LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A MODEL FOR ONGOING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN EVANGELICAL GENERATION Z MINISTRY LEADERS

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Jillieta Diane Norwood

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the leadership preparedness and biblical worldview of Generation Z (Gen Z) Christian ministry leaders to inform the formation of a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development. Participants (N=7) were paid senior ministry leaders of Assembly of God churches in the Midwest region who were involved in the hiring process and ongoing development of paid Gen Z ministry leaders. Additional participants included ministry leaders who fell within the defined years of the Generation Z cohort (1995-2010) and who had been employed by the church for a minimum of six months (N=10). Data were collected through observations and both structured and unstructured interviews. Data analysis was conducted by using the Strauss and Corbin (2015) data analysis protocol. The model generated from this study utilized the Hrivnak, Jr. et al. (2009) theoretical framework for leadership development as a starting point for targeting key development needs specific to Gen Z ministry leaders. The model reflects the important components of ongoing leadership development that were expressed by participants as needing additional growth. These areas included spiritual formation, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and organizational skills. Research showed that Gen Z leaders primarily manifested unpreparedness for leadership through spiritual stagnation, struggles in navigating the human aspects of the job, and failure to capture the big picture of the church as an interconnected and living organism. This new model for ongoing Gen Z leadership development suggests important implications and applications for stakeholders committed to investing in their ongoing development.

Keywords: Generation Z, senior ministry leaders, leader development, leadership development, post-Christian, emerging adult

Dedication

It is true what they say that anything is possible when you have the right people in your corner. I humbly dedicate this work to the ones in mine.

First, my husband Kris, who maybe does not entirely understand my insatiable need to learn but gives me his wholehearted support anyway. Thank you for your acceptance that I collect degrees like other people collect stamps, and for sharing in my joy every time I add a new one to the shelf. This might. . . maybe. . . could be, the last.

Second, to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, this is really all for you. You called me into it, equipped me through it, and to you be all the glory for anything that is to come of it. It is yours to do with what you will. I am ready and willing to respond, “Here I am, send me” (*NIV*, Isaiah 6:8) when you call.

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For reasons which remain unknown in their entirety, when God designed my sanctification process, he included in it this monumental endeavor. Knowing how desperately I would need support and encouragement he hand-selected some individuals who, whether willingly or unwillingly, have become a critical part of my sanctification package. It is no secret that I could not have accomplished this without them, so for you, the reader, let me introduce you to some of the best people I know:

Tina, your love of research and command of the English language have been gifts that I am sure, at times, you wish you had not so willing shared! Thank you for walking through this process with me from its beginning to its end. I am certain there is no word in the English language that adequately expresses my gratitude.

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To the 65 leaders that I have the privilege of serving with each week, you are constant reminders of how extraordinary heaven will be. Thank you for allowing me the time to get this done and cheering me on from the sidelines while I did it.

To all my Gen Z and Senior Leader participants, you are extraordinary individuals who are changing the world. Thank you for allowing me to catch a glimpse.

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Kristopher and Kedric, I saved you for last because you represent the best of any of my achievements. Thank you for asking how school was going even when you knew you were going to get an answer that was longer than you wanted. You are my favorite.

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List of Abbreviations

Continuing Education Unit (CEU)

Generation Z (Gen Z)

Liberty University (LU)

New International Version (NIV)

English Standard Version (ESV)

International Ministerial Foundation (IMF)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Minnesota School of Ministry (MNSOM)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

History is characterized by moments of change, the advent of something new – sometimes good and sometimes bad, but always different. The nation is faced with such a moment as a new generation begins to graduate from college and enter the workplace. This by itself is nothing new, however, seminal research on Generation Z, the cohort born between 1995 and 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2019), consistently reveals unique characteristics of historical significance. They are bringing to the workplace a new dynamic that is sometimes good, sometimes bad, but without a doubt different.

Generation Z is the first generation in history born into a technological age that has become so endemic to society that there has never been a point in their lives when they have not had access to electronic devices that give them instant access to the internet and social media. There is also grim news concerning its eroding spiritual condition. A recent Barna Report (2018), focused entirely on understanding what defines Gen Z, reveals that only 4% of this generation reflects a biblical worldview. Furthermore, studies have shown that while previous generations have grown up with a prevailing Christian worldview, Gen Z has grown up in a truly post-Christian world (Barna Group, 2018; White, 2017; Seemiller and Grace, 2019).

The leading edge of this post-Christian generation has recently begun to enter leadership positions in Christian ministry. The new and different realities the generation brings must raise the question of how prepared they are to lead in a ministry context. Christian church ministry is unique from other professions in the respect that it is one of the only environments where young college graduates can step directly into a leadership role without prior experience. Furthermore, the local church is not known for implementing consistent and intentional leadership

development programs to cultivate the ongoing growth of its leadership (Elkington et al., 2015; Thoman, 2009). These facts beg two questions: Is this different generation prepared to lead, and how ready is the church to continue ongoing leader and leadership development?

This chapter addresses these compelling questions by orienting the reader to the background of the problem, providing a clear statement of the problem, and presenting the purpose of the research and the questions that guided it. The chapter also addresses the assumptions and delimitations of the study and offers a brief summary of the research methodology that was used in the study. It is hoped that by the end of this chapter the problem and its need for further research will be fully understood.

Background to the Problem

In this section, a framework for the problem is built by offering a summary of the most relevant literature that addresses the theoretical, historical, sociological, and theological aspects of the problem.

Theoretical Significance

There is an idea gaining traction that the world is at a pivotal time in its history. To this point, six eras have been documented. Each era has lasted several centuries, and, thus far, each ended in a crisis that became unsustainable and unsolvable without the introduction of a new way of thinking (Anthony and Benson, 2011). White (2017), in his book *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, joins a rising chorus of those who believe Generation Z is a hinge-point generation ushering in a seventh era of history.

This thought is an expansion of Strauss and Howe's generational theory which is grounded in American history rather than world history - but also places this time and generation in a critical position known as a "turning" (Strauss and Howe, 1997). Strauss and Howe's (1991)

generational theory lies in the idea that American history cycles through four stages of seasons that represent roughly 80-90 years. Each 80-90-year span represents a "saeculum," and each 20-22-year cycle is called a "turning" representing one generational cohort. The four turnings can be viewed as symbolizing the seasons of winter, spring, summer, and fall. The first turning, known as The High, follows a crisis that marks the end of a previous cycle. This season is characterized by solid institutions and marked by a strong sense of community leaving individualism as a concept that is not championed. The second turning gives rise to a greater sense of individualism and spiritual autonomy that begins an erosion of community. Social institutions increasingly come under attack and public progress is impeded. The third turning is ushered in by a strong and flourishing sense of individualism that leaves institutions weak and distrusted. Finally, the fourth turning is characterized by an era of social destruction where institutions in the current form are destroyed and a society in crisis longs for the benefits of being part of a strong community (Strauss and Howe, 1991; Strauss and Howe, 1997).

The Four Turnings as defined by Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory are believed to remain relatively constant, maintaining around 20 years for each cycle. The imagery for the 80–90-year cycle is not just limited to the cyclic seasons but can also be represented as a lifespan illustrating youth, rising adulthood, midlife, and old age. These visual analogies maintain the idea that generations will continue to be defined by a roughly 20-year span, however, not everyone, holds to the theory that defined generations will remain historically stable cohorts representing this length of a span.

Researchers, Sparks & Honey (2015), believe that as technology changes at the speed of life the outcome for generational cohorts is that because of this "breakneck speed of culture, Gen Z will mark the end of generations as we know it" (Sparks & Honey, 2015). Strauss and Howe

(1997) continue to maintain, however, that generations, at least in the seasonal cycle of the turnings, will continue to be roughly 20-year lifespans. Applying this theory to what is being seen in society today, the chaotic flood of technological advances coupled with a post-Christian culture is now revealing new norms, and remarkably unique characteristics in Generations Z that hint at the beginning of a new Saeculum (Strauss & Howe, 1997; White, 2017).

Historical Significance

To fully understand Generation Z, one must understand the generations that have preceded it and, relevant to this study, the steady progression towards post-Christianity. Throughout American history, there have been many defined generations; however, there are currently four older generational cohorts that daily speak into the lives of those in Generation Z and knowingly or unknowingly contribute to their development. A Pew Research study conducted in 2014 took an in-depth look at the religious landscape across generations and painted a bleak portrait of its consistent decline. A brief overview given in the table below illustrates the generational erosion:

Table 1

Generational Overview

	Silent (1928-1945)	Boomers (1946-1964)	Gen X (1965-1980)	Millennials (1981-1996)
	%	%	%	%
Importance of Religion in one's life	67	59	53	38
Belief in God (Certain)	71	69	64	50
Church Attendance (weekly)	51	38	34	28
Seldom or never participate in prayer, Scripture study, or religious education	51	57	57	62
Use religion as a source of guidance on what is right or wrong	41	38	33	23
Hold a Biblical Worldview	11	10	7	6

Note. The statistics have been gathered from the following sources: Pew Research Center, 2014; Barna Group, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2019.

These statistics are evidence of a quiet but dramatic end to what was once a Christian landscape, and they mark the beginning of a new post-Christian era.

Sociological Significance

The fact that Generation Z has unique characteristics is not in itself newsworthy. Every generation has differences from the previous one. For this new generation, several characteristics are and will continue to, impact society at large in a profound way. These characteristics include their insecurity, diversity, post-Christian upbringing, status as digital natives, and emerging adulthood.

Gen Z as Insecure

Gen Z's formative events have left them grasping for stability and security. For them, this equates to the need for financial success, and confirming studies reveal that two-thirds of the population believe establishing a strong career and achieving financial independence by the age of thirty will provide the requisite security (Barna, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Studies also show they are getting an early start on it. Roughly half of Gen Z teens are already saving money (Sparks & Honey, 2015; Northeastern University, 2014). It is believed their deep need to ensure financial security has fueled their motivation to move from a capitalist system to a socialistic one (White, 2017).

Gen Z as Highly Diverse

Roughly half of the Gen Z population is currently non-white, resulting in another historical landmark, as they have become the most racially and ethnically diverse generation to date (Barna, 2018; Sparks & Honey, 2015). Additionally, new trends in politics and culture have led to the promotion and celebration of anyone who is nonmale and nonwhite (Sparks & Honey, 2015). The dramatic increase in interracial marriage over the last three decades has led to such a fast-growing multiracial youth demographic that it was anticipated that this previous minority group would take over majority status in 2020 (U.S Census Bureau, 2010; Sparks & Honey, 2015; White, 2017).

The diversity of this generation, however, is not limited to the categories of race and ethnicity. Fluidity in the definitions of gender identity has given rise to a rapid increase in the adoption of different sexual orientations. Research reveals that one in six Gen Zers claims a sexual orientation other than heterosexual (Jones, 2021). Furthermore, the 2015 landmark Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage opened the door for the normalization of

different gender identities. For those who do claim to be heterosexual, they are highly likely to have friends who have adopted an alternative sexual orientation or gender identity (Barna, 2018).

The high levels of diversity on all fronts in this generation have led to a ready acceptance and inclusivity of other perspectives and beliefs which continues to leave its mark on the church (Barna, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2015; Pichler et al., 2021; White, 2017). What previous generations have seen as anomalies have become normal to this generation (White, 2017; Barna 2018). It is, however, important to note that Generation Z has not come to this state of normalcy because of their own intentional decisions or beliefs that have led them to such diversity of thoughts and behaviors. They are a byproduct of decisions and actions that were taken by previous generations (Barna, 2018; White, 2000; 2017).

Gen Z as Post-Christian

These preceding attitudes and actions have made their mark in other areas of life for this generation. For many, it comes as no shock that the influence of Christianity in our nation has eroded. This erosion has gained steam in recent years and the drop-off in church attendance and religious affiliation has continued (Pew Research, 2015; 2019). Occurring simultaneously has been the rise of atheists, agnostics (Pew Research 2015; 2019), and “nones” - defined as those with no religious affiliation in particular (White, 2000). One of the most dramatic changes in the religious landscape is the doubling of the statistic of those who claim to be atheists. What had been a relatively stable number across previous generations has made a dramatic leap in this one (Barna, 2018). Gen Z has grown up as a product of a society that has either turned away from the Christian faith or is apathetic to it, resulting in the first generation that is living in what is known as a post-Christian society (White, 2017; Barna, 2018) – one in which the predominant values and worldview are not necessarily Christian (Lexico, n. d.).

While the majority of the generation still professes a belief in God, belief is less likely to turn into action (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2014). Engaged Christians, defined as those who put their faith at the center of their lives, weigh in as only 9% of the generational population (Barna, 2018). What has become the reality in the culture today is the erosion of the influence of the church and this has manifested itself in the worldview of the new generation. Research indicates that only 4% of the population reflects a biblical worldview even while 78% profess a belief in God (Barna, 2018). There are many factors that contribute to this discrepancy, but the thread that ties all the defining characteristics of this generation together is the prevalence of technology that provides instant access to the internet, and therefore, opinions, information, and global communities - all of which have the power to shape worldviews (White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

Gen Z as Digital Natives

While it is true that many in the Millennial generation, especially its younger members, grew up connected to the internet, the difference with Generation Z is from the moment of birth, Gen Zers have lived in a digitally saturated world. They essentially cut their teeth on their parent's electronic devices (Blumberg & Brooks, 2017) as, by the age of two, nearly all Gen Zers already have an online history (Steyer, 2012). While technology has impacted all generations, it is this characteristic that sets them apart as different from any preceding generation.

What this means for Generation Z is it has now become the test subject for the long-term effects of lifelong technology use. Research thus far has shown that it has had a direct and compounding impact on attention, emotions, mental health, interpersonal relationships, communication skills, worldview formation, and these just scratch the surface (Blumberg & Brooks; 2017; Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Turner, 2015; Carr, 2010; Turkle, 2011; Freitas, 2017;

Barna, 2018). Furthermore, since technology is just a normal part of their existence, they are more unaware, and thereby susceptible to its influence (Steyer, 2012).

