and new followers of Jesus Christ.
- (5) **An Aware and Responsive Ministry** As followers of Christ, we are called to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). In a lot of our church experiences, however, we're used to inviting our friends to church so that the pastor can tell them about Jesus, not us. Yet, this isn't the job of the pastor only, but it's the mission of every follower of Jesus. Therefore, the

membership of the church must be aware and responsive to one another. Let's be honest; so often we don't even know the members of our churches, much less exhibit this supernatural type of unity and love. And if one is even more honest, one would admit that it's much easier to try to invite someone to a church service with a cool band, an excellent children's program, an amazing speaker, and a comfortable building than actually loving that person with Christ's love just as Christ loved us.

In concluding, the church and its congregation must pay vital attention to the quality and details within this model while systematically implementing this model into church's vision. The church must be willing to exceed the expectations of those whom it serves and find new ways to improve, not just for its survival but for the glory of building God's Kingdom.

The Role of the Pastor and Leaders

The apostle Paul wrote two letters to Timothy that defined the role and importance of a pastor. Paul points out the shepherd's job was to keep the flock. That meant he was responsible for the well-being of the sheep entrusted to him. In the same way, a Pastor is responsible for the spiritual well-being of the people entrusted to him. But this doesn't mean running other people's lives for them. Each of us is responsible for our own life.

Additionally, the pastor's role is to establish the biblical foundation of the church. However, "around the 1970s and 1980s, a new understanding started to emerge that was more business based than scripturally based – Pastor as CEO. Many book authors and pastors of megachurches started to see the role of the pastor as a CEO of the church (Kidder, 2009). Greg Ogden, in *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*,

proposed that the pastor should be a visionary leader who constantly builds other leaders, casts the vision, and changes the culture and structure of the church, while doing all of this with an eye for mission, evangelism and growth (Ogden, 2003). Finally, the role of the pastor and his importance should be based on biblical principles and have strong theological foundation. These two, biblical principles and strong theological foundation, when adapted, become the foundation of a healthy church regardless of the size of the church.

Role of the Congregation

The role of the congregation within this ministerial context is to ensure that leaders of the church understand that each member should honor, respect, indeed, love their leaders. And they must submit to them and ensure the church teaches the right doctrine. Further, it is important for congregational relationships develop among all members of the church in order for the church to effectively function. Especially critical is the relationship between the youth ministries and the pastor because communication of the gospel will be either promoted or shut down (Anderson, 2008).

Youth Leaders

In this ministry project, the importance of the role the youth ministry leader was constantly noted. The words in Philippians 2:5-7 are instructive here:

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-7).

The stated reason we give so much attention to youth within the church is “to prepare youth to be mature adults in leadership and to bring others to Christ” (Anderson, 2008, 4). Further, ministry leaders in youth ministry “must empty themselves of adult ways of thinking and doing and become servants of youth” (Anderson, 2008, 4). However, this does not mean that leaders have to become like the youth they are working with. Rather, it means listening to them, identifying with their needs and problems. Therefore, “doing these small measures the youths would perceive that leaders understand their problems, lives, experiences and can walk with them in both the joys and struggles of their journey” (Anderson, 2008, 4).

Measuring Success

“You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.” John C. Maxwell

How does one measure success in Ministry? Eventually, each individual in the ministry must answer this question. Measuring by the wrong standard leads to failure. “Take a look at the most-celebrated names in broader evangelicalism, and it would be easy to conclude that *numerical fruitfulness* is what defines ministerial success. But both Scripture and church history remind us that *steadfast faithfulness* is actually the true measure of success” (Kolstad, 2016, 1). Some think success can only be achieved when ministry leaders sacrifice their personal time in order to establish a ministry program that gains numerical fruitfulness; the consequences can be dire because, pastors can be tempted to vacate the biblical approach in favor of a program that yields more numbers for church

growth (Kolstad, 2016). Leaders must be patient, faithful, and have endurance to see the project to the end.

I would describe this program successful when ministry leaders review this document and implement some of the information held within it. Further, success is achieved when ministry leaders use this compiled information to connect with their respective communities and church members. The success of the church ministry is the lifeblood of the church and the church is the lifeblood of the community. The church ministries must reach out to the community in order to bring others to the Kingdom of God.

Additionally, success is achieved when leaders of the church fully integrate their youth in the operation and benefits of the church. As emphasized earlier, to be effective with this generation, their voices must be heard (Kubosiak, 2016). The youth must be integrated fully in order for the church to achieve growth in numbers and spiritual development. Once the youth and congregation are fully integrated into the church, the benefits must be understood and continually rehearsed with all, especially the youth. These benefits answer the question, “What’s in it for them?”

What’s In It For Post-Millennials

To answer that question, we must help Post-Millennials know the holistic value in their personal and communal lives:

- The holistic value for personal life. We must turn to scripture to see that the mind, body, and spirit connection is a wondrous thing. Romans 12:1-21 states, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Understanding this, Post-Millennials and all believers will discern that a healthy mind helps create a healthy body and a healthy spirit.

- The holistic value for communal life is about the chance to do something good, something kind, or unselfish. It means finding a way to give back. The best way to enhance your own life is to contribute to the quality of somebody else's life. Because of discernment, we know what is right and wrong.

A Post-Millennial who asks what's in it for them may be looking for more immediate answers pertaining to the Model of Ministry for Post-Millennials identified as necessary by Post-Millennials. When the model is implemented as outlined, they will feel that they have been heard and have been included in a participatory ministry. They are respected as included, not as part of sat-aside "youth" groups. This inclusion and respect make them feel good. However, there is something even greater for them – the chance for salvation. The Word tells us, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10: 9-10). This righteousness is available to all who confesses the truth of the resurrection.

CHAPTER 5

FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

Introduction

A doctoral project is a large undertaking. It is hope that drives such an endeavor. This project was based on a desire and the hope to form a vision community that could get and keep young people connected to a base for learning and for using spiritual foundational principles throughout their lives – the church. Through this research, it was found that there are large numbers of disconnected youth. Also, the research for this project confirmed the findings of others who made it known that churches must: (1) connect with youth by being available, (2) must collaborate with youth by listening to them, learning from them, and allowing them to lead, and (3) celebrate youth by recognizing their presence, honoring their gifts, and acknowledging their accomplishments (Wimberly, Barnes, & Johnson, 2013).

The current generation set to take the lead in our communities across the country is known by many names: Generation Z, the iGeneration, Founders, Plurals, the Homeland Generation, or Post-Millennials. All these names refer to the generation addressed in this dissertation, the Post-Millennials. Born between 1996 and 2010, they are very similar to their Millennial generation immediately preceding them. For that reason, this researcher studied Millennials and finally researched the differences (see Appendix E) from that last generation. It became known that Post-Millennials literally grew up with

technology and social media in their hands, they are poised to dramatically change the cultural, economic and political landscape for some time to come (The Sound, 2016).

Post-Millennials are also poised to change their connection to the church and that was the hope of this researcher. To learn what the Post-Millennials want from youth ministry, the surveys, focus group, and discussion group activities were used to get that information. Post-Millennials want to have more spiritual growth and more leadership responsibility for self and for the sake of teaching others. The Post-Millennials in this study had many ideas for bringing others to Christ and several stated that they want to be on a Post-Millennial Leadership Team. This attitude shows why it is important to listen to this generation. This attitude lets this researcher know that there is hope and the next generation is in good hands.

An Endeavor Built from Hope

My hope entering into and carrying out this doctoral project was that we can form a vision community that understands and connects with the youth of today in ways that stem the increase of disconnected youth. This hope was based on the desire for my salvation and theirs: “For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Roman 8:24-25).

