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Millennials: The Next Paradigm of the African American Church

Sharon Cobbins
Olivet Nazarene University

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MILLENNIALS: THE NEXT PARADIGM OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN
CHURCH

by

Sharon Cobbins

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

School of Graduate and Continuing Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

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in

Ethical Leadership

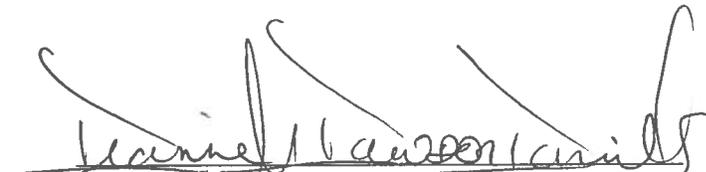
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Sharon Cobbins

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Dianne M. Dawson Daniels, D.B.A.
Dissertation Adviser

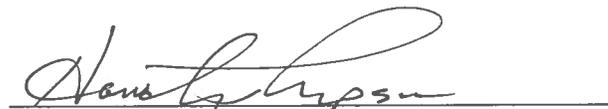
4/23/16


Mark A. Frisius, Ph.D.
Dissertation Reader

4/23/16


H. Stanton Tuttle, Ph.D.
Dissertation Coordinator

4/23/16


Houston Thompson, Ed.D.
Program Director

4/23/16


Carol Maxson, Ed.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs

4/23/16

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the decline of church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation specific to the African American church. Church attendance and church participation has been integral in the culture of the African American church, and the decline for the Millennial generation is of significant importance. One hundred and forty-five Millennials from three African American churches participated in the study and were asked to explain their perception of today's church. Three main research questions covered demographic factors related to the decline of church participation and church attendance, belief patterns and opinions, and the role of Millennials in the African American church as perceived by the respondents. The study revealed common characteristics for Millennials with current literature of the topic. However, Millennials in the study indicated that church is more about spirituality and not a religious life. Implications of the study are helpful for the church to specifically target this generation to gain a better understanding of their expectations. The research findings are useful to advance the understanding regarding the decline of church attendance and church participation for Millennials, as well as to provide insight to African American churches, pastors, and ministry leaders to connect and engage the largest generation in U.S. history for the African American church to remain relevant in the 21st century.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A passage of scripture in Hebrews of the Bible conveys the importance for followers to come together to encourage and support one another in the body of Christ (Hebrews 10:25). The African American church has served as a gathering or meeting place for encouragement and support for the African American community. The African American church was the “bulwark of spiritual and moral strength, and a center for total life for African Americans” (McKinney, 1971, p. 453).

Religious and spiritual beliefs and the practice of church attendance and church participation provided African Americans an opportunity to understand and find meaning regarding the challenges of life (Taylor, Mattis, & Chatters, 1999). Church attendance and church participation played an integral role in the tradition of African Americans, which interpreted a rich and diverse cultural and historical background (Taylor et al.).

The future of the African American church is the Millennial generation, young adults 18 to 29 years of age. Millennials, also known as Generation Y are the largest growing population, and are reported as the least religious and unaffiliated with any religious institution (Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life Project, 2010). With the decline of church attendance and church participation among the Millennials, where does this leave the future of the African American church?

Statement of the Problem

An emerging generation of young adults called Millennials has garnered much attention. With the Millennial generation being the largest generation since the baby boomers, many people have written books, articles, and blogs about the Millennials and how to engage them in business, education, and the church. Like generations before them, this cohort has its own unique characteristics, beliefs, and habits. One unique characteristic which places the Millennial generation apart from previous generations is that they are less religious, increasingly unaffiliated with any religion, and attend religious worship services less than older adults (Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life Project, 2010). Religious attitudes and beliefs were reported as less passionate for Millennials than previous generations according to the Pew Research Center.

The decline in church attendance and church participation for Millennials creates a major concern nationally for all churches. The African American church represented a stable community for African Americans with church attendance and church participation as a tradition of the African American culture (Frazier & Lincoln, 1974). However, specific to African Americans, where church attendance and church participation has been integral in the culture of the African American church, the decline is of significant importance.

Research regarding Millennials' beliefs and behavior conveyed that they have not rejected their beliefs in Christ, but have rejected the religious institutions that represent Christ (Guldalian, 2013). The Millennial generation finds no value in church, nor do they make sense of how the church relates to their challenges of everyday life. It is unfortunate that Millennials have heard stories of corruption and fallen leaders in the church, further

adding to their decline in church attendance and church participation (Waters & Bortree, 2012). The message of the church remains the same, making disciples of all generations to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Millennials are the future of the church. However, if the church is unable to engage this generation, church attendance and church participation will continue to decline, leaving the African American church vulnerable. The African American church must find a way to reach this next generation of disciples to remain relevant.

Millennials are the largest growing generation and the future of the church, (Sandfort & Haworth, 2002). The purpose of this research is to examine the decline in church attendance and participation in the African American church. This topic is of vital importance because Millennials represent a generation of the so-called *lost sheep*, referred to in the Gospel of Luke. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus conveys the importance of the shepherd going after the sheep that have wandered away from the flock because they may not find their way back (Luke 15: 4-7). Jesus shared this parable with his disciples to show them the heart of God and to explain the mission of Christ, which is to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus expressed that every single sheep is worthy to be saved and the parable represents the importance of going after that which is lost. If the church is to recover this lost generation, it must address their decline in attendance and participation in order to support or ensure the survival of the church.

Background

Millennials are defined as a generation of young adults born between the 1980s and 2000s (Waters & Bortree, 2012). Howe and Strauss (2000) defined a generation as a cohort group that has common experiences during their span of life. There is much

dispute regarding actual dates for generation cohorts; however, most literature referenced regarding generation and cohort blend the two (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2012). Generational differences are of significant importance regarding Millennials as they are characterized with new and unique differences from previous generations. Millennials “are the largest, healthiest, and most cared for generation in American history” (Howe & Strauss, p. 76). Millennials are the new face of America, the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort group of any generation of young adults in history (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). At the same time, they are becoming the most educated generation and the least religious of any other generation.

Millennials are technologically astute and rely on the Internet, social media, texting, and YouTube videos as a part of their daily routine (Bicen & Pinto, 2012). The use of technology is a characteristic which governs their behavior and lifestyle. Millennials consider their knowledge and use of technology as a badge of honor giving them access to information, family, and friends 24/7 (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010).

Considerable attention has been devoted to the Millennials’ generation regarding spirituality and religion. Millennials have conveyed a distinction between religion and spirituality. In a study of Millennials, Sandfort and Haworth (2002) found that spirituality was described as freedom of expression, whereas religion was believed to be more confining. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center revealed that Millennials’ attitudes towards religious institutions continued to decline, and the group was disenchanted with organized or traditional religion (Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life Project, 2010). The religious institution, for the Millennial generation, had

less importance than previous generations and the practice of going to church was no longer relevant (Sandfort & Haworth).

With religion, spirituality and church attendance being a significant part of the African American culture, Sanchez and Carter (2005) conveyed that much of the psychological literature regarding African American religion and spirituality focused on the African American church. Spirituality is an important part of the African American culture. However, an overlap remains in defining spirituality and religion (Astin & Astin, 2003). Religion for the African American church was referenced for "...its faithfulness and consistency. It was a religion which had been tried and proven worthy of the testimonials of time" (Frazier & Lincoln, 1974, p. 103). Millennials have been reported as spiritual but not religious (Gay & Lynxwiller, 2013), and according to the Public Religion Research Institute (Cox, 2013), Millennials engaged less often in religious activities and embraced less traditional beliefs.

According to Arnett (2000), the theory regarding emerging adulthood provides a way of conceptualizing the development of young adults. Emerging adults also fall within the same age range as Millennials. The theory indicated that this is the "age of identity explorations" and that emerging adults are contemplating the numerous possibilities for their lives (p. 8). Arnett (2000) stated that during this time these young adults begin to question their values and religious beliefs. The theory suggests that this is the time when religious attitudes, behaviors, and preferences are reexamined (Koenig, McGue, & Iacono, 2008), and that the frequency of church attendance begins to decline. Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) stated that emerging adults are bombarded with numerous tasks and that religious participation is edged out, and that religious

involvement is no longer important. The emerging adulthood theory will serve as the theoretical foundation of this study.

Research Questions

1. What are the demographic factors related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African-American church?
2. What belief patterns/opinions are related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church?
3. What do Millennials perceive their role to be in the African American Church?

Description of Terms

African American church. A Black or predominately Black congregation consisting mainly of African American Christians (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Emerging adult. The developmental period from late teens through mid twenties, 18 to 25 years of age when youth are no longer considered adolescents but are not considered to be fully mature adults (Arnett, 2000).

Generational cohorts. The term is used to “categorize a group of people with similarities, an era in which individuals were born, and when they came of age” (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2012, p. 2).

Millennials. A generation of individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Religion. “Consists of the encounter of human beings with the sacred or divine” (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Spirituality. “A worldview in which individuals hold a more comprehensive understanding of self and hold belief in a larger reality than what is experienced in the natural world” (Dancy, 2010, p. 416).

Significance of the Study

In reference to the research questions, this study seeks to make a contribution to the current literature regarding the decline in church attendance and church participation specific to the Millennial generation in the African American church. While there is significant research regarding the decline of church attendance, church participation, and religious affiliation by the Millennial generation, there is limited information in the literature specifically regarding the minority generation of Millennials (Cokley, Garcia, Hall-Clark, Tran, & Rangel, 2012).

This study is of significance for the African American church and their leaders. Millennials are the largest generation in the United States and are the next paradigm of the African American church (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2012). The tradition of church attendance and church participation will continue to decline for the African American church if the church does not engage the Millennial generation.

Process to Accomplish

The purpose of the present research was to gain an understanding of the demographic factors, beliefs, and perceptions of the Millennial generation that may be related to the decline in church attendance and church participation in the African American church. This research utilized a mixed method approach to address the research questions. Combining both approaches of quantitative and qualitative research in examining the perceptions and behaviors of the Millennials, “may provide a more

complete picture of the phenomenon than either approach could do alone” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 98). Conducting a mixed methods approach included both numerical data and text data, which provided a better understanding of the research problem. An explanatory design utilized the results from the quantitative phase of the study to construct relevant questions for the qualitative phase of the study.

Method

The study included a quantitative data collection tool designed to “measure the psychological characteristics or behaviors” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 95) of the Millennial generation to provide insight that could be utilized to increase church attendance and church participation of this group. The use of surveys provided a quantifiable explanation of opinions and trends of the sample size of the participants from the overall population (Creswell, 2013). Survey research allowed the researcher to obtain information about one or more groups of individuals pertaining to their characteristics, attitudes, and opinions through the use of questions and statements rated by tabulating their responses (Leedy & Ormrod).