Gen Z as Emerging Adults

Over the last fifty years, significant demographic changes have occurred making the late teens through mid-twenties year span no longer defined as merely transition years into adulthood, but rather "a distinct period of life course, characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). The increase in the American population seeking higher education, combined with the continual delay of marriage and parenthood has established the 18-25-year-old age group as a distinct period of development that has since been labeled as *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2000; Setran and Kiesling, 2013). Arnett (2000) describes the emerging adult demographic as a group that has left the dependency of childhood and the adolescent years but has not yet fully entered the responsibilities of adulthood, therefore, leaving them in a state of limbo where they do not view themselves as adolescents or adults. This crucial life phase is marked with key characteristics. Emerging adults are actively engaged in identity formation. They are also nomadic and marked with instability as the formation and revision of life plans force frequent location changes. They are largely self-focused as they are now free of parental oversight and responsibilities to others. They feel "in-between" (Setran and Kiesling, 2013, p. 3) adolescence and adulthood and are generally optimistic about the vast possibilities and options for their future (Arnett, 2000; Setran and Kiesling, 2013). Arnett (2000) notes emerging adulthood "to be a time of frequent change as various possibilities in love, work, and worldviews are explored" (p. 469). It is during this volatile phase of life that Gen Z members are entering Christian ministry leadership positions.

Theological Significance

In a world where church attendance is increasingly scant, religion is met with apathy, and we are faced with a new generation that has not been born into a Christian culture (White, 2017, Barna, 2018), it should not be assumed that just because students are graduating from a Christian university and profess to be a Christian they have adopted or adhere to a well-developed Biblical worldview or possess the leadership skills needed for Christian ministry positions (Thoman, 2009; Lifeway Research, 2015). This does not mean church leaders should shy away from hiring members of this new generation, but it does suggest that church leaders must not take lightly the task of investing in their further development. The passion of youth and the wisdom of age is a powerful combination that God uses to further his kingdom, and the older generations must be continually and intentionally engaged in the development of the new generation. In this new post-Christian landscape, the old way of doing things must be infused with fresh ideas. A new and unique generation demands a new and unique approach. The Christian community must courageously pick up the godly mandate to continually develop the next generation so that when the mantle of leadership is passed the gospel continues to accurately go forth.

Statement of the Problem

Generation Z is the most diverse generation as well as the first in history born into a technological age that has become so endemic to society that there has never been a point in their lives when they have not had access to the internet and social media. Furthermore, studies have shown that while previous generations have grown up with a prevailing Christian worldview, Gen Z has grown up in a truly post-Christian world (Barna Group, 2018; White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Current research on Generation Z shows the cultural impacts of a technological and post-Christian society have taken a toll on their cognitive development (Cavanaugh et al.,

2016; Blumberg & Brooks, 2017; Firth et al., 2019; Hoehe & Thibaut, 2020; Small & Vaughn, 2008; Carr, 2010; Firat, 2013), interpersonal relationships (Freitas, 2017; Steyer, 2012; Turkle, 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2020), and spiritual formation (Esqueda, 2018; White, 2017; Dean, 2010). Furthermore, the neglect in the church to cultivate among the pastoral staff a need to be lifelong learners and engage in the ongoing leadership development that is prevalent in secular companies, educational institutions, and organizations only exacerbates a growing problem (Elkington et al., 2015; Lifeway Research, 2015). Further research shows there is a strong correlation between the success of a church and the ongoing professional development of its leaders (Abney, 2018). With the leading edge of this post-Christian generation beginning to enter leadership positions in Christian ministry, the new and different realities the generation brings must raise the question as to how prepared they are to lead in a ministry context. Has this different generation brought with it an urgency to take a different approach to ongoing leadership development?

The Barna Group (2018) offers a thorough quantitative study that addresses the declining spiritual condition of this generational population which illustrates the effects of the post-Christian society on the generation, but it did not go deeper into the lived experience of Gen Z Christian leaders, therefore, there is a gap in the literature that is related specifically to members of Gen Z in roles of Christian leadership. Additionally, with Generation Z only recently graduating from college and entering Christian leadership, ongoing leadership development for this generation is simply too new of a field for research which leaves the door to its exploration wide open. This qualitative study aimed to add solid and relevant research for churches that have or are onboarding new Gen Z leaders and are committed to seeing to their ongoing leadership development.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the leadership preparedness and worldview formation of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders so as to inform the development of a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development for senior leaders who are onboarding these new leaders into Christian ministry leadership roles. For this research study, Generation Z was defined as the birth cohort born between 1995 and 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Leadership development for this study included both leader development which targets the growth of the individual (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2010; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009), and leadership development which focuses on developing a repertoire of leadership skills that expand the capacity to serve the community (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). The theories that guided the study were Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory which provided a basis for Generation Z being a history-defining generation that is causing paradigm shifts in societal institutions, and the Hrivnak, Jr. et al (2009) leadership development model which offered a basic framework for the construction of a leadership development model that can be used in specific contexts.

Research Questions

RQ1. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, to what extent, if any, are they seeing a difference in the leadership preparedness of Generation Z as compared to other generational leaders?

RQ2. To what extent, if any, has the documented erosion of biblical worldview development and post-Christian upbringing of Generation Z manifested itself in new Gen Z Christian ministry hires?

RQ3. What, if any, ongoing biblical worldview, and leadership development strategies are in place to further prepare and develop newly hired Generation Z ministry leaders, and what are the components of these strategies?

RQ4. From the perspective of Gen Z ministry hires, in what specific areas of leadership skills or worldview formation do they feel they require or seek further development?

RQ5. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, what different leadership preparation and development, if any, is needed for Generation Z as compared to previous generations?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for this research:

1. Generation Z exhibits unique characteristics from other generations because of being the first American generation raised as true digital natives in a post-Christian society.

2. Being raised in a technological, post-Christian society has negatively impacted, to some extent, the leadership preparation and biblical worldview formation of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders.

3. Church leaders who have had contact with an employed Generation Z ministry leader within the church for a minimum of six months have sufficient insight into the biblical worldview and leadership preparedness of the Generation Z ministry leader to meet the demands of this study.

Delimitations of the Research Design

The qualitative study was delimited to Evangelical church ministry settings that employed a Generation Z ministry leader for a minimum of six months. The participants in these selected settings included the senior ministry leaders who have worked with a Gen Z ministry leader for a minimum of six months along with persons who fell within the year parameters of Generation Z (1995-2010) who had been hired into a Christian leadership position in an Evangelical church.

Definition of Terms

1. *Worldview:* a comprehensive view of reality that affects all other things (Smith, 2015)

2. *Biblical worldview:* a "framework of assumptions about reality, all of which are in submission to Christ" (Schultz & Swezey, 2013, p. 232)

3. *Generational cohort*: a group of people born during a specific timeframe who have similar behaviors, characteristics, and shared historic experiences that are different from members of other age groups

4. *Generation Z*: generational cohort born between the years 1995-2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2019)

5. *Post-Christian:* the movement beyond the primacy of a Christian worldview in all areas of the public arena where it once flourished.

6. *Christian Leadership:* Includes, but is not limited to, the roles of youth pastor, mission's coordinator, worship leader, children's pastor, associate pastor, technology leader, and senior pastor and is directly involved in "influencing a community to use their God-given gifts toward a goal and purpose as led by the Holy Spirit" (Stetzer, 2019, para. 7).

7. *Leader Development:* development targeted at an individual leader as an investment into human capital (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2010; Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009).

8. *Leadership Development*: development that seeks to affect the community and, therefore, is an investment into social capital (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2009; Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009).

9. *Leadership Preparedness*: the long slow process of leader preparation that focuses on character and personal development before a person is ready to lead others (Boa, 2005).

10. *Christian Ministry Hire*: a member of Generation Z who is hired to a paid, pastoral leadership position that falls under the management of the senior ministry leader.

11. *Senior Ministry Leader*: a hierarchal, paid, pastoral leadership position that oversees other church employees such as secretaries, music, youth, associate, or other junior pastors.

12. *Generational Leader*: a leader who belongs to one of the five generational cohorts in the workforce today: Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennial, and Generation Z.

13. *Vocational Ministry*: a career in which someone is paid for working in a church or other Christian organizational setting. Example: Pastors, missionaries, evangelists

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was found in the potential of its theoretical and practical applications. In terms of theory, it sought to develop a theoretical model of ongoing leadership that could be applied in Christian ministry settings. There is a general consensus in the leadership field that although there is much theoretical variety in leadership styles, there has been little progress made on a comprehensive model of leadership development (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009; Daniels et al., 2019; Day, 2000; Day and Halpin, 2004; Yukl, 2006). What seems to proliferate

instead is an abundance of theories on leadership style (Day, 2000). This study, therefore, provided further theoretical understanding of leadership development and serves as a starting place for a well-developed theory on leadership development for Christian ministry leaders.

In terms of practical significance, there continues to be a need for leadership development in the church (Thoman, 2009; 2010; Yeong, 2012). It is unrealistic to think that a bachelor's degree is sufficient in preparing a student for the rigors of Christian leadership (Thoman, 2009; Lifeway Research, 2015). Research focusing on finding the cause of attrition in pastors revealed that the lack of practical preparation in Bible colleges and seminaries addressing relationships, essential leadership skills, and teaching the basics of the gospel were factors in pastors leaving the profession (Lifeway Research, 2015). Furthermore, the mandate for lifelong learning that is fundamental to the Christian faith (Mathis, 2014) seems to be missing to a considerable extent. Given these things, the Christian community would be benefited from further research on effective leadership development models.

Since members of Gen Z have only recently begun graduating from undergraduate degree programs and are being hired into leadership positions in Christian ministry there is a significant gap in the research related to their leadership readiness, abilities, and styles. What the specific content of ongoing leadership development should include in light of this post-Christian generation, is still emerging. This study has practical implications for Christian ministry settings that seek to take a deliberate approach to investing in the ongoing leadership development of Gen Z ministry leaders. It also has critical implications for those being led by emerging Generation Z Christian leaders.

Summary of the Design

Grounded theory methodology was chosen for this researcher's study on Gen Z Christian ministry leaders and ongoing leadership development for several reasons. First, as Figgins et al., (2019) described it is a highly useful methodology for when theories are undeveloped for a specific population or existing theories are underdeveloped. Both are true in this case. A theory on leadership development is undeveloped for the specific population of Gen Z Christian ministry leaders, and to this point, leadership development theories, in general, remain largely underdeveloped (Day, 2000; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009; Popper and Lipshitz, 1993; Daniels et al., 2019). Since the purpose of this study was to generate a leadership development theory for a specific population the methodology became an ideal choice.

To begin the implementation of the grounded theory methodology in this study, a target number of three to five ministry settings was selected using purposive sampling to select information-rich settings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Sampling continued with snowball sampling; a sampling strategy designed to find further participants based on the recommendations of current participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Once the settings were chosen the initial stage of data collection involved on-site observations. Billups (2021) posits these observations are critical "When the interpretation of a setting is critical to understanding the phenomenon under study" (p. 134). This proved true to understand the environment that Gen Z leaders were in, understand their level of preparedness, and discern their needs for ongoing leadership development.

Observations were followed by face-to-face unstructured interviews that took place between the interviewer and the senior ministry leaders who oversee the Gen Z leaders. The unstructured interviews targeted the first two research questions which explored the senior

leaders' perspectives on how Gen Z's leadership preparedness compared to other generational leaders in the setting, as well as to what extent the erosion of the generational biblical worldview was perceived to have manifested itself in the ministry setting. This process was supported by an interview protocol (Billups, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) designed to bolster dependability and confirmability.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with Gen Z leaders to gain their perspective on needed or desired aspects of ongoing leadership development. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior leaders to address perspectives on current or needed leadership development for the younger leaders. In addition, these interviews targeted key concepts that were gleaned from the immediate analysis of data collection and initial open coding that took place (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). As these more focused interviews unfolded, documents participants used in relation to concepts of leadership or personal development were analyzed.

In addition to these documents, a research field journal was maintained that kept a detailed record of all the activities, summaries of the conversations, insights, and questions pertaining to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It has been noted that the research journal is a valuable resource for tracking the research process as it evolves (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), therefore it became an important part of the audit trail which is an extensive and thorough document system that records every step taken in the research from data collection to analysis, to theory (Bowen, 2009).

In accordance with grounded theory design, each iterative data collection process was followed immediately with analysis which utilized open, axial, and selective coding, and theoretical integration. Data was broken into conceptual themes and categories. As these

emerged, theoretical sampling was introduced and the interview guide (Figgins et al., 2019) was reworked and updated. Additionally, memo writing reflected the process of distillation as data was transformed into theory (Lempert, 2007). The overall process of data analysis was conducted following Creswell's (2011) data analysis spiral that moves raw data to the final report in an ongoing interaction with the data that organizes, peruses, classifies, and synthesizes each layer of data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As each iterative layer was applied, relationships that wove the conceptual themes together were identified and from those relationships, a theory of leadership development, firmly grounded in the data collected from selected ministry settings, was developed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has been designed to provide an overview of the research problem, its background, significance, the questions that guided the research, and a summary of the design. Subsequent chapters further expand on these critical topics.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides a survey and analysis of what the current body of literature offers on the topic of Generation Z – their worldview, their preparation for leadership, and the need for ongoing development as leaders. The first section addresses the biblical foundations of worldview, spiritual leadership, preparation, and development. The subsequent section addresses the theoretical framework provided on these issues. Following the theoretical framework is a review of the related literature as it pertains to Generation Z and the role of the church in its ongoing leadership development. Finally, the rationale of the study is summarized and relevant gaps in the literature are identified.