According to Greek mythology, the first woman on Earth, Pandora, was given a box that she was not to open under any circumstance. Too curious to resist, she opened it, and all of the evils of the world flew out: hate, pain, destructiveness, starvation, unemployment, gang violence, racism, miseducation, teen pregnancy, and Post-Millennial disconnection from church. In this mythological story, when Pandora saw what she had

done, she closed the box before the last thing in there could escape. That last thing was hope.

Hope is the belief that circumstances in the future will be better. It's not a wish that things will get better, but an actual belief, even when there may be no evidence that anything will change. Hope can encompass a wide variety of beliefs -- everything from a high school student hoping for a family financial crisis to disappear to a cancer patient hoping for a cure. This mythological story and this dissertation story reopen Pandora's box in order for Post-Millennials to capture hope in their attempts to hope for a better tomorrow.

Hope is not blind optimism. It's not ignoring the enormity of the task ahead or the road blocks that stand in our path. It's not sitting on the sidelines or shirking from a fight. Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it and fight for it. Hope is the bedrock of this nation. The belief that our destiny will not be written for us, but by us, by all those men and women who are, in the words of President Barack Obama (2008), "Not content to settle for the world as it is, who have the courage to remake the world as it should be."

My hope in entering into and carrying out this dissertation project is that a vision community would become a reality. My hope continues that every ministry leader at all levels will read and implement, in their respective congregations, some of the scholarly information that's compiled herein. The achievements we have made over the years are merely a prologue for the hope of Post-Millennials and all future generations. Clearly, those achievements resulted from struggle. Dr. Cornel West, noted Harvard Theologian and Author, has observed that hope and the struggle for betterment are essential, "Without hope there can be no future... without meaning there can be no struggle" (Paris & Crump, 2016,

266). Dr. West's thoughts were echoed back in 1857 by Frederick Douglass in a speech titled, "If There Is No Struggle, There Is No Progress" (Douglass, 1857). Hope must begin in small places close to home. It's the world of the individual person, where every man, woman, and child seek equal justice, equal opportunity, and equal dignity without discrimination. Without hope, there is little meaning anywhere and there will be failure to struggle for change.

Youth ministry leaders understand more about Post-Millennials and must help Post-Millennial youth understand that ministry leaders and community leaders share the same vision for their future. Post-Millennials must understand the road they have embarked upon that and what the world has placed upon them at this point has not been easy. But then again, the road to change never is. My hope in entering and carrying out this doctoral project is that Post-Millennials find the courage to examine the world in which they live because the challenges they will face are going to require faith in God and the courage to believe He is still alive! For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16 KJV). This is my belief.

Core Beliefs

"We appreciate what he (President Obama) has done to send the message to our children and around the world, that equality of opportunity is only limited by our aspirations"

(Laura D. Blackurne).

Core values influence the fundamental beliefs of individuals, organizations or ministries. These guiding principles dictate behavior and can help individuals understand the difference between right and wrong. Core values also help to determine if one is on the right path and fulfilling their goals by creating an unwavering guide.

While some individual or ministries might expressly share their core values, often the best way to identify these values is to watch how they behave. For example, a church ministry that emphasizes individualism over congregational ministry in a way that is not consistent with a stated core value of caring for others presents a contradiction. No church or ministry will advertise negative core values, of course, but you can judge what really lies at the heart of a church's mission by examining how the congregation acts when it counts. A core value is only true if it has an active influence and if the congregation and ministries manage to live by it, at least most of the time. It's also important to remember that individuals don't necessarily choose their core values. Many individuals have these values instilled in them by the way their parents and community raise them.

As Post-Millennials enter these new communities, many are introduced to a structured environment for the very first time, and many of them have turned their backs on the church. A small number seek a relationship with the Christian community and therefore they are introduced to the core values of ministry. These core values are: Truth, Spirit, Love, Story, and Community. These values are based on scripture:

Truth - Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17 NIV). And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32 KJV).

Spirit - We are led by the Spirit (Galatians KJV)

Love - Love is always relevant (Galatians 5:6, KJV).

Story - We are intentional about sharing the story (Matthew 28:19-20 KJV).

Community - We are part of something bigger than ourselves (John 17:20-21KJV)

Further, some Post- Millennials may already live by strong core values without realizing it. To get a sense of what core values are, Post-Millennials must ask themselves what activities bring them the most joy, or what they couldn't live without. They must ask themselves, "What gives life meaning and what do they want to achieve?" If they can articulate those answers, they are likely to formulate a pattern that they can boil down into a single concept, such as a consistently positive attitude or using their creativity to make the community and world a better place.

Post-Millennials must remember, throughout history, spirituality has played a significant role in the ministering to families and the building of communities. Many of the religious expressions among Saints of God are based upon the religions of ancestral origins. The worship of these ancestral spirits and other family factors greatly influenced the lifestyles of these Saints of God. While these traditions originated from their past relationships they are now turning more to the Word of God which will give them the guidance and faith to follow the Word of God.

Therefore, the importance of this research must remain spiritually sound, in which these Saints of God are driven by a deep desire for fellowship with Jesus Christ and a life of fullness. These Saints of God must demonstrate a committed life of service to the Lord, and they must emulate the life of Christ for all of mankind. They must be willing to assist other faithful believers to rise to a higher level of spiritual maturity through the process of consistence discipleship.

This research was to provide insights with regards to the importance of what the collected scholarly information means to me and the African American Community as a whole for the purpose of building a vision community. The information collected from scholarly researchers and the study findings will contribute to the understanding of Post-Millennials and the African American community. This information will enhance the awareness of readers through provoking examination of the struggle inherent by the Black Church tradition and Post-Millennials. Reviewing the scholarly works cited in this document in particular, allows one to see the rich history, impact, role, and the importance that the church has played in the lives of the black community to promoting social justice in America. Further, the information from scholars and from Post-Millennials themselves provide a firm foundation and understanding that these individuals recognize the challenges that Post-Millennials face and the holistic factors that impact their lives on a daily basis as well as what must be done as a community to find solutions to identified ethical principles coupled with the Black Community's quest for liberation and freedom.

This collection of information will provide church leaders and Post-Millennials with a focus on the role of the Black church. Historically, the Black church has been the foundation of the black community, a place of salvation, hope, refuge and spiritual healing. It has been a place where important issues are addressed locally and nationally. Post-Millennials have long been left off the agenda of the Black church, ignored in a largely patriarchal system, even thought to be justified by scripture. This collected information will particularly help Post-Millennials focus their efforts to remove themselves from the sideline and become active – taking positive actions to improve the lives of others and for generations to come. This doctoral project was truly an endeavor built from hope.

What was not done in the area of ministry on which this project focused?

**“The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.”
(Charles Mayes).**

One thing that was not done in the area of ministry on which this project focused was to teach the young participants about the importance and power of community. We saw community in action as members of the two churches volunteered their services for the cause outlined for them about this dissertation. The Bible is clear that living in community with other believers is vital to the Christian life and these volunteers demonstrated that. It was an omission to not direct the attention and appreciation for their service as a sermon or at least a conversation about community at work.

Reflecting back to the initial research for this ministry project, one of the things that was not done was to review the history of Saint James Baptist Church and Friendship Community Church. The researcher believes the history of these pillars of the community may have provided more information and insights with regards to the community, congregation and the history of ministry leadership of these respective Godly institutions. The researcher believes by not focusing on these religious intuitions one missed an opportunity to point out the immeasurable success for Kingdom building or community involvement of the church. Yes, the researcher has had several opportunities to review the contributions and rich history of these pillars of their respective communities.