Qualitative data was gathered and analyzed from open-ended questions given to a small sample of the population that used an interview format with the thought that “the key behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem from the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). Allowing participants an opportunity to voice their feelings provided a better understanding regarding their perceptions and beliefs related to the decline of church attendance and church participation for their generation. The validation for this approach was that the quantitative data provides a synopsis of the research and

statements rated, and that the qualitative data probe deeper for a more in-depth understanding (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

Population and Sample

The research participants consisted of Millennials, 18 to 29 years of age, from a congregation of three African American churches in the Midwest. The researcher determined that the three African American churches combined have a population size of more than 3,000 Millennials. The convenience sample size was 145 Millennials drawn from the population of the three African American churches. The researcher utilized the bulletins, social media, and emails from the African American churches to invite Millennials to complete an online survey questionnaire. The church membership data base provided access to both active and non-active Millennials. The request consisted of providing a brief introduction about the researcher, dissertation title, and the invitation to participate in the study, which was submitted to the designated church personnel to post in the various modes of communication; church bulletin, social media, and email.

Participants were provided a link to a religious measure online survey. Participants were advised to read and agree to the consent form. The consent form clearly communicated that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants must be 18 to 29 years of age. Additionally, the consent form provided information about the nature of the study and that participants are free at anytime to withdraw without giving a reason, and without penalty. Participants were also informed that participating in the study did not affect their church membership. Once consent was obtained, participants were directed to complete the survey questionnaire via the use of an electronic online

format. The researcher provided a telephone number and email address for participants with questions about completing the survey. The participants remained anonymous.

Phase 1

The survey questionnaire was a modified version of Sethi and Seligman's Religiousness Measure (as cited in Hill & Hood, 1999). The survey sought to collect data that measured the degree in which Millennials' religious beliefs and religious influence played a role in their lives and their decision making. Additionally, the data sought to measure religious involvement and participation in church services and participation in church ministry.

According to Hill and Hood (1999), validity and reliability of the scale were not reported other than the differences between the religious groups in their study. However, the researcher sought the advice of a church youth Pastor for content validity and utilized cronbach's alpha for reliability. The design was modified to specifically address the research questions for this study. The cross-sectional survey design consisted of 37 questions to measure religious influence, religious involvement, religious beliefs, religious participation, and two open-ended questions. A cross-sectional survey design provided a picture of existing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of a population (Gay et al., 2012). The first part of the survey gathered demographic information pertaining to gender, age, education level, race, marital status, etc. Religious beliefs, religious influence, and religious participation were measured utilizing a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Likert scale allowed respondents to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric disagree-agree scale for a series of statements (Salkind, 2012). Religious involvement was

measured by two questions that assessed the number of times that participants attended church and participated in church ministries during a one year period. These measures were an attempt to correlate perceptions of Millennials' engagement of church attendance and participation with other items measured on the survey (e.g. demographic items and ratings provided on the statements). Survey answers were entered into the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) for coding demographic information and identifying patterns.

Phase 2

The researcher conducted the second phase of the study with in-depth interviews from a purposeful sample population of five participants drawn from the population of interest in order to further explore responses from the quantitative data analysis.

Participants were recruited by personal invitation through email or telephone call which included both categories of Millennials considered as active and non-active members in the church. Participants who took part in Phase 2 were required to have taken part in Phase 1 of the study. The interview consisted of six open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The researcher chose a location for the interview; explained the purpose and general overview of the research. As in Phase 1, participants were provided a consent form and advised that they are free at any time to stop their participation without penalty. In examining the demographic factors, beliefs, and perceptions of the Millennial generation that may be related to church attendance and church participation, this study will address the following research questions.

Question 1: What are the demographic factors related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African

American church? Data was collected from the cross sectional religious measure survey. The independent variables were the demographic questions and the dependent variables were numerical responses of the participants regarding church attendance and church participation. Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics (e.g. mean, median, mode, frequency counts, and standard deviation) designed to organize and summarize the data that looked for patterns or themes as a function of the different conditions of the independent variables (e.g. gender, educational level, marital status, etc.). The surveys were examined for correctness and completeness, and incomplete surveys were discarded from the analysis. Finally, inferential statistical analysis were conducted on these data to determine if any of the demographic items are in fact related to a decline in church attendance and church participation in the Millennial generation. These analyses took the form of independent samples *t*-tests and between subject ANOVAs. The exact nature of these analyses cannot be determined until data has been collected.

Question 2: What belief patterns/opinions are related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church? Data was collected from the cross-sectional religious measure survey to address this research question. Descriptive statistical analysis (e.g. mean, median, mode, frequency, counts, and standard deviation) were conducted to organize and summarize the data yielded by the numerical values provided for Items 10 and 11 in Part I of the survey and ratings provided by Part II of the survey.

The analyses allowed the researcher to examine the data for any patterns that seem to be present regarding relationships among these variables. In addition, inferential statistical analyses were conducted as well. First, a correlation coefficient was conducted

to correlate all of the variables mentioned above with one another. This analysis enabled the researcher to detect any significant relationships among these variables. Second, the numerical data for Items 10 and 11 are on Part I of the survey will be broken down into interval categories (e.g. 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, and more than 15). If the data across these categories are not too disparate, then the single-factor between-groups ANOVAs could be run to assess any relationships that might exist between attendance or participation number category (the independent variables) and each of the items rated on Part II of the survey (the dependent variables). Again, dependant on how the data runs, it was possible to conduct some factorial ANOVAs on these data by crossing category number for attendance or participation with some of the demographic items of the particular statement rated as independent variables. The ratings given served as dependent variables. The range of data analysis possible could not be determined for certain until the data are collected.

Question 3: What do Millennials perceive their role to be in the African American church? In order to gain a deeper understanding about the perceptions of Millennials' attitudes and behaviors regarding the research question, and the impact of their perceptions, narrative data from in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions (e.g., What do you believe your function is in the church?) was recorded via an audio recording device. Responses from the interviews were numbered and given a label in order to capture the idea of each comment(s). The interview data was reviewed, transcribed, and analyzed for codes or common themes via NVivo research software to ascertain factors pertaining to Millennials' perceptions regarding their role in the church. Categories were created based upon emerging themes. Once no additional categories can be created, the

data was summarized and organized by themes to give meaning and understanding to the data collected. The purpose of interpreting the data was to address the meaning of the analysis as it pertains to the research question.

Realizing the importance of protecting the participants, care was taken to ensure that the data collected did not have a negative effect on their church membership, as well as to ensure confidentiality of the participants. The survey and in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to ascertain factors to provide insight to influence Millennials' attendance and participation in the African American church and give an understanding of their beliefs regarding their role in the church.

Summary

Millennials, the next paradigm of the African American church are no longer interested in attending worship service or participating in the church culture (Sandfort & Haworth, 2002). They view the church as outdated and irrelevant. Millennials were reported as being raised in traditional religion, but now considered as unaffiliated with any religious institution (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). This research study seeks to extend to the body of research specific to the African American church "to further understand the trends and issues found in the apparent disconnect from organized religion among the Millennial generation" (Waters & Bortree, 2012, p. 213).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Research continues to show a decline in church attendance and church participation by the Millennial generation (Waters & Bortree, 2012). As defined by Fromm, Lindell, and Decker (2011), Millennials are the largest cohort generation at 80 million; the most the United States has ever seen. Millennials are between 18 to 29 years of age, are more racially diverse, less religious and are obtaining more education than all previous generations (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). In addition, the Barna Group (2013) found that 59% of Millennials who grew up attending church have now left.

The African American church has represented a system of support for African Americans (Nance, 2009). Church involvement holds historical and contemporary significance for African-American students and is an important social support (Markstrom, 1999). However, according to a report by the National Opinion Research Center in 2000, membership and church attendance in the African American church has decreased 5.6% between 1995 and 2000 for Millennials (Kitwana, 2002).

It is necessary to clearly define the Millennial generation and determine its common characteristics, their relationships to religion in general and the decline in church attendance and church participation specific to the African American church.

For this purpose, existing research findings must be gathered and analyzed for both demographic and psychological characteristics, as well as preferences and beliefs. Current literature regarding the Millennial generation, trends and relation to social, political, and religious life in the United States can be characterized by a medium level of in-depth coverage and analysis, with religion and spirituality in emerging adults remaining understudied.

Defining the African American Church

The African American church is defined as a church that serves a Black or predominately Black congregation consisting mainly of African American Christians (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Historically, the African American church was one of the critical institutions of the African American community (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). Attending religious services and participating in prayer were the highest among members of the African American church and was seen as a major religious tradition than the general population (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010).

The African American church was known for more than being a religious institution. The church also served as an agent of social change for its members (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The African American church dealt with struggles of social injustices that people of color faced in America. The church was a haven where African Americans could express their concerns openly and honestly and unite culturally without restraint for their beliefs and practices (Morris, 1984). Spirituality was seen as the most distinctive feature of the African American culture (Hill & Hood, 1999). Johnson, Elbert-Avila, & Tulskey (2005) speculated that the high level of spirituality in the African American church may be the result of the history of oppression and mistreatment of African

Americans, and that their beliefs and practices are demonstrated by the high level of church attendance and participation. Both historically and in modern times, African Americans find support, reliance, and relief in their religion. Brome, Owens, Allen, and Vevaina (2000) emphasized spirituality being a key component of African American personality and culture as well as key sources of strength and tenacity for African Americans. The research also shows that recovery from substance abuse has a significant correlation with religious practices, increased spirituality, and corresponding positive mental health outcomes (Brome et al.).

The 21st century African American church faces a dilemma with the next generation, Millennials who appear not to adhere to the religious traditions of church attendance and church participation with the same distinctiveness. If the African American church is going to connect with this next generation of disciples, they must first understand who they are, what their values are, and what motivates them (Rainer & Rainer, 2011).

Defining the Millennial Generation

Millennials received their generational name because “they are the first generation to come of age in the new millennial” (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). According to Howe and Strauss (2000), Millennials are unlike any generation before them. The Millennial generation, as with all generations before them are affected by certain events and trends during their lifetime that have a profound affect as they grow into emerging adulthood (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). This generation stands out from previous generations because they are numerous in size, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse (Howe &

Strauss). Millennials are characterized as technologically dependent, confident, open to change, team-oriented, impatient, lazy, adaptable, multitasking, and rich in information (Fromm et al., 2011). Particular common characteristics exist when defining the Millennial generation in relation to education, socialization, mindset and identity, politics, beliefs, spirituality, religion, and employment. This shows that Millennials share common characteristics within their generational group and do contrast in their values and beliefs with baby boomers, busters, and other generations.

Millennials are the children of the *baby boomer* generation, adults 46 to 64 years of age (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau 36% of Millennials are living at home with their parents, of which one third to one half are college students (Dayen, 2014). Millennials are reported as a generation that gets along well with their parents and reportedly value their parent's opinions (Fromm, et al., 2011). This may explain the name *helicopter parents* often referenced from the research for parents of Millennials because they tend to hover over them. Tulgan (2009) said, "making children feel great about themselves and building up their self-esteem became the dominant theme in parenting, teaching, and counseling" (p. 7). Yet, the subject of increased and overemphasized self-esteem leads to another controversial trend highlighted by various authors; narcissism of the Millennial generation. Twenge and Campbell (2009) referred to Millennials as being narcissistic; Twenge (2006) indicated that this is regarding "excessive vanity and a sense of entitlement" and claimed that this "generation of swollen heads" can harm American society in the future (as cited in Hoover, 2007, p. A41). At the same time, Hoover (2007) and Howe and Strauss (2000) disagreed with these statements and criticized Twenge's

theory and claims as being harsh, unfair, and unsupported by the data. Strauss and Howe's generational theory addressed today's teens and young adults as recasting the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged. Hoover (2007) emphasized their ability for multitasking, to confront anxiety and to overcome the expectations of their parents.