Theological Framework

This section seeks to build a strong rationale for the study by establishing a biblical perspective that deals with the theological themes that were relevant to the study. With this purpose in mind, this section discusses the relevant themes of a biblical worldview, biblical leadership and preparation, and biblical leadership development.

Biblical Worldview

Undoubtedly one of the most significant challenges that the church faces in onboarding a new generation of Christian leaders is the research that reflects that only 4% of Generation Z has a biblical worldview (Barna, 2018). This statistic represents the entire population, those who profess to be Christians as well as those who do not (Barna, 2018). If one takes this into account, it means that many professing Christians within Generation Z, at worst, do not have a biblical worldview, and at best, because of age, have one that is still developing as the leading edge of this generation is in what is known as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; White, 2017).

Emerging adulthood is defined as a time of life between the ages of 18 and 29 (Arnett, 2000) when individuals are still adding to and discarding parts of the worldview they have adopted to this point in their lives. (Arnett, 2000; Erdvig, 2016). This became relevant to the purpose of this study as it is in this period of life that Gen Z leaders are entering ministry leadership positions.

Definitions of Worldview

Whether one is aware of it or not, everyone does have a worldview. Sire (2009) offers a robust description by stating,

> A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being (p. 20)

It can also be simply defined as, "a comprehensive picture of reality that affects everything. . ." (Smith, 2015, p. 6). Worldview is developed both positively and negatively through a sum total of experiences, culture, upbringing, what is read or watched, relationships, demographics, education, all combined into a vast complex conglomeration of daily interactions (Sire, 2009; Sire 2015; Smith, 2015; Ryken, 2013). It is not a moral system, political statement, or just one doctrinal system, but rather it is a lens that is looked through that filters all things. It is developed over a lifetime and is a complicated, intertwined system of doctrines and moral values (Smith, 2015). Behind every thought, idea, or perspective there is a set of previous thoughts or assumptions. It is impossible for ideas or perspectives to exist independently, they are all rooted and tied to something even if there is no awareness of it, which is often the case. A worldview is most commonly identified by the answers to the following critical questions (Sire, n. d.; Davis, 2006),

1. What is the nature of the ultimate reality?
2. What is the nature of external reality?

3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

These questions can be further simplified to four key questions: Who am I? Where am I? What is wrong? and What is the answer? (Colson et al., 2004; Smith, 2015). These questions encompass critical elements of the main idea for any story: characters, setting, problem, and solution, therefore, it can be said that a worldview serves to drive the fundamental story of a person's life. Although most people do not stop to assess the worldview to which they hold, the answers to these questions inevitably reveal the answer.

A biblical worldview answers these questions rather simply, although the process of getting to them for the individual person is usually never easy (Smith, 2015). The first two questions are answered in Genesis 1 where humanity's identity as being created in the likeness of God is established (Genesis 1:26-27), and humanity finds itself in a world that is created by God (Genesis 1; Romans 1:20). What is wrong with the world is sin (Romans 3:23) and the remedy is found by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6). Through the lens of a biblical worldview an individual's story, and as an extension, his leadership, is defined by the greater story of who God is and his plan to redeem humanity. Unfortunately, as seen from grim statistics on the biblical worldview of generations: Boomers - 10%, Gen X - 7%, Millennials – 6%, Gen Z – 4% (Barna, 2018), most people do not use this lens to see the world. Research shows that the majority of professing Christians do not know how to let a biblical worldview govern every aspect of life and all too often do not even see the need, reducing their understanding of holding a biblical worldview to being a morally good person (Smith, 2015).

From a theological standpoint, this reality presents a salient concern: As the percentage of people holding a Christian worldview continues to dramatically erode in this post-Christian era, can the Christian church assume that its Gen Z leaders are bringing to leadership a well-developed biblical worldview? Furthermore, since worldview is developed over a lifetime, how is the church working to intentionally guide the ongoing development of its leaders' worldview?

Doing What is Right in His Own Eyes

These are not new problems. Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory was not the first theory to reflect that history repeats itself. King Solomon wisely reminded the world, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" (*NIV,* 2011, Ecclesiastes 1:9). Coming off the success of claiming the Promised Land, the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua was thriving (Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:6-7) but somewhere in the middle of the success the older generation neglected to develop a new generation. Judges 2 gives a dismal verdict on the situation: "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, and another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel" (*NIV,* 2011, Judges 2:10). The younger generation was captured by the culture and was both manipulated and completely devoted to the business of it (Church, 1960). They were still Israelites, they were still considered God's chosen people, but the erosion of their biblical worldview deteriorated to the point that ". . . everyone did what was right in his own eyes" *(ESV,* 2001, Judges 17:6; 21:25). The entire book of Judges settles into a predictable pattern. The people would turn away from God, God would punish them for disobedience, the people would cry out to God when things got really bad, God would send them a judge, there would be peace, the judge died, the people would do what was right in their own eyes – wash, rinse, repeat.

The problem was their eyes. Scholars agree that the assumptions and perspectives that people make about the world are based on what is seen – (Ryken, 2013; Naugle, 2002; Smith, 2015). This idea is consistent with Scripture. In Luke's gospel, Jesus rebukes a "wicked generation" (Luke 11:29) for demanding miraculous signs as a prerequisite for belief. He goes on to instruct that "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness" (*New International Version*, 1984, Luke 11:34). The Bible is the revelation of himself and the framework for his way of seeing things (Smith, 2015).

Unfortunately, many proclaiming Christians do not take the time to notice or cultivate their worldview. As Smith (2015) notes, "Worldviews are everywhere" (p. 147) and in the post-Christian, technological world that Gen Z has been raised in they are exposed to competing worldviews in nineteen-second increments (Yeykelis et al., 2014). Many assume that because they were raised in a Christian home, practice basic morality, and hold general conservative ideas they possess a biblical worldview or possess the label "Christian leader" and, thereby, possess a biblical worldview (Smith, 2015). If an individual is going to commit to seeing things God's way, the Bible and the belief in its truth and inerrancy must become the way of seeing, the dominant influence in defining who one is, how one sees, and what one thinks about all that matters (Smith, 2015). The intersection where worldview development and this research problem meets is the realization that here exists a generation that one researcher posits, "lives immersed in a web of divergent ideas and morality without the necessary time and maturity to reflect about them and respond appropriately" (Esqueda, 2018, p. 2). Ongoing leadership development for Gen Z ministry leaders must incorporate into its model the tools and time to continue developing a biblical worldview.

Renewing the Mind

The biblical worldview is a call to something different and set apart (Deuteronomy 14:2; I Peter 2:9; Psalm 4:3; 2 Corinthians 6:17). It is a leaving behind of the world's viewpoint (I John 4:5) for the adoption of a different one. Paul urges the believer to leave behind the world's perspective in his letter to the Roman church, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (*NIV*, 2011, Romans 12:2). There lies within this verse two fundamental truths that must be recognized to engage in this type of worldview transformation.

Forming New Patterns. First, the pattern of the world must be seen (Smith, 2015). The debilitating cycle of the Israelites in the book of Judges is not isolated to those ancient generations. To be transformed, it must be recognized that the pattern of the world, its way of seeing, is dysfunctional and the cycle needs to be broken. Second, conformity is the enemy of renewal (Church, 1960). Conformity and different are mutually exclusive, our minds cannot be on earthly things while at the same time claiming citizenship in another world (Colossians 3:2; Philippians 3:19-20), therefore, a call to something different must ignore and override the pull towards conformity. This requires a transformation of thought that can only come through the transforming power and ongoing work of the gospel that thoroughly equips and renews (2 Timothy 3:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This transformation of thought is not just incumbent on adding more information *to* the mind, it is about adopting a new way of seeing that shifts the paradigm from head knowledge to heart transformation (Smith, 2009). As Smith (2015) notes, "The transformation and renewal Paul is calling for is a long-term process of learning to think and live biblically, not an instantaneous decision but the beginning of a process" (p. 149).

This idea provides the church with a compelling argument for the need to invest in the ongoing development of its leaders. A Christian leader, one who is identified as being a spiritual leader, cannot be so without leading with a biblical worldview.

Biblical Foundations of Leadership

A biblical worldview is a critical component of biblical leadership, however, when seeking to further develop Christian leaders it is important to have an overall understanding of how biblical, or "spiritual" leadership stands in stark contrast to secular leadership. Over the decades there have come to be as many definitions for leadership as there are people trying to define it (Howell, Jr., 2003; Northouse, 2015; Ledbetter et al., 2016). With each new generation, there seems to be a new and cutting-edge definition or method. As these contribute to the body of literature, the rhetoric continues to evolve and change (Northouse, 2015). While it is true that there are many similarities in the methods of secular and spiritual leaders it remains true that to be considered a spiritual leader there must be dimensions of spiritual leadership that are markedly different (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011), therefore, the adjective "spiritual" is not just a descriptive add-on that automatically comes with taking on a leadership role in the church (Doohan, 2007).

As the Christian community begins to embrace the biblical mandate to prepare and develop a new generation of Christian ministry leaders using the lens of a biblical worldview, we must be careful not to define leadership in terms of what the world sees but through the lens of Scripture. The Bible provides unwavering and unchanging definitions of what spiritual leadership is, what it does, how a spiritual leader is prepared, and how a spiritual leader is developed.

Defining Spiritual Leadership

As with the word "leadership" - the semantics of the definition of spiritual leadership may change depending on the author of the definition (Northouse, 2015). Howell, Jr. (2003) posits, "Biblical leadership is taking the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom in the world" (p. 3). Piper (2011) opines that a spiritual leader must understand where God wants people to be and then act intentionally using biblical methods to move them there. Sanders (2007) believes spiritual leadership to be about influence. Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) define it as "moving people on to God's agenda" (p. 36). Regardless of the semantics of the definition, any conversation on spiritual leadership includes a discussion on godly character, calling, motives, and competencies (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011; Sanders, 2007; Howell, Jr., 2003; Piper, 2011). When words are stripped away, however, the meaning remains fundamentally the same. When the variety of definitions is reduced to fundamental meaning, out of them emerges the same purpose which is what ultimately separates it from secular leadership. Spiritual leadership is defined by God's agenda, and that is to advance his kingdom (Howell, Jr., 2003; Piper, 2011; Sanders, 2007; Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011).

The Mission of Spiritual Leadership. Advancing the kingdom of God was Jesus' mission on earth (Matthew 4:17). He intentionally and carefully trained his disciples to carry on this purpose in his absence. As Jesus transferred the authority of leadership over to his disciples, he gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16) so the doors could be flung open to the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), and the Gentiles (Acts 10). Spiritual leadership is designed to guide people to the threshold of God's kingdom, therefore, at its basis,

what spiritual leadership is can be defined by what it does: it leads people to Jesus (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011; Sanders 2007).

Who is a Spiritual Leader?

Sanders (2007) proposes that spiritual leadership is impossible without Spirit-filled people, and this spirit-filled status is marked by a renewing of the mind and a biblical worldview that rises from that transformation. A transformation results in a dramatic change from one form to another, therefore, the spiritual leader is first and foremost different than a secular one. This reality is built on the biblical theme woven throughout biblical history that God has called his people to be different than the world. This proposition comes with a wealth of biblical proof to support it. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, gives four compelling reasons why believers, and thereby, spiritual leaders must be different (Brown, 2016).

The Different Leader. First, in Ephesian 4:17, Paul reminds the people that they must be different because God commands it. The instructions that Paul is giving are not based on his own ideological reasoning, but on the commands of God. Second, believers are different based on the reality that unbelievers are "separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts" (*NIV*, 1984, Ephesians 4:18). Christians are different because they are no longer separated from God as the world is, which leads to the third reason for the difference. The Christian knows Christ (Ephesians 4:20). They have learned from him and been changed by him. Boice (1988) expands on this thought and explains that Christians are different because "The world is ignorant of God, but Christians have come to know him. The secular mind is hostile to Christ's teaching, but the believer joyfully enrolls in and continually makes progress in Christ's school" (p. 161). Finally, Paul reminds believers, and therefore spiritual leaders, that they must be different because they are made new through transformation:

> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to but on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (*NIV*, 1984, Ephesians 4:22-24)

All too often in our world, and in our churches, a spiritual leader is simply determined to be the one who fills the leadership role. A church leader, however, does not always preclude someone to be a spiritual leader (Blackaby, 2014). A church leader may hold the title, but lack the differences required for recognition as a spiritual leader. People cannot be appointed to or hired into spiritual leadership. As Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) state, "Spiritual leadership flows out of a person's vibrant, intimate relationship with God. You cannot be a spiritual leader if you are not encountering God in profound, life-changing ways" (p. 16). It is this reality that provides support to the argument that spiritual leadership requires a different type of preparation and ongoing development than a secular leader.

The Call to Be Something - How a Spiritual Leader is Prepared

Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) state, "Secular leadership is something to which people can aspire. It can be achieved through sheer force of will" (p. 74). A young student spends four years at a university getting prepared, then heads out into the workplace to work his way up the career ladder until he earns himself the corner office. Christian leaders tend to take the same approach, they feel the "call," head to a seminary or Bible college, complete four years of university learning, and then set out for the local church armed with the verifying documents necessary for the corner office. The question becomes, is a diploma from a Christian school a sufficient standard for spiritual leadership preparation? Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) go on to say that in contrast to secular leadership, "Spiritual leadership. . . .is not a position for which one applies. Rather, it is assigned" (p. 74). This would imply that preparation for spiritual leadership must look different than preparation for secular leadership.

Although even for the spiritual leader some preparation takes place within the confines of a classroom in an institution of higher education, this is merely one aspect of the curriculum that God designs when he prepares a leader. The Bible provides substantial evidence of the long slow process of leader preparation that focuses on character and personal development before a person is ready to lead others (Boa, 2005). Moses serves as just one example of the long slow process of leadership preparation, and his example offers some insight into understanding how God prepares leaders.