Saint James Baptist Church. In 1871, just six years after the civil war, a small group made plans to build a church in Varina Georgia. They began holding meetings at what is now called St. James Hall. It was here that the people decided to put their faith in

God that he would make a way. Seventeen years later, in 1888, the trustees negotiated the purchase of one acre of land called Varina Grove for the purpose of building a new church. The deed stipulated that the church had to be completed within two years or the land would revert back to the original owners. Through many sacrifices and faith in God; the conditions of the deed were met and the new church was built. Today Saint James has built upon its history to be in a position to serve this present age.

Friendship Community Church. The researcher discovered rich history of Friendship Community Church. This church even incorporated the word “community” in its name. In order to be effective and efficient, the project required the establishment of several ministry leaders and positions. These positions were Ministry Leader Coordinator, Ministry Leader of Participant Recruitment, Ministry Leader of Focus Group Participation, The Ministry Leader of Operations, and Ministry Leader of Transportation. This was community in action as this group of volunteers acted as one body of Ministry Leaders, reflecting the Bible teaching, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12: 5). Other Bible verses, too, could have been referenced in teaching about community to our young participants. It may have led them to really appreciate what was being done for them in order for them to participate as contributors to the research for this dissertation. The Post-Millennial participants were recipients of this action:

Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:9-11).

Further, an admonition for working as community states:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Reflecting what could have been done in the area of ministry on which focused may have caused a realization of a missed opportunity to send our Post-Millennial participants home impassioned for God and armed with a strategy and plan to grow the Kingdom of God within their community.

What Might Have Been Done Differently

This research project was started by using a discussion group to identify problems in the community. The group agreed to discuss the following subjects: (a) community violence, its impact and how it plagues our cities; (b) the importance of voting and how to prepare the community to make these important decisions; (c) providing quality community health care; (d) obtaining and maintaining quality education within our community; (e) millennial non-denominational transition; and (f) the lack of K-12 parental involvement in the community schools and how to revive this participation.

This discussion group, made up of community and ministerial leaders, convened at the Friendship Community Church, located at 4141 Old Fairburn Road, College Park, Georgia. The Social Action Ministry at Friendship Community Church sponsored the group that consisted of ten (10) people from the community including four (4) educators, two (2) law enforcement officers, two (2) business leaders, one (1) health professional, and one (1) church member. The purpose of the meeting was to provide insight into situations that needed to be addressed in our community, as well as how the church could be

beneficial in tackling these concerns. This group was selected because of their closeness, relationship or direct involvement with the community.

Although all of the topics are of great importance, we narrowed our focus to fostering a holistic solution to issues faced by African American youth. We discovered that there was a sharp drop in the number of young persons connected to church and it was hard to work with disconnected youth if we do not understand them. We decided it would be beneficial to understand the Post-Millennial group because they are the next generation to transition into adult leadership roles. Therefore, this research project targeted the need to address tenth and eleventh grade high school students and prepare them for transition into leadership roles. They are the ones who interact with the children and family members on a daily basis and will be the leaders in their communities. In addition, the members in this generation will be the ones who provide physical and spiritual health. They must face the challenges of everyday living, so we need to understand the Post-Millennials. These are the community's men and women whom we must embrace to ensure quality and justice for members of the community. However, after the issues and problems were identified by the First Discussion Group, these individuals were not included in this research endeavor. None of the members of the First Discussion Group were Post-millennials. Therefore, what would have been done differently would have been to include Post-Millennials in the initial focus group.

Additionally, if the researcher would have known that the Black church has historically valued fostering relationships and the part the Black church has played in developing the faith of the next generation, this project would have started with a focus on the input from Post-Millennials rather than the older generation. Youth leaders of Post-

Millennials especially have understood the mentoring functions to be extremely important in the mandate: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12 KJV). As a result of this project, ministry leaders have organized programs to teach, train, and listen to Post-Millennials. Things had to be done differently because many of these traditional youth leadership programs, though effective in the past, no longer address the issues of today’s Post-Millennials. All said, the one thing that could be done differently would be more research before starting this dissertation. Also, the goal would have been to learn from Post-Millennials rather than pouring past generation thoughts into Post-Millennials. As a result of this dissertation, there is more respect for and hope for the Post-Millennial generation and the generations they will lead.

Envisioning the Future

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us." -- Camille S. Evelyn

A child goes missing, abducted, in the community. The police are notified and they issue what is referred to as an “Amber Alert” to notify the public. Radio stations begin broadcasting descriptions, while TV stations flash pictures of both the abductor and abducted across the screen. Billboards along major roads flash pertinent information regarding the abduction. The police move out in force with helicopters and planes and the Army National Guard may even be engaged. Everything is put into operation to bring a child home to its family. At the same time, they go after the abductor to put him behind bars, so she or he cannot harm any other child. However, what happen when a Post-Millennials become disconnected from the church and the community. Where is the

Amber Alert? Where is the sense of urgency to get Post-Millennials connected to the church?

As Post-Millennials begin to mature, the question must be asked, “Where are those community assets to recover those disconnected Post-Millennials?” The researcher’s hope for the sake of others is to get more engaged in community efforts in order to effect change. We must never forget the church’s connection with Post-Millennials. In fact, a study undertaken by Sharon Nichols and Thomas Good (1997) found that adults are all too ready to describe young people as rude, irresponsible, and wild. In fact, in that 1997 study, 67 percent of adults used these negative adjectives to describe teens; and the proportion increased to 74 percent in a follow-up 1999 study. “The church’s connection with Post-Millennials must be based on clear understandings of their value and rightful place in the life of the faith community” (Wimberly, 2005).

Action must be taken now to set the conditions in our respective communities for the sake of the next generation. Post-Millennials must understand the Calvary is not going to mount up in attempt to save them, they must begin and have a desire to make the necessary changes. Post-Millennials must be embraced by the community. Improving conditions must begin with parental involvement with our children along with a quality educational environment. Marcus Garvey once said, “Never forget that intelligence rules the world and ignorance carries the burden. Therefore, remove yourself as far as possible from ignorance and seek as far as possible to be intelligent” (Garvey, 2017, 8).

In order for communities to achieve, there must an embrace of education as the road to life setting the pace for future generations. Also, there must be a wiliness to revive the values of those who have paved the way. It was because of those forerunners, who took

risks laying paths for us to achieve in ordinary life situations, that many are where they are today. We must desire a life where our communities focus efforts on direction and understand the shoulders of giants that came before us, because many of them risked it all. Are we willing to do the same? There can no longer be an excuse for communities to do nothing or very little. Too much is at stake to continue to be silent and inactive while children are literally and physically dying all because of the lack of justice and equality in every spectrum of life.

Martin Luther King Jr. called for us to be love-struck with each other, not colorblind toward each other. To be love-struck is to care, to have deep compassion, and to be concern for each and every individual, including the poor and vulnerable (Alexander, 2012). Further, for the sake of others, Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). Action must be taken now to embrace Post-Millennials, listen to them, learn from them, and let them know we embrace them or we may find the next generation to be a world of hopelessness with the need to “enliven hope and care with those cut dead but still alive” (Ellison, 2013, xviii).

Post-Millennial Hope

One of the main recommendations coming from this research project was that Post-Millennials must be heard and included in leadership positions. Inclusion! That was the source of hope for the Post-Millennial generation. My Hope entering into this dissertation was that those working with Post-Millennials would begin to understand the Post-Millennials and would prepare for today and for those yet unborn generations. Post-

Millennials have to know and always remember from whence and how far, we as African Americans have come in society, in politics, and in our spiritual growth in the church.