While seemingly controversial to other characteristics of this generation, narcissism is an important characteristic that could possibly explain the new value set of the Millennials and can possibly be linked to the decreased church attendance amongst this generation. Sociologists researched the increased use of social networking as one of the most popular reasons to explain "the narcissism phenomenon" and sought correlation with the increased level of narcissism; none was found (Bergman, Fearrington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011). Additional studies link narcissism with environmental movement, volunteerism, activism, and digital technology use (Hoover, 2007; Kapp, 2009; Koch, 2008). The research findings show that narcissism of Millennials refers largely to increased individualism and personalization. These characteristics along with liberty, independence, and increased technology literacy shed some light on why Millennials are more concentrated on self-esteem and personal matters and less focused or interested in community interest, volunteerism, and church participation.

Demographic and Other-Type Diversity of Millennials

Demographically, Millennials make up approximately 25% of the U.S. population (Gardyn & Fetto, 2000). Millennials are more racially diverse compared to the previous generation because one-third is non Caucasian (McBeath, 2008). Taylor and Pew Research Center (2014) noted that voters in 2012 were "the most racially and ethnically

diverse in our nation's history, a trend driven mainly by the tens of millions Hispanic and Asian immigrants (and their children)" and emphasized the current demographic transformations taking place in the United States, including the demographic trends caused by the Millennials (p. 2). In this cohort, Hispanics make up 18%, Blacks – 14%, and Asian – 5% (Greenberg & Weber, 2008). In fact, bi-racial and multiracial Millennials are a separate discussion theme raised by scholars. Bonner, Marbley, and Howard-Hamilton (2011) pointed out that American Millennials are a mixed race generation with its increased diversity and the complex identity mix that represent Black, Asian American, Latino, Native American, and White. The authors explained that *multiracial models* are now actively present in mass media, and this affects socialization, racial, and identity development trends of the Millennial generation. The social construction of the *race* perception is affected, and racial boundaries are changed (Spencer, 2006). Uncertainty of *multiracial identities* in the *color-blind* environment appears as a separate trend (DaCosta, 2006, p. 184). With the new demographic trends emerging, a shift is taking place in racial categories and multiracial change is happening.

African American Millennials have been separately studied by scholars. According to Monroe (2005), although Millennials were raised with high levels of self-esteem, African American Millennials have been designated and treated as special to a lesser extent. Research indicates that African American Millennials do not share some of the common characteristics of the Millennial generation. Namely, according to Howe and Strauss (2000) and Lowery (2004), the following common characteristics are not fully shared by African American Millennials: special, sheltered, confident, team oriented, conventional, pressured, and achievers (see next section for list of the common

characteristics for the generation). Monroe stated that “although attempting to assert self-affirming identities in adverse environments, behaviors among African American youth often fuel pejorative stereotypes that distinguish black males as troublesome and threatening” (p. 46). Howe and Strauss referred to this as “a lack of fit” and Bonner (2010) explained it with their feeling of “being pressured to fit into a prescribed mold of school culture that is based on Eurocentric cultural norms” (p. 156).

Another important type of diversity unusual to the Millennial generation is a religious one. According to Taylor and Pew Research Center (2014), year after year the American population is becoming less white and less Protestant and more diverse demographically and religiously. Although the United States remains the most religiously observant nation among the world’s great powers, its youth is growing “more pluralistic and less connected to traditional religious institutions” (Taylor & Pew Research Center, pp. 8-9). Religious diversity is also emphasized by Bengtson, Putney, and Harris (2013) who point out the existence of “a variety of Christian principles” among the Millennials where every individual pulls ideas together to shape his or her own “unique set of beliefs which work for them as individuals” (p. 49). Scholars emphasize that many Millennials prefer “a flexible belief system that draws from religion but is not entirely dictated by it” (Bengtson et al., p. 17).

Considering religious diversity of the Millennials, Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) point out that the religious outsiders’ or unaffiliated group is increasing compared to preceding generations (see Table 1). The scholars emphasize that their influence is growing also, which may mean that the African American church has to pay attention to this group of Millennials and find new ways of attracting and communicating with them.

Table 1

Religious Outsiders are the Growing Part of American Society

Generation	Age in 2014	Percent of generation who are outsiders to Christianity in 2014	Size of this segment in the US in 2014
Adult Mosaics (born 1984-2002) and Busters (born 1965-1983)	ages 12-30 and ages 31-49	37%	34 million
Older Mosaics and younger Busters*	ages 23-36	40%	24 million
Boomers	ages 49-67	27%	21 million
Elders	ages 68+	23%	12 million

*Millennial generation considered by the present research

Adapted from Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 21

Along with diversity Anderson (2007) emphasized such demographic characteristics of the Millennial generation as belonging to strong, non-traditional families (i.e. single-parent homes, full-time employed mothers, hovercraft parenting, etc.), higher education level (college enrollment rate has increased up to 64%, most teens are striving to obtain post-secondary education, with women unprecedentedly exceeding men in formal education), and being earlier moneyed (e.g. teens having average of \$5200 annually, more than 10% having credit cards, and over 40% being partially employed). Greenberg and Weber (2008) pointed out that the increased voting power of the Millennials as compared to all preceding generations.

Characteristics and Common Traits

While various studies focus on different traits of Millennials, certain sociological and psychological characteristics can be listed as common for this generational cohort, according to a literature search as per every separate group of character traits listed (see Appendix A). Core values of the Millennials listed throughout different scholarly sources are freedom, flexibility, choice, trust, sense of belonging, self-realization, equality, democracy, continuous change, (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006).

Millennials are motivated by independence, privacy, ownership, status and peer pressure (McBeath, 2008; Spero & Stone, 2004). Millennials also share new types of opinions and preferences in such areas as education, tourism, employment, social trends, relationships, and politics. For example, more than any of the previous generations Millennials appreciate opportunities, value education, are knowledge-driven, support alternative marriages and legal abortion (Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Oblinger, 2003; Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010; Sandeen, 2008; Strauss, 2005; Wuthnow, 2007). The set of values differs from those shared by the preceding generations, which affects their life choices and lifestyle, including religious life. Decreased church attendance and church participation can be similar to the value sets being changed, and the reasons behind Millennials becoming more and more unaffiliated with religion are linked to the new types of opinions and preferences they share.

Sheahan (2008) illustrated how the long list of characteristics constitutes an apparent difference between Generation X, Generation Y and Baby Boomers (see Table 2) and explained that these differences appeared because “certain social, cultural,

economic and technological environments remain relatively consistent for pockets of time” (p. 2).

Table 2

Influence on Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y

Influence	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Role models	Men of Character	Men & Women of Character?	What is Character?
Television	I Love Lucy	Happy Days	Jerry Springer
Musical Icons	Elvis Presley	Madonna	Eminem
Music Mediums	LPs and EPs	Cassettes and CDs	Digital (iPods and MP3s)
Computer Games	Pong	Pacman	Counter Strike
Money	Earn it	It is not everything	Give it to me
Loyalty to employer	Work my way to the top	Shortcut to the top	Give me Saturday off or I'll quit
Respecting elders	Automatic	It's polite	Whatever!
Sex	After marriage	On the backseat	Online
Change	Resists it	Accept it	Want it
Technology	Ignorant of it	Comfortable	Feel it in their gut
Justice	Always prevails	Up to the courts	If you can afford it

Sheahan, 2008, p. 2

Finally, Rainer and Rainer (2011) listed the most important areas of life for Millennials as indicated in Table 3. For this cohort, life, religious matters and raising kids, are no more in the top five as it used to be for preceding generations.

Table 3

Most Important Things in Millennials' Life

Life Sphere	% of respondents
Family	61
Friends	25
Education	17
Career/job	16
Spouse/partner	13
Spiritual matters	13
Finances	12
Happiness	12
Raising kids	11
Health	10

Rainer & Rainer, 2011, p. 229

At the same time, Donnison (2007) argued that one should be cautious about accepting and adopting popular dialogues about the Millennial generation because it can hinder communication, education and other processes. Instead, the author recommends staying reflective, moral, ethical, and critical when addressing common characteristics of the Millennial generation.

Religion and Millennials

According to Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends (2010), the Millennial generation is considerably less religious than older Americans. Mabry (2013) called this cohort the most spiritually challenged, as well as having little time and patience for anything religious. Research findings by Mabry indicated that only a quarter of Catholic and Mainline Protestant Millennials indicate a strong affiliation with their

tradition, and only about 20% indicated faith being important in their daily lives. However, most of the research deals with the average Millennial and is not representative of the homogenous group (Fromm et al., 2011). In addition, Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends indicated that overall Millennials are significantly more unaffiliated with any particular faith. Therefore, if compared to other generations at a similar point in their life cycle, currently the Millennials' degree of unaffiliation is 25%, where Generation X was 20% in the late 1990s, and Baby Boomers were twice as less unaffiliated with 13% in the late 1970s (Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life Project, 2010).

Although some of the Millennial representatives do seek answers to their spiritual questions in other religions, most of them simply stop affiliating themselves with the religion they were brought up in (Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010). Arnett and Jensen (2002) explained this with negative childhood experiences and increased level of individualism, Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) tied it with negative religious socialization, Sandfort and Haworth (2002) with their seeing traditional religious practices as obsolete, Waters and Bortree (2012) with lack of trust and dissatisfaction with one-sided preaching (absence of symmetric dialogue) and with how contemporary church treats cultural differences. Social studies indicate a considerable shift of social values towards more tolerance and nontraditional beliefs, including homosexuality and same sex marriage, evolution, abortion, and divorce which are incompatible with traditional Christian values and behavior norms (Farrell, 2011; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends). Thus, one of

the reasons of decreased affiliation and church attendance is that the contemporary values of the Millennials are usually frowned upon in a religious setting.

Additionally, Beaudoin (2000) explained the significance of existing and emerging technologies' impact regarding the ability of today's children and youth to envision their participation in religious activities. Beaudoin asserted that technological progress affects the Millennials' worldview and characterizes their faithfulness as distinguished by ambiguity, irreverence, suffering and illusions of the virtual world. Millennials frequent use of technology and online streaming was suggested as an attributing factor to the decline in traditional church attendance (Waters & Bortree, 2012). Nevertheless, no research was found to show that Millennials tend to replace church attendance with online participation.

Both Lefkowitz (2005) and Arnett and Jensen (2002) analyzed the relationship of Millennial's religious views and education level in the family. The latter found a reverse correlation between the education of the mother, and the attendance at religious services and importance of religion in the children's lives; similarly, Lefkowitz has shown that higher educated students are more likely to change their views about their religion, and vice versa. Feldman (1970) and Patel (2007) have also studied the impact of the college environment on religious views of contemporary students. They have discovered the following important factors of both positive and negative influence regarding one's affiliation and degree of attendance and attendance: the college environment, including the level of religiosity, religious beliefs and racial diversity, and the student's socio-economic status. Increased religious diversity of a college campus revealed a positive effect of a student's likelihood to think of religion change. Thus, one may conclude that

religious socialization of Millennials is taking place both in the family and during college. Arnett (2000) also pointed out that contemporary Millennial students characterized their college years as critical for discovering for themselves what they believe about religion.