It has been said that "Moses was a 'somebody' for forty years, and then a 'nobody' for forty years, and then learned what God could do with a nobody for forty years" (Scott, 2019, p. 1). Having been born a Hebrew, Moses found himself being raised by the daughter of a Pharoah and educated in the finest schools Egypt could provide. For forty years he was prepped for leadership in Pharoah's court (Exodus 2:1-10). Around the age of forty, "he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor" (*NIV*, 1984, Exodus 2:11). Seeing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he was overcome with the injustice of it all and taking up the cause of his people he impulsively killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand (Exodus 2:12). The next day he confronts two Hebrews who are fighting each other, and they express disdain for Moses' self-appointed leadership knowing of the previous day's murder. In fear of being discovered, Moses flees to Midian where he remains in exile for the next forty years (Exodus 2:13-15).

It was the obscurity of his "nobody" status in a Midian desert that became the classroom for God's version of leadership preparation. It was going to take some time, it had some different purposes, therefore, it was going to look different. One commentator relates it was ordered by God ". . .for wise and holy ends. Things were not yet ripe for Israel's deliverance. Moses is to be further fitted for the service, and therefore is directed to withdraw for the present" (Church,

1960, p. 74). It took forty years for Moses' preparation, and the process was long and slow, but there is no way to circumvent the process it takes to develop a man who possesses the depth of character required for spiritual leadership (Boa, 2005; Scott, 2019; Moore, 2015). In the wilderness, God added to and discarded parts of Moses' worldview. God transformed Moses' thinking so that God could reshape his future. The years of lonely preparation taught him to depend on God and tend the sheep, two skills that were critical to the final forty years of his life as a leader. God prepared the person and God prepared the person for the task (Moore, 2015).

Moses is a powerful example of the personal and spiritual preparation required for spiritual leadership, but he is only one of many. Joseph was seventeen when he received his commission to lead (Genesis 37). It took thirteen years in slavery and prison to prepare him to be the "discerning and wise man" (*NIV,* 1984, Genesis 41:33) that could lead Egypt through seven years of abundance and seven years of famine. David was anointed as the second king of Israel while in the middle of his teenage years. For the next fourteen years, he was set aside as God cultivated his shepherding skills (I Samuel 16-31; 2 Samuel 1-2). In the New Testament, following his dramatic conversion, Paul was sent to Tarsus where he lived in the obscurity that preparation often requires before he emerged as a leader to both the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 9).

Although God often calls an individual into leadership at an early age, he does not immediately promote the individual into the leadership position, these examples demonstrate there is often a rather long delay between the appointing and the fruition. The call to be something is a long process and "the personal preparation for leadership can be as important as leadership itself" (Moore, 2015, p. 4). Preparation is difficult, slow, and often overlooked by the spiritual leader, but to try and circumvent the process results in a malformed leader. In God's

wisdom and mercy, while he hones practical skills, he takes the time to deal with character flaws that, if left untouched, will negatively impact the ability to lead.

Biblical Foundations of Leadership Development

There is no escaping the fact that a spiritual leader is prepared differently and, therefore, developed differently than a secular leader. Many of the same methods can be employed, and the Christian community is quick to adopt the secular world's methods, but too often the church forgets that millennia before leadership development models were formed, God's Word provided the best model, the best teacher, and the best setting.

The Perfect Model

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he chose a ragtag group of twelve men, each with a unique conglomeration of strengths and weaknesses, to lead and train. The gospels document how Jesus masterfully moved them through a continuum of development and provides the church with a model of what leadership development should look like.

In the initial stages of the disciples' development, Jesus began with the end goal in mind of training up disciples who would ". . . go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (*NIV,* 2011, Matthew 28:19-20). He also developed them by directly instructing the new band of disciples. They were chosen and then enrolled in an institution of "higher learning." Matthew documents in his gospel, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where he teaches, commands, and instructs on a wide range of topics (Matthew 5-7). As leaders are developed "opportunities must be provided for them to grow in their knowledge" (Thoman, 2011, p. 28), so as the disciples progressed in their learning, these teachings culminate in a ministry internship where Jesus sends the twelve out to the people of Israel to proclaim a specific

message (Matthew 10:1-20). This segment of their leadership development was designed to apply what they had learned by giving them practical experience.

Once the disciples had gained some real-world experience, Jesus adapted to their developmental stage and his direct instruction took on another dimension that included coaching. This is illustrated as he taught in parables and the disciples, becoming confused, "came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field'" (*NIV,* 2011, Matthew 13:36). Jesus employed the use of two-way communication for back-and-forth exchanges to coach them and nurture the leader/follower relationship. His coaching also frequently utilized questions to provoke deeper thought and engagement in their learning. These questions were a powerful leadership development tool (Baumgartner, 2017). Finally, at the end of Jesus' three-year ministry, when the disciples had reached a level of preparation and leadership development that he felt was ready for independent ministry, he gave his final instructions and delegated the disciples to the task of carrying on the ministry of being his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*NIV,* 2011, Acts 1:8). He tasked his spiritual leaders with a purpose that separates them from secular leaders - to build the kingdom of God.

It should be noticed at this point, however, that independent ministry did not mean their leadership development was complete. Jesus, as he nears the end of his time spent developing the disciples, knows that while they are now taking on practical roles as leaders, they are not fully developed and assures them that although he will be physically gone there will be another who will come to continue what he had begun. He says, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (*ESV,* 2001, John 16:12-13).

The Perfect Teacher

There is a requirement for a spiritual leader that is not present in the development of a secular leader and that is the continuing work of the Holy Spirit (Sanders, 2007; Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011). Paul tells the Corinthians that, "we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (*ESV,* 2001, I Corinthians 2:12-13). The primary and perfect developer of today's spiritual leader is the Holy Spirit.

His role in developing the spiritual leader comes in many forms. As he dwells in the saved leader (I Corinthians 6:19), he continues to teach while also bringing to remembrance everything that has already been learned so it can be applied in needed situations (John 14:26). He infuses one's leadership with the power to complete the mission (Acts 1:8). He develops strengths (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12), he fortifies weaknesses (Romans 8:26), he continues to cultivate the leader's character (Galatians 5:22-23), and he transforms and renews the mind so it is no longer conformed to the pattern of the world and discerns God's will (2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:2). All of this develops a spiritual leader in such a way that he is recognizably different than the secular leader. As Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) note, "When leaders neglect the Holy Spirit's role in their lives, they never reach their full potential as spiritual leaders" (p. 73).

The Perfect Setting

Along with Jesus' model of leadership development and the Holy Spirit's role as the perfect teacher in bringing to the leader wisdom and understanding of God's Word, those committed to being formed into spiritual leaders have also been given the perfect setting.

Leadership preparation often may happen in times of isolation or obscurity as seen specifically in the example of Moses, but ongoing leadership development cannot happen outside the context of community. Michael Zigarelli (2019) in addressing challenges of Christian leadership posits, "Reading is not enough. Hearing is not enough. Knowing is not enough. Trying hard is not enough. And making sincere vows to do better next time is not enough. What's required is something more, something deeper, something relational" (Zigarelli, 2019, p. 2). The most effective leadership development program happens in learning groups and the perfect setting for this is found within the body of Christ (Baumgartner, 2017; Pettit, 2008; Lowe and Lowe, 2018; Samra, 2006; Chester and Timmis, 2008).

A Thriving Environment. The early church provides us with an illustration of how this happens. Acts 2:42-47 paints a picture of a thriving and rich environment for learning as, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (*NIV,* 1984, Acts 2:42). They shared everything from goods and services to knowledge and information, and as a result, "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (*NIV,* 1984, Acts. 2:47). Out of that rich environment grew mentoring relationships.

Every leader needs a mentor, regardless of their stage of personal development (Howe 2010; Setran and Kiesling, 2013; White 2017; Howell, Jr., 2003). One of the first examples of this leadership development strategy in the New Testament church was the interaction between Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos. Apollos was "a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures" (*NIV,* 1984, Acts 18:24) who had an extraordinary gift of passionate and bold oration, but his knowledge was incomplete regarding the gospel. Priscilla and Aquila recognized his need for further development, and they invited him to their home and mentored him so he

could use his gift more effectively for the kingdom of God (Acts 18:26). Barnabas, another key player in the formation of the early church, was one of the leading mentors of the time (Howell, Jr., 2003). Recognizing the church needed more leaders to meet the discipleship challenges of a growing number of believers, Barnabas went to Tarsus to bring Paul out of the obscurity of his leadership preparation (Acts 9:27; Galatians 1:22-24) and incorporated him into the leadership team of those in Antioch under his personal guidance (Acts 11:25-26; Acts 13:1).

Paul grew into a powerful leader of the early church as he planted churches and spread the gospel, but through Barnabas' mentorship, he came to understand that leadership has to be passed on to the next generation through modeling and mentoring (Boa, 2005). One of his most valuable contributions to the church was his own role as a mentor which has added to the body of knowledge on practical leadership development (Kostenberger, 2018). Boa (2005) notes in his summary of biblical leadership development that, "Leadership is not merely grasping of concepts. Neither is it just a matter of developing skills to their full potential. For leadership to be passed on, it must be modeled" (p. 4). The Bible clearly demonstrates that mentors are critical in this process.

This modeling and passing on takes time, it takes a lifetime to develop a spiritual leader (Philippians 1:6). It is a different process than the secular leader that requires the realization that wisdom and leadership skill is not guaranteed by age (Mathis, 2014). It is guaranteed by a commitment to lifelong learning through the power and tutelage of God's Word, the Holy Spirit, and a community of other Christian leaders who invest in the development of future leaders (Chester & Timmis, 2008). The remarkable benefit is that "Those willing to submit themselves to the Lord's leadership development process have the opportunity to accomplish God's purpose in their generation" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 83).

Spiritual Leadership and the preparation and development that must come with it look different when surveyed against the model of the world's leadership. This must be at the forefront of thinking as the Christian community is faced with preparing and developing the significantly different Generation Z for spiritual leadership. The biblical model of leadership preparation and development does not change, and it remains relevant to all generations, however, the "very nature of any training assumes intentionality, a training plan, and action steps" (Thoman, 2009, p. 289). At this point, the older generation of leaders must evaluate if there is intentionality, if there is a plan, and if there is adequate meeting and adapting to the challenges of developing a different and post-Christian generation.

The Generational Mandate

It has been said that "If we don't teach our children to follow Christ, the world will teach them not to" (Fritz, 2020, as cited para. 1). The Bible definitively and inescapably speaks to the role of older generations passing on a biblical worldview and the torch of leadership to the younger generations throughout Scripture but most prominently in Psalm 78:2-7. Encompassed in that mandate are reasons for doing so: It is a gift to be shared, it is love expressed to the receiver, and because of ". . . the inseparability of past, present, and future. History takes all people forward in its movement" (van der Walt, 2017, p. 3).

This new generation is beginning to lead, and they will move people forward. The direction forward will largely be determined by the level of intentionality and quality with which a model of ongoing leadership development is developed. To address this issue a look at the theoretical framework of leadership development was warranted.

Theoretical Framework

Generation Z is believed to be a generation that has characteristics that have not been seen before in previous generations that will have a significant impact on the direction of the church (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Strauss and Howe (1991) also note that although it is history that shapes and defines a generation, it is an inescapable reality that generations will also shape history. They note that,

> Because the peer personality of each generational type shows new manifestations in each phase of life, and because it is determined by the constellation into which it is born (a pattern that is forever shifting), the ongoing interplay of peer personalities gives history a dynamic quality. How children are raised, affects how they later parent. How students are taught, affects how they later teach. How youths come of age, shapes their later experiences of leadership—which, in turn, substantially defined the coming-of-age experiences of others. (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 33)

Pertinent to this study was exploring that connection as Christian ministries begin to hire Gen Z leaders. How has history shaped this generation in such a way that it is historical? In the effort to answer these questions it is critical to gain an understanding of relevant theoretical frameworks that relate to generations and leadership development. To that end, a survey of Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory and Hrivnak, Jr., et al's (2009) framework for leadership development was explored as they both served to provide the theoretical foundations for this study.

Defining a Generation

Important to any study that seeks to address a particular generation is the definition of the word itself. In 1952, Karl Mannheim's essay on generational theory hit the presses in its English form and made a profound impact on how populations of people are viewed. According to Mannheim (1952) generations are defined by a key historical event that affects a particular age group in their formative years. Responses to that critical event give rise to general characteristics that define this specific cohort of individuals and separates them from previous cohorts.

Generational Theory

Since his seminal work on defining generations there have been many additional attempts to further clarify and categorize generations. While Mannheim (1952) defined a generation by the sharing of a key historical event, others have broadened out that definition and generalized it as a group of people identified by a span of time or centered around a phase of life, and these phases of life are generally around 15-20 years (Strauss & Howe, 1991; McIntosh, 2002; Dimock, 2019). During these developmental cycles, the members of this group are affected by similar experiences and events that shape them into a group that shares similar characteristics (Strauss and Howe, 1991; McIntosh, 2002; Carroll & Roof, 2002; Dimock, 2019). This does not mean, however, every individual within the defined generation exhibits every generational characteristic. What generational theory offers is a constantly changing socio-cultural theoretical framework that seeks to define characteristics of a *group* that may not always be represented in an individual of that group (Pendergast, 2010; Li et al., 2013).

Mannheim's (1952) revolutionary way of defining social groups has been used to help understand historical and cultural contexts. Strauss and Howe (1997) also offer a generational theory specific to the historical context of the United States that provides a critical theoretical framework for this study as it provides support to the belief that Generation Z is poised to impact the national and institutional future of the nation in profoundly different ways than preceding generations because of its post-Christian and technological shaping.