In the communities throughout America, Post-Millennials today are protesting the mass shootings in their schools and other institutions:

The “children’s crusade” against gun violence, stemming from the Florida shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14 appears to be more than a transitory movement. Already sweeping cities across the country pointing toward a March 24 march in Washington, this groundswell of student support—reminiscent of protests against the Vietnam War in the 1960s—could hold long-term consequences for national politics (Frey, 2018,1).

Post-Millennials must be able to hope, to envision a pathway forward, be positively engaged in the process of social justice, and see themselves as important voices for systemic change. Historically, protests have played a vital role in social change. What makes today’s Post-Millennials motivated to speak up for change as were the Baby Boomers and Silent generation who spoke up for civil rights? Today, Post-Millennials see themselves as a generation of workers who stand for the betterment of society and leverage learning as an agent of social and moral change. Further, Post-Millennial hope is based in the belief that the time has arrived for them to become fiercely engaged in social justice, equality, and other moral issues because their voices are powerful agents for change. We, as by-standers are witnessing the diversity of our Post-Millennials, from those living in affluence to those living in poverty. They realized they must talk with each other as well as with their parents, teachers, and public officials. When they take part in dialogue, walk together in peaceful protests, and problem-solve in their local communities and the nation, they send a strong, formidable message which, in essence and in actuality says, “We are no longer the voices in the wilderness or Cut Dead and still alive. We ARE CHANGE

AGENTS!” It is with great hope that these change agents will realize the importance of church in the setting and re-setting of their moral compasses.

Concluding Thoughts

This researcher will not be satisfied with knowledge that is not applied to bringing the Millennial and Post-Millennial generations into the church. The scholarly research and the young people who participated in the focus group activities have made known what is necessary to form a vision community to bring in and keep young people connected. Key learnings are (1) Place special focus on meeting the spiritual needs of the disconnected, (2) Use a ministry model that is intentional on outreach into the community, and (3) make a sure path so that unchurched Post-Millennials can assimilate, get involved with the worship and workings of the church. This is the realization envisioned in this dissertation.

Appendix A

Parental Permission for Participation of a Child in a Research Study

Interdenominational Theological Center

Forming A Vision Community that Fosters a Holistic Solution to Issues Faced by African American Youth

Description of the research and your child's participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by John O. Herring. The purpose of this research is to understand post-millennial thinking and influence in the church. Your child's participation will involve surveys and discussion groups. The amount of time required for your child's participation will be an estimated three hours over the expected duration of three weeks.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research. The participating church practices "Safe Sanctuary" measures.

Protection of confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your child's privacy. Your child's identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to allow your child to participate or to withdraw your child from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact John O. Herring at 404.765.9256.

Consent

I have read this parental permission form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my permission for my child to participate in this study.

Child's Name: _____

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction to Participants

Dear _____:

I am an Interdenominational Theological Center candidate for Doctor of Ministry degree. I am conducting a study on, “Forming a Vision Community that Fosters a Holistic Solution to Issues Faced by African American Youth.” My goal is to collect data that will offer awareness into the problem of disconnectedness and invite you to be part of a vision community that will give insight into a solution.

The data collection procedure I plan to use is youth interviews in a focus group of those who are in the age group known as the Post-Millennial generation. I have selected you as a participant in this study because you are currently in the post-millennial generation. Your opinions and focus ideas are invaluable.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If selected, any information provided by you will be kept confidential. The total study time frame for data collected is three months. We will complete the work needed at a church in your neighborhood within four weeks. Please confirm whether you are interested in participating in this study by completing and emailing the attachment to [mailto: John.O.Herring@usdoj.gov](mailto:John.O.Herring@usdoj.gov)

Sincerely,

John O. Herring
Doctoral Student for Doctor of Ministry Degree
Interdenominational Theological Center

Appendix C

Youth Survey and Focus Group Discussion Questions

Forming a Vision Community that Fosters a Holistic Solution to Issues Faced by African
American Youth

Youth Survey and Focus Group Discussion Questions

Researcher: John O. Herring
Doctoral Student for Doctor of Ministry Degree
Interdenominational Theological Center

April 17, 2017

Youth Survey

Thank you for taking a few moments to complete this survey about participation in a youth ministry. Please answer the following questions honestly and feel free to add additional comments at the end of this survey. Your input is needed to help us understand ministry with youth.

Participant Information:

Name: Last: _____ First: _____ MI: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Age: _____ Sex: _____ Email Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

1 How would you describe yourself: (Check one or more)

☐ Living with Both Parents ☐ Living with Mother ☐ Living with Father ☐ Living in Shelter
☐ Living with Family Member ☐ Living in Foster Care ☐ Living on own

2 Have you ever been a Youthful Offender in the Juvenile Justice System? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Explain _____

3 Have you ever been in the Youthful Offender Rehabilitation Program? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Explain _____

4 How would you describe yourself? (Check one)

☐ African American/Black ☐ Caribbean ☐ African ☐ Multiracial
☐ Other: (please specify) _____

What is your religious/spiritual background? (Check one)

☐ No religious/spiritual background ☐ Christian ☐ Buddhist ☐ Hindu
☐ Muslim ☐ Non-Denominational ☐ Other (please specify)

What is your current school grade? _____

Participant Survey Input:

Please indicate what weekly activities you are **most** likely to attend.
You may select more than one.

- ☐ Sunday School
 - ☐ Sunday Evening Activities
 - ☐ Wednesday Evening Activities
 - ☐ Why?
-
-

Please indicate what weekly activities you are **least** likely to attend.
You may select more than one.

- ☐ Sunday School
 - ☐ Sunday Evening Activities
 - ☐ Wednesday Evening Activities
 - ☐ Why?
-
-

What, if anything, would help you attend these “least likely” events more?

What are you willing to do to encourage other youth to get connected to church?

- Would you be willing to come to a brainstorming session? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ☐ I would be interested in helping plan, lead or assist with activities in the following areas when I’m able: (check all that apply)
- ☐ Discussion Topics
 - ☐ Community Building
 - ☐ Service Projects
 - ☐ Prayer/Worship Experiences
 - ☐ I would be interested in being part of a Post-Millennial Leadership Team.

Thanks! Other suggestions?

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Please fill in this form as honestly as possible. All answers will be treated confidentially.

(1) Why do you go to Church?

- ☐ To meet friends ☐ I go with my parents ☐ To learn about God ☐ To worship God
☐ To have fellowship ☐ Other _____

(2) Why do you go to youth group?

- ☐ Meet friends ☐ To have fellowship ☐ My parents ask me to go ☐ To learn about God
☐ To worship God ☐ Other _____

(3) How would you rate Church Youth Groups for providing social activities?

- ☐ Very successful ☐ Successful ☐ OK ☐ Unsuccessful ☐ Very Unsuccessful

What might you suggest? _____

(4) How would you rate the Church Youth Groups for encouraging people to grow spiritually?

- ☐ Very successful ☐ Successful ☐ OK ☐ Unsuccessful ☐ Very Unsuccessful

What might you suggest? _____

(5) How would you rate your Youth Group for reaching out to others?

- ☐ Very successful ☐ Successful ☐ OK ☐ Unsuccessful ☐ Very Unsuccessful

What might you suggest? _____

(6) What issues or topic would you like to see looked at in a youth group?

(7) How can you bring other young people to Christ? _____

(8) What would you like to see happen as a result of participating in this research study?

Thanks! Other suggestions?