According to Sandfort and Haworth (2002), the Millennial generation considers spirituality being not less important than religion but different. Bengtson, Putney, and Harris (2013) found that Millennials' appreciation for diversity make them construct their faith, values, and beliefs from multiple sources and redefine traditional religious notions and terms. Research by Bengtson et al. showed a continuous shift from religious towards spiritual practices and changes in their meanings and significance for various generations throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see Table 4). Starting from Baby Boomers, there is a difference in how generations treat the word *spirituality* and how they contrast it with religion and religious practices as well as how people incorporate spirituality in their lives. Both Zinnbauer et al. (1997) and Bengtson et al. reported spirituality as an emerging trend in religious beliefs of the youth in the late twentieth century; it is emphasized that Millennials self-rate spirituality higher than religiosity. Partially, this may be explained with individualism and personal vs. organizational nature of these two notions. While both religion and spirituality are defined as personal, religion is also defined as organizational by Millennials who also conclude that the two concepts are not independent of one another (Zinnbauer et al.). The Millennial generation is highly individualistic and attempts to avoid organizations with freedom restricting rules and traditions; they logically prefer spirituality to religion and creatively invent new meanings of spiritual practices to themselves (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Zinnbauer et al.).

Table 4

Spirituality and Religion: Themes by Age Cohort

	WWI, 1900-1915	Depression Era, 1916-31	Silent Generation, 1932-45	Older Boomers, 1946-51	Younger Boomers, 1955-64	Generation X, 1965-79	Generation Y, 1980-88
What and where is God?	External and universal		Internal and universal				
	God in an awesome Higher Power, evident in nature	God is an benevolent Higher Power, knowable through His actions	God is inside me and everything around me	God is a healing spirit	God is a personal relationship	God is a state of mind	God is whatever you want it to be
Location of religious and spiritual practice	Dependent on the institution; rooted in a particular theology			Not dependent on the institution; rooted in a particular theology	Not dependent on the institution; not rooted in a particular theology		
	Religious practice = Church	Religion and spirituality = Church; Belief in God ≠ Church	Religious and Spiritual practice = Church	Religious practice = Church; Spiritual practice = anywhere	Spiritual practice = NOT in a church	Believers: Religion and spirituality in church and everyday life; nonbelievers: Religion and spirituality are irrational	Religion and spirituality can be in or outside of Church
Religion vs. Spirituality	Limited concept of spirituality	Spirituality indistinct from religion		Spirituality distinct from religion			Limited concepts of religious traditions
	Spirituality? What's that?	Religion = Spirituality	Religion = Spirituality	Religion = Church; Spirituality = A Feeling	Religion = Church (=bad); Spirituality = A Feeling (=good)	Religion = Church; Spirituality = A Relationship with God	Religion? What's that?

Bengtson et al., 2013, p. 24

Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) partially explained the loss of interest of the Millennial generation in church attendance and church participation by the negative image and associations Christianity recalls. Both outsiders and Christians between 16 and 29 years of age characterized present-day Christianity as old-fashioned, insensitive to others, boring, intolerant to other faiths, and confusing (Kinnaman & Lyons). The scholars asserted that the contemporary skeptical generation can accept neither this portrait of the modern Christian Church, nor the values offered by it (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Kinnaman & Lyons). Therefore, there is a so-called *unChristian* faith emerging among the Millennials who seek ways to replace the disappointing image (Kinnaman & Lyons). At the same time, the authors emphasized that the situation about unChristianity is not fatal and there is a way out. Namely, they suggested that instead of *trying harder* to connect with people, both the church and Christian leaders should be creative, serve in new ways, practice a lifestyle of compassion, motivate in another way, and seek new perceptions.

To summarize various research findings conducted in relation to the topic considered, scholarly literature lists the following common characteristics of the Millennials in relation to their religiousness and spirituality, practice in these spheres and corresponding opinions. The Millennial cohort distinguish between religiousness and spirituality (Astin & Astin, 2003; Sandfort & Haworth, 2002), focused on spirituality rather than particular religious traditions (Gay & Lynxwiller, 2013; Rainer & Rainer, 2011), practice the so-called *Soul Searching*, and attempt to *make some sense of it all* (Smith & Snell, 2009). In seeking own identity, this generation also seek new ways to practice spirituality (Bergler, 2012; Rainer & Rainer), consider spirituality being equal to

freedom of expression and strongly associate it with democracy and human rights (Morey, 2009; Rainer & Rainer), question traditions (Morey), and like to explore other religions (Rainer & Rainer). Millennials seek new answers to old religious questions (Bergler; Wuthnow, 2007) and indicate religious diversity and creative approaches to religiousness and spirituality (Astin & Astin, 2003; Bengtson et al., 2013; Bergler; Smith & Denton, 2005; Taylor & Pew Research Center, 2014; Wuthnow, 2007). They are ready to enter any discussion about religion, spirituality and faith (Rainer & Rainer), associate church members with hypocrisy and see the church as confining (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007), and see the practice of going to church as no longer relevant (Bergler; Sandfort & Haworth, 2002). Millennials demand new nature of converts (Wuthnow). They suspect surface-level nature in Christian relationships (Waters & Bortree, 2012) and indicate both clarity and confusion in their Christian beliefs and mixed ideas about being religious (Rainer & Rainer, 2011). They tend to see the Divine as a transcendent being, which is both distant and near (Smith & Denton). They indicate tolerant social values (e.g. acceptance of homosexuality, evolution, and abortion) which contradict with traditional religious ones (Rainer & Rainer). Millennials want spiritual and religious practices to be compatible with own beliefs, including tolerance of homosexual marriages and abortion (Wuthnow). They reshape old and create new faith communities with another approach to spirituality (Smith & Snell, 2009; Wuthnow), are less engaged in religious activities (Cox, 2013; Rainer & Rainer), and show that family influence on own religious beliefs is important (Bengtson et al., 2013). Lastly, they indicate lower rates of attendance at religious services (Astin & Astin, 2003; Rainer & Rainer; Uecker et al., 2007).

Authors suggested finding new ways to treat the current generation and improve communication, emphasizing that the church has to be flexible, creative and responsive in addressing the needs of the Millennials as well as offer more visibility and face the challenge of hypocrisy (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Rainer & Rainer, 2011). Foster (2012) emphasized the importance of contextually relevant faith-forming education and community formations, and that new approaches that meet changed requirements of the Millennials can successfully coexist with old traditions and practices.

Emerging Adulthood Theory and Religion

Emerging Adulthood theory is another theory that explains behavior and beliefs of particular age cohorts, including Millennials. According to this theoretical approach, contemporary teens have many traditions and transitions postponed from their twenties to thirties, or at least their late twenties, which prolongs the process of self-focused exploration as they try out different possibilities in their careers and relationships (Arnett, 2000; Kadlec, 2007; Koenig et al., 2008; Meg, 2012; Smith & Snell, 2009).

Wuthnow (2007) listed the following seven major trends for after Baby Boomers' generations: delayed marriage, delayed motherhood/fatherhood with fewer children, uncertainties of work and money, more higher education, loosening relationships, globalization, and an information-explosion culture. Emerging adulthood is distinct from both the adolescence that precedes it and the young adulthood that comes after it. Due to the changed transitions, today's emerging adults have different values than preceding generation, and this partially explains some of the common characteristics of the Millennials.

Arnett (2000) characterized the period of one's emerging adulthood as one of exploration, instability, possibility, self-focus, and a sustained sense of being in limbo. According to the author, people who go through emerging adulthood usually describe their work as being more meaningful and satisfying than it was seen by prior generations. Arnett pointed out emerging adults tend to surround the marriage by new types of hopes and fears concerning long-term commitments. Additionally, emerging adults point out that they have to defend their own opinion and life-style to their parents, which shapes a particular challenge to them because of contrasting traditions and an increased level of uncertainty compared to Baby Boomers. Arnett's theory fits well with the concept of the distinguished Millennial age cohort because emerging adults fall within the same age range as Millennials do now. Both categories of young people are contemplating the numerous possibilities for their lives and begin to question both their private life values and religious beliefs. According to this approach, reexamining religious attitudes, behaviors, and preferences, and reconsidering the importance of religious involvement compared to flexibility of spiritual practices as well as increased multitasking explain decreased church attendance (Arnett; Koenig et al.; Uecker et al., 2007).

Conclusion

The Millennial generation is different from any generational cohort in history. A review of literature defined the African American church and the importance of church attendance and church participation as part of the culture of African Americans. The Millennial generation was defined addressing who they are, the diversities among the group, commonalities, and their religious and spiritual beliefs. The literature further provided a structure for understanding the contributing factors to the decline of church

attendance and church participation for this group through the theory of emerging adulthood. While there is much research regarding the Millennials' decline in religious affiliation, the literature review confirmed the lack of research regarding the decline of church attendance and church participation by Millennials specific to the African American church.

Given the concerns related to the Millennials' decline in religious affiliation, the purpose of this research was to examine the demographic factors, belief patterns and opinions related to the decline of church attendance and church participation of the Millennial generation in the African American church and to learn their perceptions of their role in the church. The next chapter contains the methodology used to address the research questions for this study.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Literature review regarding Millennials suggested that contemporary young adults identified themselves as a new cohort, which is different from previous generations. They have demonstrated a loss of interest in church attendance because of their values and beliefs. The research showed that while there is much data regarding the general decline of the Millennial generation's religious affiliation, there is limited research regarding the decline of church attendance and church participation by Millennials in the African American church. The purpose of this study was to examine this decline specific to the Millennial generation in the African American church where church attendance and church participation played an integral role in the tradition of African Americans (Taylor et al., 1999). Millennials who shape the next paradigm of the African American church showed no interest in attending worship service or participating in the church culture (Sandforth & Harworth, 2002). This study was done to extend to the body of research specific to Millennials in the African American church to gain an understanding of the demographic factors, beliefs, and perceptions that may be related to the decline of church attendance and church participation for this generation.

In order to examine the phenomenon this chapter describes the research methodology used to conduct the study which includes the research design, population, data collection methods, analytical methods used as well as limitations of the study.

This study addressed three research questions to examine the research problem of the Millennial generation in the African American church:

1. What are the demographic factors related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church?
2. What belief patterns/opinions are related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church?
3. What do Millennials perceive their role to be in the African American church?

Research Design

This study was completed in two phases by utilizing a mixed method approach to address the research questions. Mixed methods research combines the elements of quantitative and qualitative methods and data in a single study (Creswell, 2013). Combining both approaches of quantitative and qualitative in examining the perceptions and behaviors of Millennials should be the best approach for this study because of its increased potential to provide a broader perspective and fulfill an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon. The mixed method, thus, “may provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon than either approach could do alone” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 98). According to Axinn and Pearce (2006), this approach belongs to the most popular and powerful recent trends in social research which allows using combined data to answer the

research questions of interest. An explanatory design utilized the results from the quantitative phase of the study to construct relevant questions for the qualitative phase of the study.