Overview of Strauss and Howe's (1991) Generational Theory

Strauss and Howe (1997) assert that "America feels like it is unraveling" (p. 2). This is a sentiment that is increasingly shared by many. There is an idea gaining traction that the world is at a pivotal time in its history. To this point, six eras have been documented in world history.

Each era has lasted several centuries, and each ended in a crisis that became unsustainable and unsolvable without the introduction of a new way of thinking (Anthony & Benson, 2011). White (2017) in his book *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* joins a rising chorus of those who believe Generation Z is a hinge-point generation ushering in a seventh era of history for the world and the nation.

This thought is an expansion of Strauss and Howe's generational theory which is grounded in American history rather than world history but also places this time and generation in a critical position known as a "turning" (Strauss & Howe, 1997). As previously described, the generational theory lies in the idea that American history cycles through four stages of seasons that represent roughly 80-90 years. Each 80-90-year span represents a "Saeculum," and each 20–22-year cycle is called a "turning" and represents one generational cohort. The four turnings can be viewed as symbolizing the seasons of winter, spring, summer, and fall. The 80–90-year cycle can also be represented as a lifespan illustrating youth, rising adulthood, midlife, and old age (Strauss & Howe, 1997) and is further expounded upon here.

The First Turning

The first turning, known as The High, follows a crisis, typically a war, that marks the end of a previous Saeculum. With the dark winter days of war in the rearview mirror, this turning represents a cleaning up of the earlier crisis and ushers in a spring of new beginnings, and with them, the hope of sunnier days ahead. It is a time of new optimism born out of victory that motivates the energy to reconstruct a new social order (Strauss & Howe, 1997). This season is recognized by solid institutions and marked by a strong sense of community where individualism is not championed. According to Strauss and Howe (1997), this turning is characterized by

golden ages where new institutions are founded, and children are often over-indulged by parents who remember all too well the scarcity of previous days.

Unfortunately, in any season a timeless truth remains – "All that glitters is not gold." Lurking under the optimism and prosperity of this turning is "the suppression of bad news: Beneath the outward contentment, people ignore what are later deemed to be flagrant injustices" (Strauss & Howe, 1997, p. 151). Not everyone prospers during a golden age and emerging discontentment gives birth to a new season.

The Second Turning

The second turning, known as the Awakening, finds the sunny productive days of spring subtlety turning into the dog days of summer and no one seems to notice (Strauss & Howe, 1997). By this time memories of the crisis that ushered in the prosperous days of spring have long since faded from memory and the generation that established the new era is viewed as old and outdated. This period is recognized by a growing sense of fear and frustration. The economically prosperous days of the previous season lull people into an apathetic state, as on one end of the spectrum, is the belief that abundance is a greedy and corruptive force. On the other end of the spectrum is a growing feeling that prosperity is an entitlement. This sense of entitlement leads to an increase in individualism and spiritual autonomy that begins the slow erosion of community. It is a period that is marked by cultural unrest and spiritual awareness that becomes polarized by warring extremes: the success of the previous generation and the rising voice of a new and different generation (Strauss & Howe, 1997). As the polarization gains steam, social institutions increasingly come under attack, public progress is impeded, and generational strain reaches a pitch that gives way to the next season.

The Third Turning

According to Strauss and Howe (1997), the third turning, known as the Unraveling, finds the dry days of summer turning into the slow death of fall. This season is ushered in by a realization that it is possible to thrive as an individual while simultaneously distrusting government institutions. Public trust has bottomed out, but self-esteem is flourishing. The focus of the society has made a 180 degree turn from being externally focused to being internally focused. The individual reigns supreme, leading to an era of relativism and culture wars. Civic life becomes fractured and purposeless, and people begin to search for direction in small subcultures. Words like "postmodern" and post-Christian" start to invade the collective vocabulary as this season is characterized by moral and spiritual decline.

The overall outlook of the society is gloomy believing that the "good old days" are gone and will never return. Those who were around for prosperous days of the High are increasingly alarmed by the gloom of the Unraveling. Strauss and Howe (1997) describe, "The Unraveling mood shift is a natural consequence of the life-cycle transitions taking place among today's generations" (p. 208). Younger generations during this season are rather oblivious. With no clearly defined crisis in the crosshairs, this season of generational turnings allows for people to live off the prosperity of the past and pursue individual goals for the future (Strauss & Howe, 1997). Like any fall, however, the abundance of the harvest is mingled with the entrance of the cold chill of winter that brings with it a new crisis.

The Fourth Turning

The fourth turning, known as the Crisis, is characterized by an era of continued social destruction where institutions in their current form are destroyed, and a demand for the construction of a new social and political order is on the rise (Strauss & Howe, 1991; 1997).

During this time people allow governments to lead with more authoritarian rule and society makes decisions that are rooted more out of survival than out of fairness. This winter season of a society shakes it to its very core with the force of a devastating earthquake and what remains in the aftermath must be completely rebuilt. There are paradigm shifts, overhauls, transformations, and fresh starts. Strauss and Howe (1997) conclude by recognizing that this climax of the four turnings "can end in triumph, or tragedy, or some combination of both. Whatever the event and whatever the outcome a society passes through a great gate of history, fundamentally altering the course of civilization" (p. 259).

Generation Z and Generational Theory

Within Strauss and Howe's (1997) theory, American history is believed to consist of three cycles of turning, or Saeculum's, that have been precipitated by specific crises. The Revolutionary War represents the initial event that sparked the first cycle. The Civil War initiated the second cycle which rose into the crescendo of the third crisis that was historically marked by two world wars. The end of World War II in 1945 gave birth to the current Saeculum. It is here where an understanding of the current generations becomes necessary in the context of Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory as the current generations provide the framework of understanding for where Generation Z lies in this model. The authors of this theoretical model were of the belief that the generation that was born during the formation of their theory would usher in the 4th turning. This generation is Generation Z.

The belief that America is indeed coming apart at the seems has been embraced from many sides (Strauss & Howe, 1997; Brown, 2020; Gen Z Conservative, 2021; Greenwald, 2020). The Millennial generation, the generation that has come of age during America's third turning, is currently leading the ship to the climax of the unraveling, and there is an impending sense that

there is nowhere else to go but into a crisis (Strauss & Howe, 1997). As a fruition of Strauss and Howe's (1997) earlier prediction, the crisis that America is now faced with is believed to be both shaping Generation Z and presenting the opportunity for this generation to be the hinge point of a new era (White, 2017; Strauss & Howe, 1997). As technology changes the speed of life, and the cancel culture is redefining the moral fabric of American society there is some thought that the crisis that faces Generation Z may be so revolutionary that it may mark the end of how generations have been previously defined (Sparks & Honey, 2015; Swanzen, 2018; Strauss & Howe, 1997). For many, this theory paints a rather dire and dismal state of affairs, but Strauss & Howe (1997) also propose that it also presents a moment of opportunity. They optimistically note, "While a crisis mood renders societies newly desperate, it also renders them newly capable" (Strauss & Howe, 1997, p. 313). This study addressed what the church is doing with this opportunity as it is faced with the development of a new generation of Christian leaders.

Preparing for the Fourth Turning

Within the theoretical framework of this generational theory, Strauss and Howe (1997) recognize that as the nation is faced with an inevitable and potential devastating crisis, the approach with which one takes to face the challenge of survival in the dark days of winter is rather straightforward. They note it boils down to preparation.

The authors of this generational theory compare the climax of a crisis to be "human history's equivalent to nature's raging typhoon" (p. 259), and like preparation for a natural disaster, there are ways to button down the hatches for a societal one. Strauss and Howe (1997) present a series of ways a society can prepare for a coming crisis. Among them were two salient points for this study. First, they recommend preparing the younger generations by placing them at the top of the priority list without overindulging them. Second, prepare the predominant

institutions of society. Get rid of the things that are not working and maximize the things that are working (Strauss & Howe, 1997). This is particularly relevant for the church as it begins to onboard new Gen Z leaders. In light of a different generation that is bringing with it the potential of ushering in an era of change that may have eternal ramifications, it is incumbent on the older leading generations of the church to take seriously, and with great intentionality, the leadership development of this new and different generation of leaders (Thoman, 2009; 2011; Esqueda, 2018).

Defining Leadership Development

To define leadership development, it is first necessary to draw a distinction between what is training and what is development. Training is considered to be an activity or a group of activities that are designed and targeted at enhancing or remediating a specific skill or performance (Day, 2000; Yukl, 2006; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). Leaders typically enter a leadership role with some training that was provided by a college degree, internship, or another preparatory program. It is usually temporary and focused on a present need or reality (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009).

Development, on the other hand, is ongoing systematic preparation for improving the quality of leadership that will ultimately impact future roles, assignments, or attainment of goals. (Bartz et al., 1989; Popper & Lipshitz, 1993). Development utilizes learning strategies such as mentoring, coaching, assignments, and projects to nurture targeted growth in a leader. Where training often (but not always) happens outside the organization, development happens primarily within the context of the leader's organizational environment (Bartz et al., 1989; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). It is important to note that training, because it is temporary and focused on the present, can be an aspect of ongoing development.

Leader Development vs. Leadership Development

When engaging in a discussion on leadership development it is also necessary to differentiate leadership development from leader development. Often the terms leader development and leadership development are used interchangeably and while they do not have to coexist in an effective leadership development program, it is important to note their differences (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2010; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009).

Leader development is targeted at an individual leader as an investment into human capital (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2010; Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009). Leadership development affects the community and, therefore, is an investment into social capital (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2009; Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009). It involves a broader spectrum of development that is designed to cultivate the building and use of cross-relational competence that results in the expansion of the collective capacity of the stakeholders in an organization (Hrvinak, Jr et al., 2009). With these differentiations, a theoretical framework of leadership development can be addressed.

Leadership Development Theory

The field of leadership has reaped an abundant harvest of leadership theories, but there is a general consensus that, although there is some theoretical variety when it comes to leadership, there is no comprehensive theory for leadership development (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009; Daniels et al., 2019; Day, 2000; Day & Halpin, 2004; Yukl, 2006). Furthermore, theoretical leadership development models that *are* proposed, depend heavily on existing leadership theory for content when structuring a model for development rather than presenting a new theory specific to the discipline (Day, 2000; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009; Popper & Lipshitz, 1993; Daniels et al., 2019).

Leadership Theories

Leadership theories such as the Contingency Theory (Fiedler & Mahar, 1979) and the Transformation Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978) offer critical links between the roles of leader and follower that lend themselves well to concepts that could be included in theoretical leadership development models (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). Situational Leadership Theory developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) is another leadership theory that is utilized as a framework for leadership development. This model uses defined task behaviors or relationship behaviors based on the maturity of the follower that is being developed (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). It is a versatile theory that emphasizes development and allows for a broad base of applications in a variety of organizational settings (Northouse, 2016; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). For the church, it is a model well-suited for discipleship as Jesus offers a powerful example of this leadership theory in practice (Bredfeldt & Davis, 2018; Boa, 2020; Dobbs, 2000; Kelleher, 2020). This makes it a viable leadership theory to be incorporated into a theoretical framework for leadership development in the church setting.

Utilizing leadership theory as the sole means of designing a theoretical framework for leadership development has its limitations and, overall, there remains a paucity of scholarly literature that addresses theoretical models of leadership development. The leading reason for this is there is still a broad gap between theory and practice when addressing the *process* by which leadership as a *practice* is developed (Day, 2000, Yukl 2006; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). Additionally, since leadership development is largely based on the unique needs of an organization and the leaders that make up that organization, it can be difficult to develop broader theoretical frameworks given their contextual specificity (Hrivnak, Jr., et al., 2009; Daniels et al., 2019).

Framework for Leadership Development

Hrivnak, Jr. et al. (2009), however, offer a compelling framework for leadership development that allows for the inserting of instructional methodologies that meet the goals and needs of an organization. It is this framework that will be utilized to establish a basic understanding of the essential elements that need to be addressed in any leadership development program.

Hrivnak, Jr. et al (2009) posit that the critical aspects for a model consist of the questions of who, what, where, when, how, and why. Each basic element addresses a more complex conglomeration of variables that will be briefly addressed.

Who? When determining who needs to be a part of a leadership development program it must be remembered that the focus of leadership development is not just on an individual, but on the larger context in which that individual interacts as previously discussed. In the church environment, this would mean that not just one leader would be involved, but the entire leadership staff. Successful leadership development also requires a leader who is ready to learn (Hrivnak, Jr. et al, 2009).

What? According to Hrivnak, Jr. et al. (2009), leaders who are ready to learn require a focus that is devoted to developing aspects of leadership that are teachable. These can include areas such as critical thinking, decision making, conflict management, personal growth, and communication. Other aspects of leadership such as empathy (Boyatzis, 2007; Lord & Hall 2004; Riggio & Lee, 2007, Hrivnak, Jr. et al, 2009) and culture and diversity (Livermore, 2016; Lingenfelter, 2008; House et al., 2004; Chester & Timmis, 2008) are relevant aspects to be included. According to Hrivnak, Jr. et al. (2009), whatever is included should be driven by context and organizational goals.

Why? Leadership development seeks to not only develop the leader through personal growth but to improve organizational leadership capacity that is striving to improve in the participating leaders what is required to meet the specific mission and goals of the organization. Its purpose is to nurture inexperienced leadership, grow immature leadership, and continually strengthen seasoned leadership (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009).

How? The how of the theoretical framework addresses the methods utilized in the development program (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). A key aspect of this is taking into account the learning styles of adult learners as effective learning happens more readily in an environment where leaders are engaged in their own preferred learning style (Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009). Classroom learning is still an effective means of further development and is often included as a source of training. This more formal learning helps fill in the gaps for developing leaders who need more training in biblical foundations, spiritual growth, and relational skills (Moss, 2014). The best systemic learning, however, happens with on-site experience that is integrated into the normal, everyday functioning of the organization (Dalakoura, 2009; Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009; Day, 2000). This organic experience allows for more effective modeling and practicing of role-related competencies. It also enables the use of immediate and ongoing feedback as a learning tool (Yukl, 2006). Feedback is a tool that is frequently incorporated into coaching and mentoring (Day & Allen, 2004).