Appendix D

15 Economic Facts About Millennials

- Fact 1: Millennials are now the largest, most diverse generation in the U.S. population.....
- Fact 2: Millennials have been shaped by technology.
- Fact 3: Millennials value community, family, and creativity in their work.....
- Fact 4: Millennials have invested in human capital more than previous generations.
- Fact 5: College-going Millennials are more likely to study social science and applied fields.
- Fact 6: As college enrollments grow, more students rely on loans to pay for post-secondary education.
- Fact 7: Millennials are more likely to focus exclusively on studies instead of combining school and work. ..
- Fact 8: As a result of the Affordable Care Act, Millennials are much more likely to have health insurance coverage during their young adult years.
- Fact 9: Millennials will contend with the effects of starting their careers during a historic downturn for years to come.
- Fact 10: Investments in human capital are likely to have a substantial payoff for Millennials.....
- Fact 11: Working Millennials are staying with their early-career employers longer.....
- Fact 12: Millennial women have more labor market equality than previous generations
- Fact 13: Millennials tend to get married later than previous generations.....
- Fact 14: Millennials are less likely to be homeowners than young adults in previous generations.
- Fact 15: College-educated Millennials have moved into urban areas faster than their less educated peers.

(Council of Economic Advisors, 2014)

Appendix E

How Post-Millennials Differ from Millennials

1. Less Focused - Today relevant is constantly being refined and Post-Millennials live in a world of continuous updates. Post-Millennials process information faster than other generations thanks to apps like Snapchat and Vine. Thus, their attention spans might be significantly lower than Millennials.

2. Better Multi-Taskers Though Post-Millennials can be less focused than their Millennial counterparts, in school, they will create a document on their school computer, do research on their phone or tablet, while taking notes on a notepad, then finish in front of the TV with a laptop, while face-timing a friend. Post-Millennials can quickly and efficiently shift between work and play, with multiple distractions going on in the background...working on multiple tasks at once. Talk about multi-multi-tasking. Just think about how this kind of flow might reshape the office.

3. Bargains - Millennials care more about prices than Post-Millennials. This is arguably because they came of age during the recession. Sixty-seven percent of millennials surveyed said that they would go to the website to get a coupon, whereas only 46% of Post-Millennials polled said they would do the same. 71% of Millennials in a recent poll said they followed an advertisement online before making a purchase, however only 59% of Post-Millennials said the same.

4. Post-Millennial Generation is Full of Early Starters - Many employers are predicting that more teens, between the ages of 16 and 18 will go straight into the workforce, opting out of the traditional route of higher education, and instead finishing school online, if at all. Would you make a major investment, possibly leading to years of debt to come—knowing there are new, more affordable (not to mention more convenient) online alternatives coming up every day? Post-Millennials know the true value of independence, and knowledge is no exception here. If a Post-Millennial knows they are

capable of learning something themselves, or through a more efficient, non-traditional route, you can bet they'll take the opportunity.

5. Post-Millennials Are More Entrepreneurial - According to Post-Millennials marketing strategist Deep Patel, “the newly developing high tech and highly networked world has resulted in an entire generation thinking and acting more entrepreneurially.” Post-Millennials desire more independent work environments. 72% of teens say they want to start a business someday.

6. Post-Millennials Have Higher Expectations Than Millennials - Post-Millennials were born into a world overrun with technology. What was taken as amazing and inspiring inventions, are now taken as a given for teens. “When it doesn’t get there that fast they think something’s wrong,” said Marcie Merriman, executive director of growth strategy at Ernst & Young. “They expect businesses, brands and retailers to be loyal to them. If they don’t feel appreciated, they’re going to move on. It’s not about their being loyal to the business.”

7. Post-Millennials Are Big on Individuality - They were born social. In fact, nearly 92% of Post-Millennials has a digital footprint. Arguably as a result of the celebrities and media they follow, they seek uniqueness in all walks of life primarily through the brands they do business with, future employers, etc.

8. Post-Millennials Are More Global - Millennials were considered the first “global” generation with the development of the internet, but as more of the world comes online, Post-Millennials will become more global in their thinking, interactions, and relatability. 58% of adults worldwide ages 35+ agree that “kids today have more in common with their global peers than they do with adults in their own country.” Diversity will be an expectation of Post-Millennials.

Beall, 2017

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AAYLC Leadership Institute. *The African American Youth Leadership Conference 2016 (AAYLC)*. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/african-american-youth-leadership-conference-aaylc-leadership-institute-registration-21289806384#> (accessed August 8, 2016).
- Adelle Banks. *Black churches bucking the trend of decline*. August 13, 2015. <http://religionnews.com/2015/08/13/black-churches-bucking-trend-decline/> (accessed September 13, 2016).
- Africa University. *James H. Sally*. <https://www.support-africauniversity.org/page.aspx?pid=217> (accessed August 1, 2017).
- AIESEC. “5 Differences between Generation Z and Millennials” 2017. <https://aiesec.fi/5-differences-generation-z-millennials/> (accessed October 4, 2017).
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2012.
- Anderson, Frances. *The Pastor: Key to Effective Youth Ministry: Youth Ministry Models and the Pastor's Role*. American Theological Library Association, 2008.
- Anfara, Vincent A. (Ed) & Norma T. Mertz (Ed). *Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2015.
- Anyabwile, Thabiti. *Black Millennials and the Black Church*. 10.01.13. <http://thefrontporch.org/2013/10/black-millennials-and-the-black-church/> (Accessed August 18, 2016).
- Arbab, Farzam. *Living in a Rapidly Changing Society: Transition to Maturity, Lecture, 1993*. <http://www.bahai.org/documents/essays/arbab-dr-farzam/living-rapidly-changing-society-transition-maturity> (Accessed August 2, 2016).
- Barnes, Sandra L. and Anne Streaty Wimberly. *Empowering Black Youth of Promise: Education and Socialization in the Village-minded Black Church*. New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2016.
- Baysinger, Tim. “Turner Says the Post-Millennial Generation Should Be Known as 'Plurals': Yet another name idea for those born after 1997.” *Adweek*, January 14, 2016. <http://www.adweek.com/news/television/turner-says-post-millennial-generation-should-be-known-plurals-168994> (Accessed September 14, 2016).
- Beall, George. “8 Key Differences between Gen Z and Millennials, 2016.” http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-beall/8-key-differences-between_b_12814200.html (accessed August 4, 2017).
- Blake, Jenny. *Pivot: The Only Move That Matters Is Your Next One*. New York, NY: Portfolio Penguin Random House, LLC, 2016.
- Bloomberg, Linda Dale & Marie F. Volpe. *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map From Beginning to End 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2016.