In examining the demographic factors, beliefs, and perceptions of the Millennial generation's decline in church attendance and church participation, a quasi-experiment was chosen to address research question one and a correlation was chosen for research question two. The researcher chose a quasi-experiment because there was no random assignment regarding the selection criteria of the participants for the study and there were no manipulation of variables. A correlation was chosen to examine the relationship between two variables, namely church attendance and church participation with ideological categories and personal values. Qualitative research by means of in-depth interviews were utilized to address research question three allowing the researcher to learn more about the phenomenon from the responses of the participants.

Phase one of the study utilized a quantitative data collection tool via a cross-section survey, which was designed to "measure the psychological characteristics or behaviors" (Leedy & Ormod, 2013, p. 95) of the Millennial generation to provide insight that could be used to increase church attendance and church participation for this generation. The survey questionnaire was a modified version of Sethi and Seligman's Religious Measure (as cited by Hill & Hood, 1999). The survey sought to collect data that measured the degree to which Millennials' religious influence played a role in their lives and their decision making. Additionally, the data sought to measure religious involvement and participation in church services and participation in church ministry.

The use of surveys provided a quantifiable explanation of opinions and trends of the sample size of participants from the overall population (Creswell, 2013). Survey research allowed the researcher to obtain information about one or more groups of individuals pertaining to their characteristics, attitudes, and opinions through the use of questions and statements rated by tabulating their responses (Leedy & Ormod, 2013). The quantitative nature of the data also allowed for easily determining patterns and comparing respondents, and various factors influencing their opinion amongst each other.

Phase two of the study utilized qualitative data obtained during interviews held with Millennials from the three African American churches to allow the research to add more in-depth analysis of the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of their role in the church. Qualitative data was gathered and analyzed from open-ended questions from a small sample of the population that used an interview format with the thought that “the key behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem from the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). Allowing participants an opportunity to voice their feelings provided a better understanding regarding their perceptions and beliefs that may be related to the decline of church attendance and church participation.

Reliability and Validity

The validation for the mixed method approach chosen was that the quantitative data provides a synopsis of the research and statements rated, and that the qualitative data probes deeper for a more in-depth understanding (Gay et al., 2012). Reliability of an instrument looks at whether the results of the instrument are produced on a consistent basis (Salkind, 2012). Internal consistency is one measure used for reliability. Cronbach’s alpha is a special measure of internal consistency and the preferred measure of reliability

because it represents one value of the data set which is the sum of each item evaluated (Salkind).

Validity of an instrument tests whether the instrument is measuring what it states that it is measuring. One form of validity is content validity which “examines how well a test samples a universe of items” (Salkind, 2012, p. 464). Content validity is determined simply by asking an expert in the field.

According to Hill and Hood (1999), validity and reliability of the religious measure scale, which was used in the survey, were not reported other than the differences between the religious groups in their study. However, the researcher utilized Cronbach’s alpha for reliability and sought the advice of an expert, a church youth Pastor for content validity. Cronbach’s alpha for the Likert scale was .83, indicating a good rate of internal consistency among the items on the scale.

Population

The population of interest for this study was Millennials, 18 to 29 years of age from three African-American churches in the Midwest. A convenience sampling of Millennials for phase one of the study was utilized to obtain participants for the study from the congregations of the three African American churches.

Phase two of the study consisted of a purposeful sample for the qualitative approach which included in-depth interviews of a small sample population of Millennials obtained from those agreeing to take part in phase two, and who had already completed phase one of the study. In both phases of the study, active and non-active Millennials were invited to participate in the in-depth interviews and the online survey.

The qualitative portion of the study, in-depth interviews, consisted of five Millennials of which three were active and two were inactive in the church. Although, both active and inactive Millennials were invited to participate in the online survey, they were not identifiable in the data collection.

Data Collection

The research study utilized descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to address research questions 1 and 2, and qualitative study to address research question 3. Data collected for phase one of the study that addressed research questions 1 and 2, utilized a cross-sectional survey design which consisted of 35 questions to measure religious influence, religious involvement, religious beliefs, religious participation, and two open-ended questions. A cross-sectional survey design provided a picture of existing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of a population (Gay et al., 2012).

Structured interviews for phase two of the study included six open-ended questions to assess the participant's perception of their role in the church, to reflect upon the decline of church attendance for the Millennial generation, and the factors that may affect the decline, as well as to discuss factors that may hinder Millennials from participation in church ministry (see Appendix B).

Millennials from the three African American churches were invited to participate in the research study by way of the church bulletin, social media, email, and text message. Representatives from the churches assisted the researcher through their church membership data base which provided access to both active and non-active Millennials in the church. The request consisted of providing a brief introduction about the researcher, dissertation title, and the invitation to participate in the study.

Participants were provided a link to the religious measure online survey. The questionnaire was prepared using the Survey Monkey® software. Once participants accessed the online survey, they were advised to read and agree to the consent form. The consent form clearly communicated that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants must be 18 to 29 years of age. Additionally, the consent form provided information about the nature of the study and that participants were free at anytime to withdraw without giving any reason, and without penalty. Participants were also informed that participating in the study did not affect their church membership. Once consent was obtained, participants were directed to complete the survey questionnaire via the use of the online format. The researcher provided a telephone number and email address for participants with questions about completing the survey. The participants remained anonymous.

Phase 1

To answer research question one: What are the demographic factors related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church, data was collected and analyzed from the religious measure survey. In examining the demographic factors that may be related to the decline in church attendance and church participation, Part I of the survey gathered demographic information pertaining to age, gender, race, education level, marital status, years of church membership, etc. The independent variables were the demographic questions and the dependent variables were numerical responses of the participants regarding church attendance and church participation. Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics which included mean, median, mode, frequency counts, and standard deviation.

Descriptive statistics were chosen because it is a statistical test that organized and summarized the data that looked for patterns or themes as a function of the different conditions of the independent variables. Additionally, descriptive statistics were used in the current study because descriptive statistics described the characteristics of the population that was studied. The surveys were examined for correctness and completeness, and incomplete surveys were discarded from the analysis.

Inferential statistics chosen to analyze data for this research question included independent samples *t*-test and the one-way (between subjects) ANOVA. The independent sample *t*-test was chosen for comparison of two groups, male and female (IV) regarding the number of times church was attended within a year (DV) along with another independent samples *t*-test comparison with the same groups, males and female regarding the number of times of participation in ministry within a year (DV).

To investigate if there was a difference between the lengths of church membership on church attendance, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was used. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was used to analyze the data because there was one between subject independent variable (IV) with four levels and one continuous dependent variable (DV), church attendance and church participation, each ran separately.

To address research question 2: What belief patterns/opinions are related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church, data was collected and analyzed from the religious measure survey. Part II of the survey regarding religious beliefs, religious influence, and religious participation were measured utilizing a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Likert scale allowed respondents to specify their level

of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric disagree-agree scale for a series of statements (Salkind, 2012). Religious involvement was measured by two questions that assessed the number of times that participants attended church and participated in church ministries during a one year period. These measures were an attempt to correlate perceptions of Millennials' engagement of church attendance and participation with other items measured on the survey (e.g. demographic items and ratings provided on the statements).

Descriptive statistical analyses which included mean, median, mode, frequency counts, standard deviation, and graphs were conducted to organize and summarize the data yielded by the numerical values provided by Items 10 and 11 in Part I of the survey and ratings provided by Part II (Likert scale) of the survey. Each response from the Likert scale received a numeric value with each participant's score determined by adding up all the numeric values for each response. The analyses allowed the researcher to examine the data for any patterns that seem to be present regarding relationships among these variables.

In addition, inferential statistics chosen to analyze the data for the research question included a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. This statistical test was chosen to detect any significant relationships between variables.

Phase 2

This part of the study addressed research question 3: What do Millennials perceive their role to be in the African American church? To answer this research question, a qualitative approach was chosen in order to gain a deeper understanding about the perceptions of Millennials' attitudes and behaviors regarding the research question,

and the impact of the perceptions. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews from a purposeful sample of five participants drawn from the population of interest that further explored responses from the quantitative data analysis. The sample group was intended to be diversified in the demographics of the participants. Participants were recruited by personal invitation through email or telephone call which included both categories of Millennials considered active and non-active members in the church. Participants who took part in Phase 2 were required to have taken part in Phase 1 of the study. Five participants, who were demographically diverse (2 males and 3 females) agreed to take part in the in-depth interview, which consisted of six open-ended questions (see Appendix B). Participants were requested to recommend others who may be interested in participating in the study that fit the criteria.

The researcher chose a location for the interview and explained the purpose and general overview of the research. Each participant was interviewed once with the typical interview lasting 25 to 30 minutes. As with Phase 1, participants were provided an informed consent and advised that participating in the study was voluntary, and that they may discontinue at any time during the interview without any penalty or obligation. In addition, all participants were assured of confidentiality for their participation in the study.

Narrative data from the in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions (e.g. what do you believe your function is in the church, what is the role of church in your life, why do you think church attendance is declining for your generation?) was recorded via an audio recording device, as well as a note pad to capture brief notes. Responses from the interviews were numbered and given a label in order to capture the idea of each

comment(s). The researcher completed a brief write-up of each interview at the conclusion of the interview in order to capture any observations that occurred during the process. The interview data was reviewed, transcribed, and analyzed for codes or common themes via NVivo software program to ascertain factors pertaining to Millennials' perceptions regarding their role in the church. Categories were created based upon emerging themes. Once no additional categories emerged, the data was summarized and organized by themes to give meaning and understanding to the data collected. The purpose of interpreting the data was to address the meaning of the analysis as it pertains to the research question.

Realizing the importance of protecting the participants, care was taken to ensure that the data collected would not have a negative effect regarding their church membership, as well as to ensure confidentiality of the participants. The transcribed interview notes taken by the researcher were scanned and stored on a personal computer, and the original notes were stored in a locked file cabinet. To further protect the anonymity of participants throughout the study when utilizing direct quotes, participants were identified as a numeric value (e.g. participant 1, participant 2, etc.).

Analytical Methods

Two main types of analytical software were used to organize and analyze data obtained during the data collection process of the research; one for quantitative data and one for qualitative data. These are:

- Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS)
- NVivo qualitative data analyses (QDA) software package

Survey answers were entered into Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) for coding demographic information and identifying patterns. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to answer research questions 1 and 2 of the study. SPSS is a statistical software package that provides a comparison of independent and dependent variables and the statistical test to run for analysis (Gay et al., 2012). Descriptive statistics were chosen to examine the demographic factors, which included independent and dependent variables for comparison to address the research questions, and to provide insight regarding the characteristics of the population of interest. Inferential statistics, independent samples *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, and correlation were chosen to surmise information regarding the population based upon the sample's characteristics (Salkind, 2012). All incomplete surveys were discarded from the analyses.

NVivo was used to sort and group data obtained during the in-depth interviews conducted in phase 2 of the study. NVivo software assisted the researcher in structuring unstructured data collected from the qualitative study to identify patterns and trends that emerged from the interviews.