Although coaching and mentoring often overlap in methodology, they remain different in purpose. Coaching is more temporary and limited to scope and organizational impetus (Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009; Zust, 2017). It is performance-driven and specifically designed to improve on-the-job performance. Coaches are hired for their expertise to work with an individual for a specific time to achieve goals that are measurable (Zust, 2017). Mentoring on the other hand is a

more long-term proposition. It can be a formal or informal relationship that is intended to inspire, develop, and change the mentee, although the impact of the relationship is often reciprocal (Haggard et al., 2011). Mentors may not have the expertise that is specifically associated with a coach; however, mentors are selected for their wealth of experience and higher rank in an organization in relation to the experience of the mentee (Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009; Day and Allen, 2004; Zust, 2017; Forret & de Janasz, 2005; Kirchmeyer, 1995). Hrvinak Jr. et al., (2009) note, ". . . mentors are somewhat of a personification of the organization's commitment to support the individual's leadership development" (p. 469). There have been additional forms of mentoring that have emerged which also may be incorporated into a leadership development model. These may include peer mentoring, reverse mentoring, and group and e-mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

When? Leadership development, as differentiated from training, is an ongoing process that adapts to changes in the learner over time (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). There is little research that indicates if there is a sequence to the framework of development that is more advantageous. It is, however, understood that leadership development is rooted in the understanding that learning is a lifelong process that is future-oriented and has no expiration date (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2019; Mathis, 2014). It is a fluid and dynamic process that seeks to find the right balance and combination of methodologies and must continually adapt to the "shifting priorities, influence, the amount of effort, and sacrifice that an individual is likely to commit toward leadership development" (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009, p. 463).

The world is shifting (McIntosh, 2002). Changing at what seems to be a breakneck speed, it is on the precipice of a new era and preparation is critical (White, 2017; Strauss and Howe, 1997). Church leadership must be ready to meet this challenge of change with a proactive

mindset and new urgency for developing a new generation of leaders (Thoman, 2009; Esqueda, 2018). As the church brings onboard Generation Z, a generation of leaders who have been raised in a post-Christian world that has provided fertile ground for the distortion and impairment of a developing biblical worldview (Barna, 2018, White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019), leadership development must become a priority in the church (Moss, 2014).

A prevalent tendency for any organization, the church included, is to approach leadership development in an unstructured and haphazard way (Conger, 1993). Scripture has provided the Christian community with a biblical mandate and model for developing the next generation of leaders. Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory provides further theoretical foundations for understanding and preparing a new generation. Hrivnak, Jr. et al (2009) propose a theoretical framework for leadership development that provides ministry organizations with a basic structure that is flexible for incorporating biblical methodologies. Both of these theories become a foundational part of this study and its purpose of evaluating the preparedness of a post-Christian generation of leaders as the church structures ongoing leadership development.

Related Literature

The purpose of this portion of the literature review was to present a thorough examination of the relevant literature that informs the primary topics and subtopics that are specific to this research. This segment of the literature review is divided into three parts and is presented as follows: 1) Describing Generation Z, 2) The Church and Ongoing Leadership Development, and 3) Generation Z as Christian Leaders.

Describing Generation Z

In this first section, a critical review of current studies specific to understanding the characteristics of this generation that were relevant to this study was conducted. Because this

generation is still emerging from childhood into adulthood, thorough research is continuing to emerge as well. Only a handful of comprehensive research reports have been conducted so the research landscape continues to remain sparsely populated. This section was divided into four subsections: 1) A Generation at a Glance, 2) A Digital Generation, 3) A Diverse Generation, and 4) A Post-Christian Generation.

A Generation at a Glance

The age span of generations is an arbitrary process. There is no one area of research or corresponding group of researchers who are tasked with determining a consistent year range that defines a particular generation (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Because there is some degree of overlap of characteristics as generations transition from one into the next, it becomes difficult to define where one ends and the next begins. Because of this, there are a variety of age ranges that are presented for each particular generation (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; McIntosh, 2002). This reality results in giving the researcher ample latitude for setting the defining year range of the generation based on characteristics that are being studied (Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

Compiling all the relevant research on Generation Z, the broadest representation of the years used for this generation are anywhere from 1995-2015. Greenberg (2015) in studying workplace characteristics uses the years 1996-2010. The Barna Group (2018) in their comprehensive report on Generation Z established the years as 1999-2015. There are several other combinations, but for the purposes of this study, the years 1995-2010 offered what was seen as the best option (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Sparks & Honey, 2015). Seemiller and Grace (2019) present two primary reasons for this particular year range selection that offered what was seen by this researcher as the best argument for the selected range. First, those born in 1995 were entering kindergarten when 9/11 happened. While this was

a key societal event that largely defined the Millennial generation before them, Generation Z is considered the post 9/11 generation and 1995 places the generation in kindergarten in 2001 which offers a good breaking point for the two generations. The second reason given is that 1995 is a starting year often referenced in market research reports (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Sparks and Honey (2015), who offered the first comprehensive report on the generation also used 1995 as the starting year.

Although the leading edge of a new generation often shares some overlap in the characteristics seen in the previous generation it has been determined that Generation Z is markedly different from the Millennial generation (Barna Group, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). If the generational theory of Strauss and Howe (1997) holds true, Generation Z will usher in a new Saeculum and will be the generation of the First Turning that was described in the theoretical portion of this review. This would imply that Generation Z would bear some similarities in characteristics of other generations that were considered to be representative of a First Turning. The last generation to usher in a First Turning, as described by Strauss and Howe (1997), was the G. I. Generation (1926-1945). Research has indicated that Generation Z does bear some significant similarities to the G. I. Generation (Seemiller & Grace, 2019), as would be expected by Strauss and Howe's generational theory (1997). The primary characteristics of Gen Z that overlap with the G.I. Generation have been listed as "survivors," "conservatives," and "fixers" (Sparks & Honey, 2015, p. 2).

Critical Events that Shaped Gen Z. Fundamental to what defines a generation is the critical shared events that shaped it (Mannheim, 1952). The Center for Generational Kinetics (2020) states that a generational defining moment must accomplish two specific tasks: 1) Take place at the right time of the coming-of-age experience and 2) Create a powerful and

unforgettable emotional impact that is tied to fear or uncertainty in the fallout of the event (p. 5). The global downturn that began in 2007 was one such coming-of-age experience for Generation Z (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Members of this generation were old enough to see the net worth of their parents disappear overnight and it has caused them to place a high priority on financial stability (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; White, 2017; Barna, 2018). According to White (2017), this is also a significant factor in their increasing acceptance of socialism.

Another critical event that has shaped them is the post 9/11 War on Terror (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; White, 2017). Their entire lives have been spent living in the uncertainty and constant threat of war, which has led to placing a high premium on safety and security (Barna, 2018; White, 2017; Sparks & Honey, 2015; Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

Most recently the global pandemic of COVID-19 has radically changed the landscape of this emerging generation (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020). The leading edge of the generation who began kindergarten facing the economic and national uncertainty of a post 9/11 world is now entering the workforce faced with the economic chaos and global uncertainty that has resulted from the global pandemic. It has caused overwhelming educational and career disruption for the oldest members of Gen Z as they are currently graduating from college and entering the workforce. This additional instability for a generation that has already grown up in uncertain times has led to an overwhelming need for stability (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Barna, 2018; The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020).

Priorities that Drive Gen Z. Generation Z's need for security and stability, born out of critical shaping events, has led to its top priority being financial security (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; White, 2017; Barna, 2018). Finishing their education, starting a career, and becoming

financially independent comprise the most essential accomplishments of Gen Zers (Barna, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). The majority also places heavy emphasis on being happy (Barna, 2018). Happiness for them is largely defined by financial security. Getting married and starting a family are seen as secondary priorities (Barna, 2018).

Characteristics that Identify Gen Z. Along with the critical national events that have been part of their formation, there are cultural trends that are also recognized as having played an indelible hand in defining this generation. The generation is viewed as primarily realistic, independent, desires honesty, are digital natives, and are highly inclusive (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Sparks & Honey, 2015; Stevenson, 2019; Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Barna, 2018).

In identifying the unique factors that define this generation, the comprehensive Generation Z report provided by the Barna Group (2018) offered six major trends: Technology, a post-Christian worldview, identity, parents, security, and diversity. It is believed that out of these trends come the general characteristics that define them. White (2017) offers a similar list that overlaps with the Barna Group (2018) report on their deep dependence on technology, their diversity, and their post-Christian status. White (2017) also brings out their sexual fluidity as a trend that has been a significant factor in defining the generation. Notably, Generation Z has recently overtaken the Millennial generation as the largest generation within the nation and around the world (Stevenson, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Their sheer size, along with remarkable differences that have emerged for the first time in the generational landscape has led researchers to believe that Gen Z will impact the course of history in a profound way (White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Barna, 2018).

There is a plethora of differing characteristics that have risen to the surface and remain consistent across studies and research. In this study, however, the focus was limited to three of

the leading major trends that have not been seen in any previous generation of national history, as these are believed to bear the most considerable significance on Generation Z as leaders in the church. These three trends are technology, diversity, and the new post-Christian environment.

A Digital Generation

One of the primary characteristics that differentiate Generation Z as being different from any other generation previously seen in history is its status as the first generation to have never known life without technology. Although the Millennial generation before them was first given the label "digital natives," Gen Z has the highest level of connectivity ever seen in a generation (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Sparks & Honey, 2015; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Barna Group, 2018; Greenberg, 2015). They cannot remember a time when they did not have the internet and have been labeled as the "Internet-in-its-pocket" generation (Knowledge@Wharton, 2015, para. 4). This constant connectivity has happened so rapidly that older generations have a difficult time understanding how dramatic of a defining impact this has had on the emerging generation. The implications relevant to this study are the effects pervasive technology is having on the mental, physical, and interpersonal aspects of the generation.

Mental Effects. This generation had a data footprint that was being formed before they were even born. Their tech-savvy parents posted their sonogram pictures on social media sites prior to their birth (Seemiller & Grace, 2019), and their digital footprint has continued to expand ever since, due to their constant online connectedness. The overwhelming majority go to bed with their devices, wake up with their devices, and spend an average of four full hours of their day online. Another 26 % spend up to eight hours per day connected to the internet with a variety of devices (Barna, 2018; Sparks & Honey, 2015). Although the majority think they spend too much time online, 42 % do not plan on cutting back since they believe that what they do online

all day is important (Sparks & Honey, 2015). This constant access to information has changed the way this cohort thinks (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

It has already been documented that their pervasive digital connectedness has led to a physiological change in their thinking, and this represents a significant change from any previous generation (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Blumberg & Brooks, 2017; Firth et al., 2019; Hoehe & Thibaut, 2020; Small & Vaughn, 2008; Carr, 2010; Firat, 2013). They continue to demonstrate a significantly less linear way of thinking (de Langhe et al., 2017; Castillo, 2014; Carr, 2010 Sparks & Honey, 2015; Barna, 2018; Wallis, 2010). Furthermore, the constant and unending flow of information makes it hard for them to analyze, discriminate, and trust (Esqueda, 2018).

White (2017) notes that there is a growing gap between wisdom and information. Information gathering has historically been for the purpose of learning, however, with this generation, information is so readily available 24/7 that information gathering has become less about learning and more about merely absorbing the information. Schultze (2002) wrote that this flood of information has resulted in "endless volleys of nonsense, folly, and rumor masquerading as knowledge, wisdom, and even truth" (p. 21). Sparks & Honey (2015) posit that as a generation makes a habit of turning to online information for common sense, they will eventually forget that they already possess it, potentially leading to the end of common sense as we know it. Esqueda (2018) believes the constant connectedness and inability to evaluate information effectively will have a detrimental impact on the church as, "This generation lives immersed in a web of divergent ideas and morality without the necessary time and maturity to reflect about them and respond appropriately" (p. 2).

Physical Effects. Researchers have not only recognized the negative effects constant connectivity has had on thought and information processing, but studies also show that not

disconnecting will, over time, pose the biggest health risk for Gen Z (Sparks & Honey, 2015). Compared to other generations, they are far less likely to report themselves as having good mental health. Only 45 % report themselves as having good mental health as compared to 56% of Millennials and 74% of older adults (Bethune, 2019). The Stress in America Study conducted by the American Psychological Association (2020) has raised alarm bells on the long-term impacts that stress will have on Generation Z. The study showed that 7 out of 10 report symptoms of depression, which is a significant difference from older generations who have had the time and experience to develop more coping skills (APA, 2020; Stieg, 2020). It has consistently been shown that being constantly connected is generating a high level of anxiety among the generation as they work harder and harder to cultivate their multiple online personas that have become another defining characteristic of Gen Z (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

Besides the decline in mental health, it is also believed that constant connectivity will give birth to a variety of new health disorders. Claims of allergies to Wi-fi and lawsuits that are associated with such new illnesses are already on the horizon (Sparks & Honey, 2015). Additionally, conditions such as making oneself sick thinking about being connected are already coming to light, as are conditions that are associated with actually *being* connected making one sick (Sparks & Honey, 2015). Sparks and Honey (2015) describe this change as a result of new technology coming so fast that it is not adapting to people, but rather people are having to adapt to technology. The inability to adapt quickly enough will have inevitable ramifications on health and well-being (Sparks & Honey, 2015). It is, therefore, predicted that because of this, Generation Z will eventually not only seek out ways to be unplugged but will come to revere those digital green spaces (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

Interpersonal Effects. Although these digital green spaces may be on the horizon, they have not yet arrived and the long hours online have taken a toll on their relationships (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Generation Z members are less likely to leave the house, go on dates, get driver's licenses, and work during the summer (Stillman & Stillman, 2019). This has led to a different type of isolation that has caused teen suicide and depression to skyrocket (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Sparks & Honey, 2015; Barna, 2018). The depression is not entirely due to isolation since the generation is highly relational (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). The vast majority spend most of their time online interacting with friends (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). According to the Barna Group (2018), social media is the place where they feel most connected and seen by their friends, however, they have created multiple online personas, so although they feel seen, they do not feel known. The Barna Group (2018) notes that the constant need to create, curate, and manicure their online presence has contributed to an insecurity that affects their ability to effectively interact with others on a truly transparent level. White (2017) shares how one Gen Zer remarked, "We filter out whatever flaws we may have, to create the ideal image" (as cited, p. 45). They simply click a button to delete any perception of weakness or vulnerability. They habitually go to great lengths to appear happy on social media since appearance is everything (Frietas, 2017). It has led to a reality where they are indeed highly relational, but the version of themselves that they present to the world is not an accurate representation of who they are, leading to exhaustion, anxiety, depression, and a highly connected form of isolation (Sparks & Honey, 2015; Barna, 2018, White, 2017, The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020; APA, 2020; Freitas, 2017).