- Borgman, Dean. *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture 2nd Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013.
- Build Initiative. *Creating and Sustaining a Shared Vision*.
<http://www.buildinitiative.org/Resources/CommunitySystemsDevelopmentToolkit/Section1SettingandResettingtheStage/Section1C.aspx> (accessed August 10, 2016).
- Burley, Hansel, Lucy Barnard-Brak, Aretha Faye Marbly, and Christopher Deason. *African American Millennials: A Profile of Promise*.
www.files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ881328.pdf
- Calvin, Bryan T. *Why Aren't Black Millennials Leaving the Church: As Millennials leave the Church in droves, black Millennials are staying put*. 2013.
<http://archives.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/why-aren%E2%80%99t-black-millennials-leaving-church> (accessed September 10, 2015).
- Cambridge Dictionary, “*Holistic*.” Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Cannon, Katie G. and Anthony B. Pinn. Ed. *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2014.
- Carter, Joe. “Why Do Millennials Consider the Church a Negative Influence on Society?” The Gospel Coalition, January 5, 2016.
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-do-millennials-consider-the-church-a-negative-influence-on-society> (accessed January 13, 2017).
- Casey, Annie E. *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*.
<http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-YouthIncarcerationInfographic-2013.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2017).
- Center for Generational Kinetics. “*Generational Breakdown: Info About All of the Generations*.” 2016. <http://genhq.com/faq-info-about-generations/> (accessed January 13, 2017).
- Chan, Melissa, Kim M. Tsai, Andrew J. Fuligni. “Changes in Religiosity Across the Transition to Young Adulthood.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 2015 Aug;44(8):1555-66. doi: 10.1007/s10964-014-0157-0.
- Chiakulas, Christian. *Churches Could Fill Their Pews With Millennials If They Just Did This*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christian-chiakulas/churches-millennials-if-they-just-did-this_b_8215846.html (accessed August 18, 2016).
- Clay, Andreana. *The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back: Youth, Activism and Post-Civil Rights Politics*. New York, NY: New York University Press, July 2, 2012.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi, “Fear of a Black President.” in *Best American Magazine Writing 2013*, edited by Sid Holt for the American Society of Magazine Editors, pp 3-34. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House, LLC., 2015.

- Council of Economic Advisors. "15 Economic Facts About Millennials." *The Council of Economic Advisers*, October 2014.
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/millennials_report.pdf
 (accessed August 20, 2016).
- Creswell, John. W. & Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2017.
- Creswell, John. W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2014.
- Davis, Rebecca. "Millennials Think Badly of Church." *The Stand*, Monday, March 21, 2016. <http://www.afa.net/the-stand/millennials/2016/03/millennials-think-badly-of-church/> (accessed August 19, 2016).
- Derousseau, Ryan. "Abercrombie & Fitch Co. stock struggles to find its style: Two years after its CEO was dismissed, Abercrombie remains an unpopular brand." *U.S. News and World Report*, Dec 23rd 2016.
<http://money.usnews.com/investing/articles/2016-12-23/abercrombie-fitch-co-stock-anf-struggles-to-find-its-style> (accessed January 12, 2017).
- DeVries, Mark. *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2008.
- Dittmann, Melissa. Generational differences at work: A psychologist studies ways to help traditionalists, baby boomers, gen Xers and millennials work better together, despite their generational differences. *Monitor*, 06/2005, 36, 6. P.54.
- Douglass, Frederick. "If There Is No Struggle, There Is No Progress," 1857.
<http://www.blackpast.org/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress> (accessed 11/07/2017).
- Ellison II, Greg. *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013.
- Engel, Uwe, Ben Jann, Peter Lynn, Annette Scherpenzeel, Patrick Sturgis. *Improving Survey Methods: Lessons from Recent Research*. New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2015.
- Evans, Rachel Held. "Want millennials back in the pews? Stop trying to make church 'cool'." *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2015.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/jesus-doesnt-tweet/2015/04/30/fb07ef1a-ed01-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e_story.html?utm_term=.e972a5558a40 (accessed September 5, 2016).
- Fernandez-Alcantara, Adrienne. "Disconnected Youth: A Look at 16 to 24 Year Olds Who Are Not Working or In School." *Congressional Research Service*, 2015,
<https://fas.org/sgp/cr> (accessed October 1, 2017).

- French, Quinn. "Millennial rewrites story of homelessness through workforce training, education access." *California Economic Summit*, May 28, 2015. <http://caeconomy.org/reporting/entry/millennial-rewrites-story-homelessness-through-education-workforce-training> (accessed August 20, 2016).
- Fry, Richard. *Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation*. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/> (Accessed August 14, 2016).
- Fulbright Commission. "US School System." 2016. <http://www.fulbright.org.uk/study-in-the-usa/school-study/us-school-system> (accessed October 11, 2016).
- Fulop, Timothy E. and Albert J. Raboteau. *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*. New York: NY, 1997.
- Garvey, Marcus. *Message to the People*. Bensenville, IL: Lushena Books, 2017.
- Gibson, Caitlin. "Gen Z, iGen, Founders: What Should We Call the Post-Millennials?" *The Washington Post*. December 3, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/gen-z-igen-founders-what-should-we-call-the-post-millennials/2015/12/03/38a102b2-99d2-11e5-94f0-9eeaff906ef3_story.html?utm_term=.737753b3de6f (accessed December 21, 2016).
- Gilman, Chen, Nancy Longo, and Jessica Emick. "What Is Child and Adolescent Development?" September 18, 2015. <http://www.capella.edu/blogs/cublog/what-is-child-and-adolescent-development/> (Accessed November 1, 2017).
- Ginwright, Shawn, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota. *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America's Youth (Critical Youth Studies)*. New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group LLC, 2006.
- Ginwright, Shawn. *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America*. New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group LLC, 2009.
- Ginwright, Shawn. *Hope and Healing in Urban Education: How Urban Activists and Teachers are Reclaiming Matters of the Heart*. Florence, Kentucky: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group LLC, 2015.
- Giroux, Henry A. *The Violence of Organized Forgetting: Thinking Beyond America's Disimagination Machine*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishers, 2014.
- Green, Lisa. Survey: Americans see value in church attendance. 2015. *Baptist Press*. <http://bpnews.net/44462/survey-americans-see-value-in-church-attendance> (accessed April 1, 2016).
- Hair, Elizabeth C., Kristin A. Moore, Sarah B. Garrett, Thomson Ling, & Kevin Cleveland. "The Continued Importance of Quality Parent-Adolescent Relationships During Late Adolescence." *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18, Issue 1, March 2008. PP 188-199. DOI: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2008.00556.x
- Horovitz, Bruce. "After Gen X, Millennials, what should next generation be?". *USA Today*. 4 May 2012. (Accessed December 20, 2016).

- Howe, Neil and William Strauss. *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, September 5, 2000.
- Howell, K. E. (2013) *Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology*. London: Sage Publications
- Hutchings, P. (1990, June). *Assessment and the way it works: Closing plenary address*. Association of Higher Education Conference on Assessment, Washington, DC.
- International Teams. “*Philosophy of Ministry*” 2017. <https://www.iteams.us/philosophy> (accessed October 1, 2017).
- Isaacson, Betsy. “Homeless Millennials are Transforming Hobo Culture.” *Newsweek*. May 1, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/2015/05/01/homeless-millennials-are-transforming-hobo-culture-323151.html> (accessed August 18, 2016).
- Jansen, Harrie. The Logic of Qualitative Survey Research and its Position in the Field of Social Research Methods. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(2), Art. 11, May 2010. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1450/2946> (accessed March 4, 2017). doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.2.1450>.
- Jenkins, Ryan. *Generation Z vs Millennials: The 8 Differences You Need to Know*. JUL 19, 2017. <https://www.inc.com/ryan-jenkins/generation-z-vs-millennials-the-8-differences-you-.html> (accessed July 30, 2017).
- Johnny Saldana. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2015.
- Jones, Ken. *Marcus Garvey Said: A collection of quotations from statements made by Marcus Mosiah Garvey*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ken S. Jones Printers, 2002.
- Jones, Mel. “The Second Racial Wealth Gap,” *Washington Monthly Magazine*, November/December 2015. <http://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/novdec-2015/the-second-racial-wealth-gap/> (accessed August 20, 2016).
- Jones, Robert, Thomas Banchoff, and Daniel Cox. *A Generation in Transition: Religion, Values, and Politics Among College-Age Millennials: Findings From the 2012 Millennial Values Survey*. Washington, DC: Public Religion Research Institute and Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs, 2012.
- Kerby, Sophia. *The Top 10 Most Startling Facts About People of Color and Criminal Justice in the United States: A Look at the Racial Disparities Inherent in Our Nation’s Criminal-Justice System*, March 13, 2012. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2012/03/13/11351/the-top-10-most-startling-facts-about-people-of-color-and-criminal-justice-in-the-united-states/> (accessed January 12, 2017).
- Kidd, Thomas S. *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Kidder, S. Joseph. *Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing, 2009.