Limitations

All research studies have limitations. There are several limitations to this research, of which one includes a small sample population. The sample could have been extended by including more than three African American churches. Additionally, the sample was more representative of females than males. With more participants, there may have been an increase in the gender ratio for males.

Secondly, the researcher relied heavily on electronic communications to invite participants to take part in the study. Although the literature stated that Millennials were

tech savvy and utilized social media as a major mode of communication, more contact between the researcher and the target group may have yielded a larger sample for the study than electronic communications alone.

Another limitation to the study was the researcher's inexperience with qualitative research and time. Having limited knowledge of the qualitative approach and the researcher's personal bias for the subject matter was a concern. Data collection and analysis required much resource of time and effort due the researcher's limited skill and experience.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology of this study by providing details of the research design, population, data collection, and the analytical methods to answer the research questions. With the assistance of special software and the use of statistical calculations and corresponding research methods and techniques, the data was processed and analyzed to answer each of the questions posed. The next chapter presents the findings and the conclusions regarding the decline of church attendance and church participation of the Millennial generation in the African American church.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the decline of church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church. In this study Millennials were defined as young adults 18 to 29 years of age. The review of literature showed that this generation was less religiously affiliated and attended and participated in religious services less than previous generations as young adults (Guldalian, 2013; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010).

Current research specifically regarding Millennials in the African American church is limited. The aim of this study was to look particularly at Millennials in the African American church where church attendance and church participation in ministry were viewed as a tradition of the African American culture (Frazier & Lincoln, 1974), and to provide insight regarding the decline specific to demographic factors, belief patterns and opinions, as well as to extend to the body of research.

This study used a mix method design in which three research questions emerged, resulting in both quantitative and qualitative findings:

- Research Question 1: What are the demographic factors related to the decline in

church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church?

- Research Question 2: What belief patterns/opinions are related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church?
- Research Question 3: What do Millennials perceive their role to be in the African American church?

In this final chapter, data collection and analysis are described and summarized and the research questions are answered, followed by the conclusions, implications, and recommendations from the outcome of the study.

Findings

Research Stages

This study was completed in two phases, with phase one utilizing a quantitative method to address the demographic factors that may be related to the decline of church attendance and participation (research question 1) and measuring religious beliefs, religious influence, and religious participation via a 7-point Likert scale (research question 2). Phase one also included two open-ended questions (Appendix C) for further understanding in conjunction with the statistical data gathered. Subsequently, phase two utilized a qualitative method by means of in-depth interviews of a small sample population regarding their perception of their role in the African American church (research question 3).

Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

The final research sample contained 145 respondents drawn from the population of three African American churches. The mode of respondents' age was 19 (14.5%) and 28 (11.7%). The racial background was 144 (99%) African American and 1 (1%) Caucasian.

The respondents were asked to provide demographic information pertaining to their age, gender, race, highest level of education, marital status, and length of church membership. The sample contained 118 (81.38%) females and 27 (18.62%) males. Additionally, some religious preferences and habits as well as communication patterns were collected for further understanding of the Millennial generation. These included the preferred version of the bible, preferred way to read the bible, frequency of scripture reading and prayer, and preferred way of communication by the group.

Most of the respondents (65 people making up 44.8%) had some college education or were currently attending college, while 51 people (35.2%) were college graduates. Additionally, the study revealed that 78 participants (53.79%) preferred to read the bible by the use of their cell phone and that the most preferred communication means for 69 participants (47.5%) was email and for 60 participants (41%) for text message. There were no clear patterns regarding frequency of reading the scriptures and frequency of prayer. Table 5 outlined the detailed demographic and other mentioned characteristics of the respondents.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics: Demographic Information

Variables (survey questions Part I)	Frequency	Percentage
<i>N</i>	145	
Age	<i>M</i> =24 <i>Mode</i> =19	
Gender		
Female	118	81.38
Male	27	18.62
Marital Status		
Married	10	6.90
Separated	2	1.38
Never Married	131	90.34
Divorced	2	1.38
Church Membership		
Less than 1 year	5	3.5
1 to 5 years	27	18.8
6 to 10 years	25	17.4
11 years or more	87	60.4
How You Read the Bible		
Cell Phone	78	53.79
Online	3	2.07
Tablet/I-Pad	8	5.52
Physical Book	50	34.48
Not at all	6	4.14

Table 5 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics: Demographic Information

Variables (survey questions Part I)	Frequency	Percentage
Version of Bible Read		
King James/NKJ	111	79.43
Amplified	1	0.7
New American Standard	3	2.2
New International (NIV)	19	13.97
New Living Translation	6	4.26
The Message	1	0.7
How Often Read Scripture		
More than once a day	13	9.0
Once a day	22	15.3
More than once a week	25	17.4
Once a week	26	18.1
More than once a month	19	13.1
Less than once a month	39	27.1
How Often Pray		
More than once a day	70	48.3
Once a day	42	29.0
More than once a week	17	11.7
Once a week	9	6.2
More than once a month	1	0.7
Less than once a month	6	4.1

The basic demographic characteristics were derived from the first 13 questions of the online survey. The first five referred to basic demographic characteristics followed by

communication and religious preferences as well as church membership, church attendance and church participation. Questions 10 and 11 regarding church attendance and church participation were not designed as multiple choice questions but allowed respondents to indicate a numerical value of how often they attend church and participated in church ministry in a year. Table 6 provided the detailed research results for church attendance and church participation numbers.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics: Church Attendance and Church Participation

Variables		Church Attendance, Times per Year	Church Participation, Times per Year
<i>N</i>	Valid	136	123
	Missing	9	22
Mean		51.49	17.85
Median		46.50	3
Mode		52	0
Standard Deviation		46.885	41.323
Variance		2198.237	1707.618
Range		358	365
Medium		2	0
Maximum		360	365

The statistics gathered from the respondents indicated that both church attendance and church participation is rather highly dispersed. However, both maximum numbers for church attendance and church participation were representative of outliers which influenced the mean. Therefore, taken the median and the mode, one can conclude that

the sample of Millennials in the African American church, on average attend church at least once a week. On the other hand, church participation appeared to be nonexistent.

The disparity between church attendance and church participation, as displayed in table 6, may be that the majority of participants ($n=47$; 60%) have been a member of the church for 11 years or more, suggesting that the respondents may have been members as early as their teenage years or in childhood. Additionally, as displayed in Table 8, 90 respondents (64%) strongly agreed that religion was an important part of their life; 85 respondents (61%) strongly agreed that church attendance was important in my household growing up, and 75 people (54%) strongly agreed that attending church was important to them. However, based upon the responses from the open-ended questions, the participants viewed the value as being more about their spirituality than active church participation.

Lastly, while gathering and analyzing the basic demographic characteristics of the respondents, the researcher faced some data quality issues which affected reliability and validity of the research findings. Namely, some of the multiple-choice questions were answered more than once (two or more options were chosen) and some of the questions skipped. Table 7 illustrates the scope of data quality issues faced.

In order to produce the deriving statistics correctly, the above data quality issues were addressed by considering the first available answer (Questions 8, 9; Questions 12, 13). The goal of this approach was to have a relative frequency count of the most popular option of the highest frequency as a basis for deducing its importance as a positive source of verifying the best approach in meeting the preferences of the Millennial generation.

Table 7

Research Data Quality Issues

Data Quality Issue	Scope	Percentage
Multiple answers (data by question)		
Q8 (Bible version)	197 for 145	
Q9 (communication preferences)	253 for 145	
Q12 (how often read scriptures)	152 for 145	
Q13 (how often pray)	154 for 145	
Total questions having multiple answers	4	30.77
Skipped questions (data by question)		
Q6 (length of church membership)	1	0.69
Q8 (Bible version)	4	2.76
Q10 (church attendance)	6	4.14
Q11 (church participation)	12	8.28
Q12 (how often read Scriptures)	1	0.69
Questions missing responses	5	38.46

Findings: Research Question One

To answer the first research question whether demographic factors were related to the decline of church attendance and church participation for Millennials in the African American church, independent sample *t*-tests were conducted. This approach was chosen to examine whether the difference between males and females regarding church attendance was significant. Results indicated no statistically significant differences

between females ($M=43.88$, $SD = 53.40$) and males ($M = 58.94$, $SD = 70.76$) regarding church attendance $t(80) = -982$, $p = .329$, $d = 0.26$.

A second independent sample t -test was chosen to examine whether the difference between males and females regarding church participation were significant. Results indicated no statistically significant difference between females ($M = 10.96$, $SD = 21.92$) and males ($M = 18.84$, $SD = 35.29$) regarding church participation $t(94) = -1.229$, $p = .222$, $d = .31$.

The results of the two independent samples t -tests indicated that for this sample population, there is no evidence that gender affects the overall trends of either church attendance or church participation for Millennials in the African American church.

A one way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the length of church membership and church attendance. Comparative analysis of the number of years for church membership (less than one year, 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, and 11 years or more) and church attendance, $F(3, 89) = .351$, $p = .789$, $\eta^2 = .01$, indicating that there were no statistically significant differences between the number of years for church membership. Tukey's post hoc procedure also indicated an absence of any statistically significant differences between these two conditions.

The results for a second one way between subjects ANOVA to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the number of years for church membership (less than 1 year, 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, and 11 years) and church participation showed that there was no statistically significant difference, $F(3, 95) =$

.662, $p = .578$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Again, Tukey's post hoc procedure indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between any of the conditions.

Lastly, a one way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the levels of education completed, church attendance and church participation. The results indicated no statistically significant difference for the level of education and church attendance, $F(3, 86) = .961$, $p = .415$, $\eta^2 = .03$, and there was no statistical significant difference between the level of education and participation in church ministry, $F(3, 93) = .401$, $p = .752$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

Based upon the above quantitative analysis, the data showed no statistical significant differences between demographic factors which included gender, length of church membership, and level of education as a contributing factor related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church. The demographic variables for race and marital status were integral characteristics of the participants in the study which represented 135 (over 90%) of unmarried African American Millennials.

Findings: Research Question Two

The second research question was designed to examine patterns/opinions related to the decline of church attendance and church participation for Millennials in the African American church. A 7-point Likert scale was utilized to capture responses from the participants regarding religious beliefs, religious influence, and religious participation based upon their level of agreement for statements presented in the questionnaire.

The respondents shared their opinion regarding 22 different statements. The questions were combined into a single composite variable during the data analysis

process to provide a quantitative measure of patterns/opinions and characteristics. The independent variable was patterns/opinions and the dependent variables were church attendance and church participation in church ministry per year (Table 8 indicates details on respondents' answers).

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine whether there was a relationship between patterns/opinions and the number of times per year of church attendance and the number of times of participation in church ministry per year. The correlation reflects participants who answered the items categorized as perceptions/opinions. The results indicated no statistically significant relationship between patterns/opinions and the number of times per year of church attendance: $r(82) = .13, p = .267$. Additionally, there was no statistical significance between patterns/opinions and the number of times of participation in church ministry per year: $r(82) = .20, p = .064$.