The relationship effects that technology has had on Generation Z are not all doom and gloom. The generation, as a whole, places a high priority on relationships, is known to have a

closer relationship with their parents from previous generations, and craves face-to-face communication (White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Barna, 2018; Sparks & Honey, 2015), although 74 % claim to struggle with in-person communication (Pichler et al., 2021). Overall, they can be considered a generation that is constantly connected and yet very much alone (Pichler et al., 2021; Turkle, 2011).

As these digital natives are just hitting their mid-twenties there is still much that is not known about how their perpetual online presence will continue to impact every aspect of their lives, but research indicates that it will. As a technological generation begins to enter leadership positions in the church, it will also reverberate into their leadership as it impacts their ability to communicate and relate to older generations (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; White, 2017). It is for these reasons and many others that are yet unknown that make this a relevant aspect for this study on the preparation and leadership development of this generation.

A Diverse Generation

Another factor that defines Generation Z as different than any other generation that will inevitably impact their leadership is the fact that they are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in national history with 48% of its members being non-white (Barna, 2018; Fry & Parker, 2018; Parker & Igielnik, 2020). This increase in diversity has led them to be such a highly inclusive generation that diversity has become a natural concept (White, 2017; Bershidsky, 2014; Sparks & Honey, 2015). This high level of diversity has lent itself to the development of a high tolerance for different beliefs and a willingness to see the world from another person's perspective (Pichler et al., 2021; White, 2017; Barna, 2018).

Diversity of Thought. Generation Z's diversity is not just limited to racial and ethnic categories. They reflect a diversity of thought on gender identity that has not previously been

seen. The Supreme Court decision in 2015 which ruled that same-sex marriage is constitutional came during the generation's formative years and has led to it being considered a cultural norm for many of this generation (White, 2017). According to a Northeastern University (2014) study, same-sex marriage had an approval rating of 73% among Gen Zers. White (2017) notes, "For Generation Z, the idea of 'acceptance' is often interchangeable with the idea of 'affirmation'" (p. 46). Whether by way of acceptance or affirmation it has also led to an increase in the Gen Z population who define themselves as something other than heterosexual (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). A current study has revealed that one in six Gen Zers identifies as something other than heterosexual (Jones, 2021).

When surveying the diversity of this emerging generation, the totality of what has been discovered so far through research indicates that the highly inclusive and individualistic characteristics of this generation pose some significant opportunities and challenges for the church (Barna, 2018). Showing concern and understanding the perspective of others is an important characteristic (Sparks & Honey, 2015) given the American church has increased in its diversity (Pew Research, 2015). The diversity of Generation Z and its inclusivity will have the potential of becoming a powerful strength in an environment that is rooted in community (Esqueda, 2018; White, 2017). The challenge, however, comes with inclusivity being of such high priority that they do not take a stand on fundamental beliefs (Barna, 2018). These points made the generation's high level of diversity a salient point in this study on leadership preparation and development.

A Post-Christian Generation

The reluctance to speak out on what is right or wrong is a prevalent characteristic of Generation Z and comes as a result of its most defining characteristic – being post-Christian.

This generation is the first generation in the United States to have been raised in a post-Christian environment (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Esqueda, 2018). Religion, and particularly Christianity, are no longer a major influence in American culture (Esqueda, 2018; Barna, 2018). Members of the generation are twice as likely to claim to be atheists and less than half of the 78% who believe in the existence of God attend any type of religious service on a weekly basis (White, 2017; Northeastern University, 2014; Pew Research, 2015; Barna, 2018). Furthermore, the dramatic trend toward secularization has formed a generation that has a flexible moral compass (Esqueda, 2018; Zuckerman, 2020). This has led to what Sparks and Honey (2015) noted as a generation who views the world as not having any real norms, but rather everything just is what it is as defined by the individual.

The increase in secularization and the generation's post-Christian upbringing has led to the erosion of a biblical worldview (Barna, 2018; White, 2017). Additionally, the generation's diversity and connection to technology have been shown to be powerful influencing factors on their worldview (Barna, 2018). In the comprehensive study on Generation Z conducted by the Barna Group (2018), it was found that out of 64 million only 4% hold to a biblical worldview, and only three of five claims to be Christian. As the flood of post-Christian thinking overwhelms the culture it is believed that "Church attendance alone is not enough to counter the post-Christian prevailing narrative" (Barna, 2018, p. 81). Churched teens and young adults who claim to be Christian are becoming less Christian under the influence of a post-Christian culture (Barna, 2018).

Having synthesized the prevailing scholarly thoughts on the new post-Christian reality, combined with the generation's diversity and technology that are continuing to influence their worldview, it appears inevitable to this researcher that the post-Christian environment that

shaped Generation Z will continue to have a profound impact on the church (White, 2017; Barna, 2018; Pew Research, 2015). These factors will undoubtedly affect their future roles as Christian leaders and were taken into great consideration in this study.

The Church and Ongoing Gen Z Leadership Development

This section focused on literature related to the area of ongoing leadership development of ministry leaders in the church. While there is a wealth of literature regarding discipleship and leadership development conducted by ministry leaders for the benefit of developing laypeople in the church, there is a significant lack of literature, research, or models that deal with the ongoing leadership development of the church ministry leaders themselves (Elkington et al., 2015). In light of this, this segment of the literature review discusses the model proposed by Elkington et al. (2015) that is specifically for the ongoing development of pastoral staff leaders in Christian ministry.

A Model for Ongoing Leadership Development of Church Leaders

While leadership development is a hot-button topic for business organizations that spend considerable time and money on this effort, church organizations do not seem to follow the same trend (Elkington et al., 2015). The prevalent, and in most cases, the only model for the preparation and development of Christian ministry leaders is available by attending an institute of higher learning (Elkington et al., 2015). There seems to be an overall assumption that once one graduated from a preparatory pastoral leadership program one is sufficiently equipped to lead (Elkington et al., 2015). Unfortunately, at this point, the leader is expected to lead in a complex social environment without the benefit of personal ongoing leadership development (Elkington et al., 2015). Banks (1999) posited that theological education itself is struggling to adapt to the changing culture and is experiencing its own version of culture shock, making them

insufficient as a sole means of leadership development. Furthermore, Elkington et al. (2015) view Ministry Training Institutes (MTI) such as Bible colleges or seminaries to be strong in their focus on training in orthodoxy but appear to believe that orthopraxy naturally follows all on its own once entering church ministry. Elkington et al. (2015) posit that local churches need to be intentional in their efforts to help emerging leadership engage in ongoing development to equip them on how to be a biblical leader who accomplishes the clear mission of the church in spreading the gospel. They must also be deliberate about developing leaders who are fluent in the practical administration and bureaucracy of the church; things that are not taught in a classroom (Elkington et al., 2015).

Growing a Living Organism. Studies show that while 93% of church leaders do see ongoing leadership development as critical in the church, only 52% think the church is succeeding in this area (Stetzer and Bird, 2010). Part of this problem, according to Elkington et al. (2015) is the failure to make a move from a pastoral model of leadership toward a missional paradigm "where the church is Spirit-empowered and driven to transcend culture by fulfilling the *mission dei*" (p. 6). This requires a shift in thinking toward a systems approach (Rendle, 2002; Senge, 2006) or, in other words, seeing the church as a living organism (Elkington et al., 2015). In this missional approach, it abandons the prevalent idea that pastors are viewed and treated as the "professional Christians" (Elkington, 2015, p. 7) tasked with growing the church by the numbers and the dollar. Rather, they become part of the sum total of the community organism, constantly growing and learning. To this end, Elkington et al., (2015) believe that the "Health and strength of the system and its capacity to self-maintain and function as a community on mission could be a better indicator of successful leadership than the normal indicators of size and wealth" (p. 6).

To encourage the health of the system and to retain and empower emerging leaders, Elkington et al. (2015) propose an ongoing leadership development model that seeks to equip leaders as follows:

- Obtain a firm understanding of theology through formal educational outlets.
- Focus on their own development through internships and entry-level ministry work.
- Continue to enhance their Christian worldview as a dyadic learning process that incorporates both mission and professionalism.
- Pursue knowledge of current leadership and systems thinking literature.
- Embrace both formal and informal mentorship opportunities as they progress in their ministry career. (p. 12)

The primary method by which it is believed these pursuits should be accomplished is through mentorship by a veteran leader who possesses a sound biblical worldview (Elkington et al., 2015). The researchers recognize that while classrooms deal with theoretical ideas, and these are important in leadership development, mentoring addresses the more practical realities of leadership *in situ*, and this learning cannot, but often is, overlooked (Elkington et al., 2015).

Being faced with the paucity of research on ongoing leadership development for Christian ministry leaders has only confirmed the reality that there is an urgent need for ongoing leadership development, and this need and lack of research are motivating factors for this study.

Gen Z as Christian Leaders

This section focused on research that builds an understanding of what Generation Z will look like as Christian leaders. Because the oldest members of the generation have only recently graduated and entered the workforce, there is a significant gap in the research, considering Generation Z church leaders are still a new phenomenon. Since they have only been employed for a few years, there is little to no research on how their generational characteristics are impacting their leadership or on the impact they are making as a new generational cohort in church ministry. Considering this, the section first highlights what relevant literature reveals so

far concerning Gen Z as emerging leaders and then addresses characteristics of Generation Z's learning preferences that offer critical understandings for developing a model for ongoing leadership development.

Gen Z as Emerging Leaders

Sparks and Honey (2015) in their seminal research on Generation Z note that "When Gen Z enter the workforce, they will be radically shifting our ideas of the working world" (p. 18). There is a consistent theme across the relevant research that as Generation Z continues to enter the workforce, they will bring with them an extraordinary amount of change (Stahl, 2019; Stevenson, 2019). Exactly what form these changes will take remains to be seen. It is predicted that organizations that have accommodated the Millennial generation's affinity for collaboration and open workspaces will find themselves unprepared for Gen Z's independent and competitive natures (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). A survey revealed that members of Gen Z would rather share socks with someone than have to share a workspace (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Seemiller and Grace (2019) echo this need for a different approach and further extend this sentiment into the realm of leadership and leadership development, stating both "will call for an approach different from what may have worked with previous generations" (p. xiii).

Apparent Characteristics. Being suspicious of leadership has made them reluctant leaders, however, their drive to find work that matters may be the thing that coaxes them into leadership positions (Seemiller & Grace, 2019) It is believed that because of their status as the most diverse generation, they will be good leaders when it comes to inclusion and acceptance (Esqueda, 2018). They are also seen as willing to work from the bottom up, but they want to be taken seriously (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Stevenson, 2019). According to Seemiller and Grace (2017) in their research on how to develop Gen Z leaders, it was revealed that while they may

initially be reluctant to take on a leadership role when they do, they have a "potentially inflated sense of their own leadership ability" (p. 5).

A characteristic that may also emerge in their leadership practice is their desire for customization. They have grown up developing their own playlists and designing their own shoes, so they prefer to customize their educational experiences (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Sparks & Honey, 2015) and want the flexibility to customize their job by writing their own job description (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). It is important for them to know how what they are learning connects to their everyday lives and, therefore, want the freedom to control their educational experiences (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Sparks & Honey, 2015). In terms of leadership development, this will impact how they prefer to engage.

Ongoing Development for Gen Z Leaders

Leaders require a skillset and a mindset to be able to successfully navigate a world of rapid change both outside and inside the church (Elkington et al., 2015). To this end, a well-rounded leader such as this requires development (Williams & McKibben, 1994) and it is, thereby, critical that the church invests in Gen Z's ongoing development as leaders (Singer, 2021).

To effectively design a model that addresses the needs of emerging leaders there must be some understanding of what motivates them in learning environments. Studies show that they prefer real-life experiences for training (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Furthermore, they look to teachers as guides rather than as the ones with all the answers since they can readily find the answers they need on Google (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). This predisposes them to the acceptance of a mentorship model of leadership development such as the one Elkington et al. (2015) propose. Furthermore, with their emphasis on financial security and

career success, they are readily looking for workplace role models to aid in their development so the mentorship model would again lend itself as an effective tool for ongoing development (Esqueda, 2018).