- Kinnaman, David and Aly Hawkins. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016.
- Kolstad, Caleb. *Measuring Success in Ministry*. September 14, 2016. <https://www.tms.edu/preachersandpreaching/measuring-success-ministry/> (accessed October 6, 2017).
- Kotter International. "Can You Handle an Exponential Rate of Change?" *Forbes*, July 19, 2011. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkotter/2011/07/19/can-you-handle-an-exponential-rate-of-change/#714127571f6f> (Accessed October 3, 2016).
- Kramer, B. J. (1998). Preparing social workers for the inevitable: A preliminary investigation of a course on death, grief, and loss. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 34(2), 211-227.
- Krauthamer, Barbara & Chad Williams. *Major Problems in African American History*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2018.
- Krishnamurthy, B. V. "A More Holistic Approach to Problem Solving." *Harvard Business Review*, April 11, 2008. <https://hbr.org/2008/04/a-more-holistic-approach-to-pr.html> (accessed November 1, 2016).
- Krueger, Richard A. and Mary Anne Casey. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2014.
- Kubosiak, Ed. "Marketing to the Post-Millennial Generation." *Mass Live Media*. 2016. <http://www.masslivemedia.com/marketing-to-the-post-millennial-generation/> (accessed January 24, 2017).
- Kweku-Muata, Osei-Bryson (Editor), Ojelanki Ngwenyama (Editor) *Advances in Research Methods for Information Systems Research: Data Mining, Data Envelopment Analysis, Value Focused Thinking*. York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, LLC., 2014.
- LaGuardia Community College. "Resources for Parents." *Dare to Do More*, 2015. http://www.laguardia.edu/immigrantparents/NYC_Public_Schools_Index.html (accessed October 9, 2016).
- Lambert, Joe. *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*. New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2013.
- Ledonne, Jennifer. Best practices for engaging youth: Whether they come with tattoos and piercings or ponytails and polo shirts, youth deserve a warm welcome from the whole parish. March 2014. *U.S. Catholic*, 79, 3, pp. 32-33.
- Lee, Morgan. "Why Black Churches Are Keeping Millennials." *Christianity Today*, January 30, 2015. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/januaryfebruary/why-black-churches-are-keeping-millennials.html> (accessed August 10, 2016).
- Lewis, Kristen and Sarah Burds-Sharps. "Halve the Gap by 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities" (PDF). *Measure of America, Social Science Research Council*, 2013. <http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/MOA-Halve-the-Gap-ALL-10.25.13.pdf> (accessed September 1, 2016).

- Lipka, Michael. *5 Key Findings About the Changing U.S. Religious Landscape*, 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/5-key-findings-u-s-religious-landscape/> (accessed November 15, 2016).
- Lipka, Michael. *Millennials increasingly are driving growth of 'nones'* 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/> (Accessed October 23, 2016).
- MacArthur, John. "What is biblical discernment and why is it important?" *Grace to You*, 2007. (accessed January 12, 2017).
- Mago, Vijay K., Hilary K Morden, Charles Fritz, Tiankuang Wu, Sara Namazi, Parastoo Geranmayeh, Rakhi Chattopadhyay, and Vahid Dabbaghian. "Analyzing the Impact of Social Factors on Homelessness: A Fuzzy Cognitive Map Approach," *BioMed Informatics & Decision Making*, August 23, 2013. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3766254/> (accessed August 20, 2016).
- Mallett, Christopher A. *The School-To-Prison Pipeline: A Comprehensive Assessment*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, LLC.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Developing a Vision: What kind of church would we like to be?* 2007. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/042705.html> (accessed October 2, 2017). Mannik, L. & McGarry, K. (2017). *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.
- Mannik, L. & McGarry, K. (2017). *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.
- Marlow, Fraser. "Leading at the Speed of Change." *Leadership Practice*, February 2016. <http://blessingwhite.com/article/2016/02/23/leading-at-the-speed-of-change/> (accessed January 25, 2017).
- Maxwell, John C. *How Successful People Think: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, 2014.
- McCarthy, Patrick, Vincent Schiraldi, and Miriam Shark. "The Future of Youth Justice: A Community-Based Alternative to the Youth Prison Model." *New Thinking in Community Corrections Bulletin*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2016. NCJ 250142.
- McFarland, Alex and Jason Jimenez. *Abandoned Faith: Why Millennials are Walking Away and How You Can Lead Them Home*. *Focus on the Family*, 2017.
- Mendenhall, A. M. (2007). Switching hats: Transitioning from the role of clinician to the role of researcher in social work doctoral education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 27(3/4), 273- 290.
- Merritt, Jonathan. Forget millennials. How will churches reach Generation Z? *Religion News Service*, 2017. <https://religionnews.com/2017/05/01/forget-millennials-how-will-churches-reach-generation-z/> (accessed December 15, 2017).

- Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman & Johnny Saldaña. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2014.
- Morgan, D.L. *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research: Qualitative Research Methods Series*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 1996.
- Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice An Introduction*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2008.
- Murray, Charles. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010 Reprint Edition*. New York, NY: Random House. 2013.
- Nasir, Na'ilah. *Racialized Identities: Race and Achievement among African American Youth*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Newport, Frank. "Frequent Church Attendance Highest in Utah, Lowest in Vermont," *Gallup Social Issues*, February 17, 2015.
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/181601/frequent-church-attendance-highest-utah-lowest-vermont.aspx> (accessed April 1, 2016).
- Nichols, Sharon L. & Thomas L. Good. *America's Teenagers-Myths and Realities: Media Images, Schooling, and the Social Costs of Careless Indifference*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004.
- Nisen, Max. How To Know If You're Too Old To Call Yourself A Millennial. *Business Insider*, May 25, 2013. <http://www.businessinsider.com/definition-of-generational-cohorts-2013-5> (accessed August 11, 2016).
- Obama, Barack. Barack Obama Quotes. *GoodReads*, 2016.
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/315845-hope-is-not-blind-optimism-it-s-not-ignoring-the-enormity> (accessed January 20, 2017).
- Ogden, Greg. *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Osmer, Richard Robert. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008.
- Oswalt, Angela. Child and Adolescent Development: An Overview of Child Development Theories. *Gulf Bend Centers*, 2016.
http://www.gulfbend.org/poc/view_doc.php?type=doc&id=7918&cn=28 (accessed December 29, 2016).
- Paris, Peter J. & Julius Crump. *African American Theological Ethics: A Reader*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.
- Pew Research Center. "Religion Among Millennials," Pew Research Report, 2010.
<http://www.pewforum.org/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-millennials> (accessed March 29, 2017).
- Pew Research Center. *Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends*. March 7, 2014.