The results of indicated that there was no statistical significant difference regarding the relationship between patterns/opinions for church attendance and church participation for Millennials in the African American. This corresponded to the general patterns and characteristics obtained from the literature review. Namely, the participants still value church attendance, faith and religious beliefs, yet their religious flexibility, including tolerance of other religions and decreased focus on religiousness as a decisive factor in one's daily activities is considerably high. This corresponds to the conclusions drawn based on the literature review on the Millennial generation regarding them as being spiritual but not religious (Gay & Lynxwiller, 2013) and Millennials being less often engaged in religious activities and embracing less traditional beliefs than earlier

generations (Cox, 2013). The participants also tend to agree that church attendance and church participation for their generation has declined, at the same time stating that the church encourages their participation and that it attempts to meet their needs.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics: Religious Beliefs, Religious Influence, and Religious Participation

Survey Questions (part II)		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Undecided	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	N Total
14. Religion is an important part of my life	Frequency	2	2	6	3	8	30	90	141
	Percentage	1.42	1.42	4.26	2.13	5.67	21.28	63.82	100
15. Church attendance was important in my household growing up	Frequency	3	9	5	1	16	21	85	140
	Percentage	2.14	6.43	3.57	0.71	11.43	15	60.72	100
16. Attending church is important to me	Frequency	0	1	3	5	12	44	75	140
	Percentage	0	0.71	2.14	3.57	8.57	31.43	53.58	100
17. My faith is important in my decision making	Frequency	0	0	4	4	12	34	86	140
	Percentage	0	0	2.86	2.86	8.57	24.29	61.42	100
18. My religious beliefs influence important decisions I make in my life	Frequency	0	0	3	4	19	42	72	140
	Percentage	0	0	2.14	2.86	13.57	30	51.43	100

Table 8 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics: Religious Beliefs, Religious Influence, and Religious Participation

Survey Questions (part II)		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Undecided	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	N Total
19. I would marry someone of another religion	Frequency	36	43	10	30	8	10	3	140
	Percentage	25.71	30.73	7.14	21.43	5.71	7.14	2.14	100
20. My religious beliefs influence what I wear	Frequency	12	19	24	12	45	18	10	140
	Percentage	8.57	13.57	17.14	8.57	32.15	12.86	7.14	100
21. My religious beliefs influence what I eat and drink	Frequency	21	46	22	14	26	6	5	140
	Percentage	15	32.86	15.71	10	18.57	4.29	3.57	100
22. My religious beliefs influence whom I associate with	Frequency	10	25	22	6	36	28	13	140
	Percentage	7.14	17.86	15.71	4.29	25.71	20	9.29	100
23. My religious beliefs influence what social activities I undertake	Frequency	8	13	19	12	44	23	21	140
	Percentage	5.71	9.29	13.57	8.57	31.43	16.43	15	100

Table 8 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics: Religious Beliefs, Religious Influence, and Religious Participation

Survey Questions (part II)		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Undecided	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	N Total
19. I would marry someone of another religion	Frequency	36	43	10	30	8	10	3	140
	Percentage	25.71	30.72	7.14	21.43	5.71	7.14	2.15	100
20. My religious beliefs influence what I wear	Frequency	12	19	24	12	45	18	10	140
	Percentage	8.57	13.57	17.14	8.57	32.14	12.86	7.15	100
21. My religious beliefs influence what I eat and drink	Frequency	21	46	22	14	26	6	5	140
	Percentage	15	32.86	15.71	10	18.57	4.29	3.57	100
22. My religious beliefs influence whom I associate with	Frequency	10	25	22	6	36	28	13	140
	Percentage	7.14	17.86	15.71	4.29	25.71	20	9.29	100
23. My religious beliefs influence what social activities I undertake	Frequency	8	13	19	12	44	23	21	140
	Percentage	5.71	9.29	13.57	8.57	31.43	16.43	15	100

Table 8 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics: Religious Beliefs, Religious Influence, and Religious Participation

Survey Questions (part II)		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Undecided	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	N Total
24. Church attendance for my generation has declined	Frequency	0	2	8	13	25	41	50	139
	Percentage	0	1.44	5.76	9.35	17.99	29.50	35.96	100
25. Watching church on the Internet/TV is the same as going to church	Frequency	34	33	29	12	24	5	3	140
	Percentage	24.29	23.57	20.71	8.57	17.14	3.57	2.15	100
26. Attending church helps with my everyday life	Frequency	1	1	5	6	24	36	61	134
	Percentage	0.75	0.75	3.73	4.48	17.91	26.87	45.52	100
27. The church is outdated and no longer relevant	Frequency	85	32	4	7	5	2	0	135
	Percentage	62.96	23.70	2.96	5.19	3.70	1.49	0	100
28. The church does not understand my generation	Frequency	27	31	13	16	31	12	4	134
	Percentage	20.15	23.13	9.70	11.94	23.13	8.96	2.99	100
29. I believe in God but not the church	Frequency	48	46	7	10	13	5	5	134
	Percentage	35.82	34.33	5.22	7.47	9.70	3.73	3.73	100

Table 8 (Continued).

Descriptive Statistics: Religious Beliefs, Religious Influence, and Religious Participation

Survey Questions (part II)		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Undecided	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	N Total
30. Church participation for my generation has declined	Frequency	3	4	2	13	33	35	44	134
	Percentage	2.24	2.99	1.49	9.70	24.63	26.12	32.83	100
31. The church has ministries that meet the needs of my generation	Frequency	4	7	19	15	42	33	13	133
	Percentage	3.01	5.26	14.29	11.28	31.58	24.81	9.77	100
32. Participation for my generation is encouraged in the church	Frequency	2	4	6	6	40	45	32	135
	Percentage	1.48	2.96	4.44	4.44	29.63	33.33	23.72	100
33. My generation is involved in the church	Frequency	8	23	11	23	40	26	5	136
	Percentage	5.88	16.91	8.09	16.91	29.41	19.12	3.68	100
34. Input from my generation regarding new projects and programs is encouraged	Frequency	3	12	15	16	28	41	19	134
	Percentage	2.24	8.96	11.19	11.94	20.90	30.60	14.17	100
35. My generation is mentored	Frequency	4	14	8	30	38	31	10	135
	Percentage	2.96	10.37	5.93	22.22	28.15	22.96	7.41	100

Findings: Research Question Three

To answer the third research question regarding what Millennials perceive their role to be in the African American church, a qualitative method with in-depth interviews was conducted where participants were asked six open-ended questions (Appendix B). The questions were designed to capture the voice of a small purposeful sample to address the research question. The sample group consisted of five Millennials; two males and three females between 20 to 27 years of age, with three identified as active and two as inactive in the church. Each participant was asked the same questions in the same order. The digital audio recorded interviews were imported into NVivo 10, a qualitative software analysis instrument to assist the researcher to organize the data. The researcher then analyzed and identified patterns/themes from the interviews. During the in-depth interview process, participants were asked to describe their perceptions of their role in the church as well as their perceptions regarding religion in their life and the life of their generation, the decline of church attendance and participation for their generation, and factors that play a role in their church attendance.

The following patterns/themes were summarized from the qualitative analysis based on the interview transcriptions (see Appendix D for detailed thematic analysis of interview questions):

- Religion is a very personal issue, and it is about one's relationship with God, not church. It is also a matter of personal choice.
- Church is a place to fellowship, meet others who believe in God, connectedness and discipline, rejuvenation, and hear the word.

- Active members perceived their role as being a role model, and mentoring the younger generation.
- Church attendance has declined for the Millennial generation because people feel *not reached out to*, disconnected, their priorities have changed, expectations are not met, and real needs are not identified.
- Family played a vital factor in church attendance at an early age and family continues to be an influencing factor.
- Lack of commitment, lack of drive, judgments of others, hypocritical attitudes, and that church attendance is sufficient were listed as the common factors affecting church participation.

One can draw a conclusion regarding the research question that the Millennial generations' role can be perceived as rather passive in the contemporary church. The nature of a personal relationship with God has become more spiritual and private.

More Qualitative Results

The study included a qualitative questionnaire section in the online survey where the respondents were asked two open-ended questions (Appendix C) to gather feedback regarding possible qualitative measures to increase church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church.

Question 36 of the survey asked, "What ideas do you have to encourage more members of your generation to attend church? Overall survey participants were 145, only 89 answers were completed, out of which 12 were not useful to the research analysis due to 11 respondents expressed no opinion and one respondent asked *not to mix politics and religion*. Nineteen respondents referenced having an understanding of their generation's

value as the key towards increased church attendance. These respondents provided detailed explanations regarding today's church. They expressed that church is about spirituality and not a religious life. At least 52 respondents highlighted concrete needs regarding the community (i.e. jobs), and suggested more opportunities for outreach ministry. Two respondents called for the importance of understanding their generation and their needs. Three respondents emphasized the idea of mentoring as a core notion needed for the modern church organization. Out of these, two mentioned advertising, three suggested food, fun, problem solving, and three emphasized the importance to unite groups by age. Four respondents stated that nothing can be done to achieve an increase in church attendance.

Question 37 of the survey asked, how can the church engage your generation to participate in church ministry? Again, of 145 overall survey respondents, only 86 answers were completed. Thirteen answers were not useful to the research because nine respondents stated that they had no ideas to express. The most frequent themes that emerged to increase participation in church ministry were an opportunity for expression of church ideas, leadership and mentoring opportunities, more outreach, make things fun and creative, and relay messages to encourage and not condemn. Some answers were rather philosophic. One respondent mentioned the importance of trust, and one mentioned the importance of authenticity. Additionally, eight respondents provided step by step detailed suggestions to increase church participation (see Appendix E).

Most respondents highlighted that their generation needs to be understood in terms of their values and interests, and something should be offered specifically to their generation. As with question 36, the key lies in understanding this generation, their

beliefs and their needs. Direct and honest communications were also mentioned as the most appealing way to connect with the generation.

Conclusions

Based on the research study conducted, three main research questions were answered:

1. There were no demographic factors related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church. The research showed that gender, length of church membership, and the level of education had no statistical significance as a contributing factor.
2. The research indicated no belief patterns/opinions related to the decline in church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation in the African American church. Namely, the sample participants demonstrated belief patterns which correspond to those which are listed in the current literature review and showed no significant correlation with the frequency of their church attendance and church participation.
3. The perceived role by Millennials in the African American church shows to be passive. Their expectation of the church is a realization of the peculiarities of their generation, their needs, and interests to create a corresponding age group to meet and satisfy those needs.

The additional qualitative analysis from the responses of the open ended questions from the survey (i.e. Questions 36 and 37) generated the following conclusions regarding the expectations of Millennials in the African American church:

- The key is to understand the Millennial generation and their general beliefs and life perceptions first, rather than concentrate on detailed measures to be taken.
- Mentoring and creation of specific-target groups should be the next step. Groups should unite members of certain demographic factors to increase satisfaction of their needs. Some ideas for church groups educational, retreat-oriented, employment specific, spiritual events, civic participation programs. Attention should be paid to the quality of communication and mentoring as well as genuine spiritual needs of the generation. While some of the themes like employment or create fun may be subjective than others, including educational and spiritual activities, it is recommended for the church to facilitate regular feedback sessions to address the most popular themes.

Millennials in the African American church appear to be no different in their characteristics than what was shown in the literature. However, although there was no statistically significant results, frequency of church attendance appeared to show that Millennials in the African American church are in attendance at least once a week, but are definitely not participating in church ministry. Additionally, one could argue that Millennials, based upon their responses from the qualitative analysis do desire a spiritual relationship with God and desire an understanding of how they can benefit from church as a young adult.

Implications and Recommendations

The major implications of the research findings regarding the current issue of decreased church attendance and church participation by Millennials in the African American church showed that is not a local or general phenomenon. The African

American church cannot rely upon the traditions of the past to attract this generation. The church will struggle to remain relevant and vibrant in the 21st century if they do not connect and engage this generation.

The African American church must be intentional in their methodology to address the phenomenon by introducing specific changes in dealing with this population of congregants. Specifically, the church should redefine and reposition itself for Millennials; organize and support activities which are interesting for them, and be more interested in understanding their needs and distinct characteristics. Although information provided in the study showed no statistical significance regarding the relationship between patterns/opinions and the decline of church attendance and church participation in the African American church, the data from the patterns/opinions provided information for pastors and leaders in the African American church to acknowledge this generation as the future of the church.

Millennials in the African American church perceived their role as passive. They do not feel missing a religious service is detrimental because their values are more about spirituality than about active church participation. Millennials expect the church to provide them opportunities for spiritual growth through spiritual retreats, mentorship programs, service projects, and social activities specifically for their generation. The benefits of this study is an addition to the body of research regarding the Millennial generation in the African American church, and any information provided for further learning.

From the findings, it is recommended to repeat the same research to capture a wider research sample covering a larger population that would incorporate more African

American churches to increase the sample size for more diversification in the demographics of participants. Additionally, the use of technology alone may not be sufficient enough to attract participation in the study and additional means should be used to reduce possible subjectivity for sample formation, and to increase research participants.

It is also recommended that a more in-depth qualitative study approach be conducted by means of a focus group comprised of Millennials to provide a sufficient sample for data saturation with the goal of exploring thematic analysis of Millennials' opinions regarding their decline in church attendance and church participation, and recommendations regarding what the African American church could change.

Summary

The expressed opinions of the participants in this study create a critical need for the church to recognize the necessity for reform to reposition itself for Millennials to remain relevant. For most of the participants in this study, maintaining church attendance was very important. To varying degrees, they attributed their church attendance to family but seek their own relationship with God. The majority of the participants (85 respondents which makes up 60% of the population) was members of their churches 11 years or more and on average attended church at least once a week. While there was no statistical significance to support the decline in church attendance and church participation for this generation, the qualitative analysis provided steps that the church can take to increase church attendance and church participation for the Millennial generation (see Appendixes D and E).

Overall, the findings in this study advanced our understanding and provided insight to the African American church including ministry leaders and pastors, as well as future learners and practitioners in several ways. First, the African American church should define the spiritual and mentoring needs of the Millennial generation, and provide service opportunities (outreach ministry) allowing this generation to live out and exercise their faith. Secondly, space in the church should be created for this generation providing an opportunity to discuss and address their questions regarding their spirituality (as contrasted against religiousness) and its connection to their lives. The church cannot afford to be only concerned about the maintenance of the church, but also the preservation of it. If the African American church is to continue to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples to spread the *good news* of Jesus Christ, they must connect and engage this generation because they are future of the African American church.

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Appendix A

Characteristics and Common Traits of the Millennials

(based on literature review)

Characteristics	Scholarly Sources
<i>General Characteristics and Character Traits</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special, “one of a kind” and unlike any other youth generation in living memory and distinctiveness; • Cheerful, upbeat and optimistic; • Very diverse, in all senses of this word; • Adventurers; • Open and tolerant; • Confident or even narcissistic individualists, with self-centered mentality and high self-esteem, who concentrate on extreme personalization; • Skeptical; • Pragmatic idealists; • Bored; • Transparent, open and honest in relationships; • Delusional; • Generous and eager to volunteer; • Pressured. 	<p>Anderson, 2007; Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Benckendorff, Moscardo & Pendergast, 2010; Burstein, 2013; Greenberg & Weber, 2008; Johnson, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Huntley, 2006; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Mabry, 2013; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013; Tulgan & Martin, 2001; Twenge, 2006.</p>
<i>Education and Learning</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought up by materialistic and demanding parents; • Knowledge-driven and education-minded; • Desiring, requiring, and seeking a mentor; • Appreciate content and are hungry for high-quality content; • Very flexible, adaptable and open-minded; • Continuous seekers and wanting to learn, always ready for change; • Seek every opportunity to advance. 	<p>Benckendorff et al., 2010; Greenberg & Weber, 2008; Johnson, 2006; Martin, 2010; McBeath, 2008; Oblinger, 2003; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013; Taylor & Pew Research Center, 2014; Tulgan & Martin, 2001.</p>
<i>Communication and Technology</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring constant connectedness and saturated by multimedia and mass media influences; • Depending on social networking; • Progressive, technologically literate and technology-driven. 	<p>Benckendorff et al., 2010; Bicen & Pinto, 2012; Bonner et al., 2011; Greenberg & Weber, 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Lenhart et al., 2011; Martin, 2010; Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013.</p>

Employment and Working Experience

- Good planners, goal setters, and achievers;
- Creative and co-creating;
- Spontaneous, active and entrepreneurship-inclined;
- Having increased disposition towards participative behaviors;
- Interactive and test-driven;
- Responsible and less criminal;
- Wanting control and immediate results;
- Liking and being able to collaborate, liking group activity, team oriented;
- Not deferential to authority;
- Participative and proficient multitaskers;
- Uninvolved and even lazy, or having delayed enrollment;
- Wanting and driving the change;
- Having excessive expectations from the workplace, which constitutes a considerable challenge to employers.

Furlong, 2013; Greenberg & Weber, 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Johnson, 2006; Lambert, 2009; Lenhart et al., 2011; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Martin, 2010; McBeath, 2008; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Oblinger, 2003; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Saratovsky & Feldman, 2013; Tulgan & Martin, 2001.

Preferences, Values, and Beliefs

- Create and follow cultural brands;
- Having liberal, or even neoliberal, mindset and receptive to new ideas;
- Shaped by consumer culture and financially confused;
- Sheltered, confident in their financial future and very consumeristic;
- Less focused on employment, i.e. are not workaholics, and are more recognition-seekers;
- Seeking to achieve work-life balance;
- Appreciate and seek a sense of community and belonging;
- Less cynical than Generation X;
- “Green” but less environmentally concerned;
- Believing there are no barriers;
- Advocating free trade;
- Wanting more private space;
- Democratic but at the same time civically and politically disengaged;
- Less socially involved and not following social rules;
- Non-traditionalists who seek to reverse the trends;
- Denying common values, norms and rules and creating own;
- Have traditional attitudes about the family;
- Conventional;
- Less religious and more spiritual, saying that religion is not “their thing.”

Anderson, 2007; Benckendorff et al., 2010; Burstein, 2013; Johnson, 2006; Hachigian & Sutphen, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Martin, 2010; McBeath, 2008; NFEC, 2008; Oblinger, 2003; Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, 2010; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013; Taylor & Pew Research Center, 2014; Twenge, 2006.

Appendix B
Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of religion and its role in your life and the life of your generation?
2. What is the role of church in your life?
3. What do you believe to be your function in the church?
4. Why do you think church attendance is declining for your generation?
5. What factors play a role in your church attendance?
6. What do you believe may be hindering your generation from participating in church ministry?

Appendix C
Survey Open-Ended Questions

36. What ideas do you have to encourage more members of your generation to attend church?

37. How can the church engage your generation to participate in church ministry?

Appendix D

Thematic Analysis of Interview Questions

	Participant 1, 20, female, active	Participant 2, 22, male, active	Participant 3, 27, female, inactive	Participant 4, 25, female, active	Participant 5, 26, male, inactive
Question 1: Role of religion in your life and life of your generation	Religion = my personal relationship with God	Religion = form a relationship between myself and God, makes me better	Religion = my personal relationship with God	Religion = my personal relationship with God, an always-present background in my life	Religion = correct way for a person to walk
Question 2: Role of church in your life	Church = place of fellowship with others	Church = discipline, leadership, serving people	Church used to be a pleasant tradition, but not anymore	Difficult to have it in tough work schedule	Church = reminder, a place to rejuvenate yourself
Question 3: Your function in church	To praise God, to be example to others, to do ministry	To proclaim the word of God and to be a role model for younger generation	To serve God, to explain and teach younger generation	Used to be in choir; being “my mom’s church buddy”	Just a passive regular member
Question 4: Why is church attendance declining for your generation?	Irrelevance of church to people’s needs and expectations	Radicalism, seeking own way to praise God	No one forces for discipline. No clear opinion given	Detachment, stereotypes and lack of tolerance, uninteresting service, loss of connectedness	Technology makes people lazy. Other priorities
Question 5: Factors of own church attendance	Family, community, fellowship, and personal drive	Creativity, opportunity to be different, seek my own relationship with God	Lack of discipline	My mother	Being stubborn and my ignorance of not going
Question 6: What hinders Millennials from church participation?	Lack of individual drive, low responsibility, commitment to other things	Opinions of others, focus on how they look and expectations of others; judgment	Viewed as unimportant, attending is enough	Lack of commitment, lack of interest in the ministry	Do not know where they fit in. Some are afraid. Others believe passive role is enough

Appendix E

Qualitative and Thematic Analysis of the Respondents' Answers to the Open Ended Questions

Need to understand	Need to act	Nothing can be done	No opinion / Answer not useful
Question 36: "What ideas do you have to encourage more members of your generation to attend church?"			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church is about spirituality and not a religious life (19) • The interests of generation must be addressed (4) • The needs of generation must be understood (2) • Should not judge (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community has concrete needs, so there are more opportunities for outreach ministry (52) • Mentoring is required (3) • Advertising and promotion are required (2) • Ideas for action: food, fun, problem solving (3) • Need to unite group by age (3) • Social events are required (2) • Use seniors as a way to attract the youth (1) • Use peer-to-peer communication (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing can be done to increase church attendance (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No opinion (11) • Don't mix religion and politics (1)

Cont.

Need to understand	Need to act	Communication	No opinion / Answer not useful
Question 37: "How can the church engage your generation to participate in church ministry?"			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically target young audience (8) • Focus on the generation's needs, ideas; be relevant (6) • Need to encourage (1) • Trust is important (2) • Authenticity is required (1) • Church should improve one's life (2) • Should be better organized (1) • Have ministries we are interested in (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for step-by-step plan implementation (8) • Be open-minded, innovative, and creative (5) • Certain events/activities are required, e.g. young adult Sunday, gatherings outside of Sunday service (6) • Implement leadership and mentoring opportunities (1) • Need to make things fun (3) • Need for outreach events (2) • Need to use new technologies (1) • Provide free stuff (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to express church ideas clearly (2) • Relay message to encourage and not condemn (2) • Talk to them at their level; speak our language (2) • Have real life conversations about life (2) • Text more (1) • Stay in touch with college students who are away (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No ideas to express (9)