- http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2014/03/2014-03-07_generations-report-version-for-web.pdf (accessed August 15, 2016).
- Pew Research Center. *Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change Executive Summary*, February 24, 2010.
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>
- Pew Research Center. *The Whys and Hows of Generations Research*. September 3, 2015.
<http://www.people-press.org/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/> (accessed December 3, 2016).
- Pierpoint, Ian. "The Generation after Millennials Are NOT Like Millennials: We Call Them Generation Edge." *The Sound*, March 2014. www.thesoundresearch.com (accessed September 30, 2016).
- Plante, Thomas G. "Two Psychological Theories All Leaders Should Know. Attend to observational learning and social contagion and you'll lead better." *Psychology Today*. July 1, 2013. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/do-the-right-thing/201307/two-psychological-theories-all-leaders-should-know> (accessed February 9, 2017).
- Powe, Jr, F. Douglas. *New Wine, New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012.
- Preus, Rolf. "The Pastor: CEO or Shepherd?" February 11, 2015.
<http://www.christforus.org/ThePastorCEOorShepherd.htm> (accessed October 31, 2017).
- Quick, Kimberly. "A New Silent Majority—Low-Income and Minority Millennials." *The Century Foundation Report*, December 09, 2015.
<https://tcf.org/content/commentary/a-new-silent-majority-low-income-and-minority-millennials/> (accessed August 20, 2016).
- Rainer, Thom S. and Jess W. Rainer. *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011.
- Rogowski, Jon C. and Cathy J. Cohen. "Black Millennials in America: Documenting the Experiences, Voices and Political Future of Young Black Americans." *Black Youth Project*. <http://blackyouthproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BYP-millennials-report-10-27-15-FINAL.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- Saldana, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2015.
- Sanburn, Josh. "Millennials: The Next Greatest Generation?" *Time Magazine*. 2013.
<http://nation.time.com/2013/05/09/millennials-the-next-greatest-generation/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
- Schott Foundation for Public Education, "Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males," 2015.
<http://www.blackboysreport.org/2015-black-boys-report.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2016).

- Scott, Mia. *Nielsen 2016 Report: Black Millennials Close the Digital Divide*. 10-17-2016. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-room/2016/nielsen-2016-report-black-millennials-close-the-digital-divide.html> (Accessed March 20, 2017).
- Samuels, Alana. "America's Great Divergence." *The Atlantic Daily*, January 30, 2017.
- Shannon, David T., Julia Frazier White, & Deborah Van Broekhoven. *George Liele's Life and Legacy: An Unsung Hero (The James N. Griffith Endowed Series in Baptist Studies)*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2013.
- Sharp, Diamond. "10 Things the Media Won't Tell You About Black Millennials." *The Root*, August 8, 2014. http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/08/black_millennials_everything_you_need_to_know/ (accessed August 20, 2016).
- Siebert Foundation and Kern Family Foundation. "Engaging Millennials in Ministry: National Research Study of Effective Ministry Models," September 2015. <http://www.siebertfoundation.org/EngagingMillennialsinMinistryResearchReport2> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- Simon, Thomas R.; Nancy M. Ritter and Reshma R. Mahendra. *Changing Course: Preventing Gang Membership*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/nij/239234.pdf
- Singleton, G.E. (2015). *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin-A SAGE Company
- Smothers, Jasmine Rose, F. Douglas Powe Jr. *Not Safe for Church: Ten Commandments for Reaching New Generations*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015.
- Sound 3 Generation Edge. "The Post-Millennial generation: A new age of rebellion. Far more rebellious than millennials. A generation with reform at its very heart." *Generation Edge Magazine*. Sep 17, 2014. <http://www.slideshare.net/thesound/the-post-millennial> (accessed October 1, 2015).
- Sound, The. *Generation Edge*, 2016. <http://generationedge.com/> (accessed December 1, 2016).
- Spano, Sedra. "Stages of Adolescent Development: Research Facts and Findings." *ACT for Youth Center of Excellence*, May 2004. http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_stages_0504.cfm (accessed November 1, 2016).
- Stark, David. *Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2016.
- Stephens, Bret. *America in Retreat: The New Isolationism and the Coming Global Disorder*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2014.

- Sujansky, Joanne and Jan Ferri-Reed. *Keeping The Millennials: Why Companies Are Losing Billions in Turnover to This Generation- and What to Do About It*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009.
- Symmonds, Nicole. *10 Things I Wish Everyone Knew About the Black Church*. <http://www.faithstreet.com/onfaith/2014/11/14/10-things-i-wish-everyone-knew-about-the-black-church/35055> (accessed August 11, 2016).
- Thomas G. Plante. "Two Psychological Theories All Leaders Should Know. Attend to observational learning and social contagion and you'll lead better." *Psychology Today*. July 1, 2013. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/do-the-right-thing/201307/two-psychological-theories-all-leaders-should-know> (accessed February 9, 2017).
- Totten, Samuel and Jon Pedersen, (Editors). *Educating About Social Issues in the 20th and 21st Centuries - Vol 4: Critical Pedagogues and Their Pedagogical Theories (Research in Curriculum and Instruction)*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2014.
- Tracy, Joseph. *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield: Classic Reprint*. London, UK: Forgotten Books, 2015.
- University of Kansas. *Community Toolbox: Leadership and Management, 2016*. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/develop-and-communicate-vision/main> (accessed August 16, 2016).
- Vaccaro, Adam. "Young Talent: What to Expect From the Post-Millennial Workforce: What managers need to know about the *next next* generation." *Inc Magazine, APR 1, 2014*. <http://www.inc.com/adam-vaccaro/generation-after-millennials.html> (accessed January 15, 2017).
- Waters, Janet. *Phenomenological Research Guidelines*. 2016. <https://www.capilanou.ca/psychology/student-resources/research-guidelines/Phenomenological-Research-Guidelines/> (accessed February 27, 2017).
- White, James Emery. *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post Christian World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017.
- Williams, Alex. "Move Over, Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z." *The New York Times, September 18, 2015*. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-generation-z.html?_r=0 (accessed January 25, 2017).
- Willoughby, Karen L. "Millennials set to outnumber Boomers this year - with immigrant boost," January 22, 2015. *Christian Examiner*. <http://www.christianexaminer.com/article/millennials-climb-to-king-of-the-hill-in-size-among-generations/48176.htm> (accessed December 27, 2016).
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty and Sarah F. Farmer. *Raising Hope: Four Paths to Courageous Living for Black Youth*. Nashville: Foundery Books, General Board of High Education and Ministry, UMC, 2017.

- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty and Sarah F. Farmer. "Building Bridges of Hope: The Church's Role in Reaching Disconnected Black Youth." *Youth Hope-Builders Academy of Interdenominational Theological Center*, November 6-8, 2015. [http://www.religiouseducation.net/papers/rea2015-wimberly\(2\).pdf](http://www.religiouseducation.net/papers/rea2015-wimberly(2).pdf) (accessed September 3, 2016).
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty, Sandra Barnes, and Karma D. Johnson. *Youth Ministry in the Black Church: Centered in Hope*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2013.
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. "Black Youth Speak Out: An Urgent Call for Hope-Bearing Response." *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 26(2), November 2016:102-120.
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. *Keep it Real: Working with Today's Black Youth*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. *Raising Hope: Four Paths to Courageous Living for Black Youth*. Nashville, TN: GBHEM, 2017.
- Wimberly, Edward P. *African American Pastoral Care Revised Edition*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.
- Wimberly, Edward P. *The Gathering of the Village for Justice and Participatory Democracy*. Atlanta: ITC Press, 2017.
- Wrenn, Jan, and Bruce Wrenn. "Enhancing Learning by Integrating Theory and Practice." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Volume 21, Number 2, 258-265 (2009), <http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/ijtlhe727.pdf> (accessed November 1, 2016).
- Zimmer, Scott. *Gen Edge: The Next Generation of Voters*, 2016. <http://www.generations.com/2016/06/16/gen-edge-the-next-generation-of-voters/> (accessed December 1, 2016).