Mentoring as a development method is considered a highly effective tool for leadership development (Thoman, 2009; Thoman 2011; White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). When moving from method to content, Seemiller & Grace (2017) also offer some insight into specific competencies that are necessary for incorporation into a leadership development model to help prepare them for complex leadership challenges where lack of experience has left them unprepared. These competencies are listed as:

- leveraging the capacity of others
- engaging in complex thinking and innovative problem solving
- utilizing a collaborative and interdependent approach
- communicating effectively
- being adaptable
- guiding others to greatness
- being optimistic
- persevering through adversity
- employing honesty and altruism (p. 21)

The mentoring methodology and the above-listed competencies serve as only starting points for a well-developed model of leadership development targeted at Gen Z leaders. The lack of research related to ongoing leadership development for church ministry leaders illustrates that getting the job accomplished in the ministry of the church has been the overarching priority for church leadership making the realization of well-developed leaders take a backseat (Elkington et al., 2015). As a new and remarkably different generation joins church leadership, this study developed a relevant model to achieve effective ongoing leadership development that can meet the challenges of shaping and maturing these emerging post-Christian leaders.

Rationale for the Study and Gap in the Literature

The purpose of the literature review was to give the reader a workable understanding of the general characteristics that define Generation Z as well as a look at the major differences that have appeared in this generation that set it apart from any other generation that has previously been documented in American history. The following two sections highlight the rationale for the study and the gaps in the literature.

Rationale for the Study

Generation Z is truly a different generation. That, however, is certainly a statement that is made about every new generation. Different is what makes them new, but unlike other new and different generations this generation comes with three significant firsts that are novel to any generation in prior history: They have never known life without technology, they are the most diverse generation in the nation's history, and they are the first generation to have grown up in a post-Christian America (Sparks & Honey, 2015; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Barna, 2018). These trends are expected to cause them to "pursue different aspirations with different methods than what older generations may deem conventional" (Elmore, 2019, p. 14). The full impact these different aspirations and methods will have on Gen Z are still yet to be seen, but the unanimous theme among the body of literature is that the impact will be big. How the trends will form Gen Z leaders also remains to be seen, and again, the consistent pattern found among those who have explored this generation is that Gen Z will be a different set of leaders. As the religious landscape across the country continues to show a trend downward (Pew Research, 2015), the church needs to feel a renewed sense of urgency to invest in this emerging generation's leaders.

A New Investment

Historically, the majority of churches have not invested in the ongoing leadership development of their paid staff leaders (Stetzer & Bird, 2010; Elkington et al., 2015). This is not biblical thinking for a community of believers who are called to be lifelong learners (Mathis, 2014). Hrivnak et al. (2009) believe the remedy for this is to write leadership development into every leader's job description and then hold them accountable. Research confirms the benefits of leadership development and Scripture requires it. Christian leaders from all generations are to continually "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (*ESV,* 2001, 2 Peter 2:8).

Leadership development in all contexts of leadership is often relegated to the storage closet waiting for the day when there is more time. This study was designed to open the door to the closet. Through qualitative research methods, it explored the lived experience of Christian leaders who are onboarding Gen Z leaders to the leadership ministry team and unearthed the impacts that are being seen from the distinctive trends that are defining this generation. The purpose of this exploratory study was to develop a model for ongoing leadership development that makes an investment into the next generation so there is a seamless passing of the leadership torch.

The Literature Gap

Given the fact that Generation Z is still an emerging generation with its eldest members just having entered the workforce in the last several years, there is still much that needs to be known about them. Several challenges were encountered while conducting research. First, there have only been a handful of comprehensive reports that have been released based on thorough research studies. The leading ones being done by Sparks and Honey (2015), the Barna Group

(2018), Seemiller & Grace (2017), and The Center for Generational Kinetics (2020). It is only in the last few years that workplace organizations have begun to address Generation Z, and when they do, the comprehensive reports are what are typically referenced. The research has expanded the territory it has covered, but it has not gone deep, and this has resulted in inevitable gaps in the literature given the generation's new arrival into adulthood. The gaps that are addressed in this dialogue are: 1) Gaps in the literature on Generation Z as an emerging generation and 2) the gaps in the literature pertaining to leadership development for leadership staff in Christian ministry.

Gaps in the Literature on Generation Z

The research on this generation began most notably in 2015 when Sparks and Honey (2015) released their initial comprehensive report. Since then, there has been a large body of literature that has been collected that describes and defines Generation Z. Research has largely been related to general characteristics that separate Gen Z from the previous Millennial generation or trends that are emerging in specific contexts such as the workplace, learning environments, entertainment, social media, and churches. Sparks and Honey (2015) offer a solid review of overall characteristics. The Barna Group (2018) offers the deepest and most thoughtful look into the generation and the effects the post-Christian society was having on it. What is significantly absent is any research that goes past the trends and takes a look into what Gen Z looks like as leaders, how their unique characteristics are impacting their leadership ability, or any look at the impact they are making in their leadership contexts.

To be fair, very few members of the generation are in leadership. Church ministry is one of the few workplace contexts where students graduate from college and go directly into a leadership position. Most secular organizations require an individual to work their way up the

corporate ladder into leadership, therefore, research that was found on Gen Z related to the workplace largely summarized the general characteristics that are endemic to the generation and then offer suggestions on how the workplace can and should prepare for this massive generation of future workers. Therefore, their young age still leaves an enormous gap in research that provides a look into how Generation Z leads. Seemiller and Grace (2017) offer resources on how to recruit Gen Zers into leadership positions on college campuses. They also include ideas on how to provide ongoing leadership development once recruited (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Other sources were found on changes Christian leaders should make to lead the generation effectively (Esqueda, 2018; Barna, 2018), however, no sources were found that studied Generation Z as Christian leaders. Furthermore, no literature was discovered that addressed the effects technology, diversity, and a post-Christian upbringing have had or may have on their leadership preparedness and ongoing development.

The Barna Group (2018) offers a thorough quantitative study that addresses the declining spiritual condition of the generational population as a whole, which illustrates the effects of the post-Christian society on the generation, but it did not go deeper into the lived experience of Gen Z Christian leaders, therefore, there is a gap in the literature that is related specifically to Gen Z acting as Christian leaders. This study sought to fill a small part of that gap through a qualitative study that looked deeper into the experience of Generation Z Christian leaders.

Gaps in the Literature on Leadership Development in Christian Ministry

When it comes to literature pertaining to leadership development there are a few avenues that this search can go down. The largest body of research is related to reproducing leaders in the church and discipleship. These sources may or may not include the development of staff leaders at the church depending on the church's purpose for the leadership development. The majority of

these models or resources are curriculums for church leadership to develop leadership in others, not in themselves. Hrivnak et al. (2009) offer what this researcher believes to be the best theoretical model for leadership development that offers the opportunity to tailor it for specific needs and environments.

Searching for relevant literature on leadership development of Christian ministry leadership specifically a study by Elkington et al. (2015) was discovered and they note, “It is difficult to find any strong body of literature outlining a cogent leadership development practice for pastors, either precareer training or mid-career development” (Elkington et al., 2015, p. 4). This certainly was the case. Other than the Seemiller and Grace (2017) source that addressed Gen Z leaders on college campuses, no additional sources were found that addressed leadership development that is targeted at the specific development needs of Gen Z ministry leaders. With this age group only recently graduating from college and entering Christian leadership, it is simply too new of a field for research which leaves the door to its exploration wide open. This study aimed to add solid and relevant research for churches that are onboarding new Gen Z leaders and are committed to seeing to their ongoing leadership development.

Profile of the Current Study

Providing ongoing leadership development of Christian ministry leaders in a ministry setting is always a need. For a new generation of ministry leaders, however, the urgency to develop a model that addresses the new realities of a post-Christian and technological society was an increasing concern. This research study developed such a theoretical model that provides ongoing worldview and leadership development.

To this end, Chapter One introduced the reader to the problem and its background. Chapter Two provided a survey of the relevant literature pertaining to the problem by addressing

the theological foundations of ongoing biblical worldview development, leader preparation, and leadership development. Following this section, the theoretical framework of Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory was presented, followed by the Hrivnak et al. (2009) theoretical model of leadership development. With these foundations built, a broad survey of Generation Z was given and relevant research literature about leadership development was explored. Additionally, a rationale for the study on Generation Z leadership preparation and ongoing development was provided.

It was with this broad understanding of the problem that this study implemented the grounded theory methodology in its attempt to fill a gap in the literature related to the ongoing leadership development needs of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of this chapter is to include a synopsis of the grounded theory research design that was used to evaluate the leadership preparedness of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders in the formation of the model for ongoing leadership development. Included in the synopsis are a description of the specific data collection and analysis methods that were utilized in the study. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the strategies that were implemented throughout the research effort to solidify the trustworthiness of the study.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Generation Z's status as the first generation of digital natives who have been brought up in what is for the first time in American history considered a post-Christian society changes the generational conversation (Barna, 2018; White, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Research has shown that the nearly constant and pervasive use of digital technology and the secularization of culture have made a lasting impact on their cognitive development, social interactions, and worldview development (Barna, 2018; White, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2019; Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Carr, 2010, Turkle, 2011, Steyer, 2012, Rodriguez et al., 2020).

The Barna Group (2018) offers a thorough quantitative study that reveals the declining spiritual condition of this generational population as a result of these variables. The research study shows they are twice as likely as previous generations to be atheists, their worldview is "highly inclusive and individualistic" (Barna, 2018, p. 12), and a scant 4% reflect a biblical worldview (p. 25). Because however, the oldest members of this generation have just recently entered adulthood the study does not go deeper into what extent these findings have had an

impact on Gen Z Christian leaders. There is a gap, therefore, in the literature that is related specifically to the effects these realities have had on the leadership preparedness and worldview formation of members of Gen Z entering Christian leadership. Additionally, with Generation Z only recently graduating from college and entering Christian leadership, ongoing leadership development for this generation is simply too new of a field for research which leaves the door to its exploration wide open. The focus of this research problem was, therefore, to discover how digital technology and a post-Christian culture have influenced the formation of the Gen Z leader's worldview and overall leadership preparedness to determine how this should inform a model of effective ongoing leadership development within their Christian ministry roles.

While ongoing leadership development is typically a part of the job description for business organizations and educational institutions it is notoriously absent from the church or other parachurch organizations (Elkington et al., 2015). This qualitative study's primary goal was to generate a theoretical model for relevant leadership training and development for Christian ministries that are onboarding new Gen Z leaders and are committed to seeing to their continued leadership growth.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the leadership preparedness and worldview formation of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders so as to inform the development of a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development for senior leaders who are onboarding these new leaders into Christian ministry leadership roles. In the conducted research, Generation Z was defined as the birth cohort born between 1995 and 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Leadership development for this study included both leader development which targets the growth of the individual (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2010; Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009) and

leadership development which focuses on developing a repertoire of leadership skills that expand the capacity to serve the community (Hrvinak, Jr. et al., 2009). The theories guiding this study were Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory which provided a basis for Generation Z being a history-defining generation that is causing paradigm shifts in societal institutions, and the Hrivnak, Jr. et al (2009) leadership development model which offered a basic framework for the construction of a leadership development model that could be used in specific contexts.

Research Questions

The following research questions were selected to facilitate the gathering of relevant data related to the problem and purpose of this study. Five questions were designed and are as follows:

RQ1. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, to what extent, if any, are they seeing a difference in the leadership preparedness of Generation Z as compared to other generational leaders?

RQ2. To what extent, if any, has the documented erosion of biblical worldview development and post-Christian upbringing of Generation Z manifested itself in new Gen Z Christian ministry hires?

RQ3. What, if any, ongoing biblical worldview, and leadership development strategies are in place to further prepare and develop newly hired Generation Z ministry leaders, and what are the components of these strategies?

RQ4. From the perspective of Gen Z ministry hires, in what specific areas of leadership skills or worldview formation do they feel they require or seek further development?

RQ5. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, what different leadership preparation and development, if any, is needed for Generation Z as compared to previous generations?

Research Design and Methodology

This research study selected a qualitative research design because this design is known to deliver an effective method for "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). This design, therefore,

afforded the opportunity to explore how senior Christian ministry leaders viewed the task of further developing Generation Z leaders while allowing Gen Z leaders themselves to share their own perspectives of their development needs. Furthermore, because this study sought to develop a theoretical model for the ongoing leadership development of Gen Z leaders in Christian ministry, this qualitative study was conducted using a systematic grounded theory design (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Grounded theory is a research methodology used to derive "a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). In accordance with this particular methodology, the data collection process involved a multi-staged approach as data was systematically and constantly analyzed and refined through the duration of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This constant analysis drove the direction of the study as it unfolded. In the first stage, research participants were selected through purposeful sampling based on specific participant criteria that was essential for addressing the research problem. The research was interview-based and gathered the views and opinions of the participants through unstructured and open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Once initial data was collected it was organized and coded for the purpose of generating categories or themes that emerged (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The overall process of coding in this methodology was achieved through systematic steps (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Open coding was used to generate basic categories of themes or information, axial coding involved taking a theme and placing it within a forming theoretical model, and selective coding analyzed the data in search of the meaning so it could find the story

that was being told through the interconnection of the selected themes or categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

As analysis and coding were accomplished through the data collection of the first two series of interviews, the process gave rise to the third stage of research that utilized theoretical sampling (Timonen et al., 2018). This involved the selection of additional participants that could confirm or disconfirm interrelating themes that were found in the initial stage of research. Data collected from these interviews were again analyzed and coded as the selected themes continued to evolve and gain meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Timonen et al., 2018). Simultaneous data collection and analysis continued throughout the research process (Lasch, 2018). A targeted sample population of twelve participants, that was established initially per grounded methodology was exceeded as data collection and analysis progressed.

The final stage of research was designed to reach a data saturation point with participants. This state was achieved when information from new participants no longer resulted in fresh insight or perspectives (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The final analysis then took place and the story of interconnection that emerged through the coding process was told in the form of a theoretical model of leadership development appropriate for the unique needs of Gen Z leaders.

Setting

Since this research study targeted the lived experience of senior Christian ministry leaders and the Gen Z leaders they hired into ministry staff positions, this research was conducted in evangelical churches that have Gen Z leaders currently on staff. The coexistence of Gen Z along with older generations was critical to the study and was the driving criteria for how a setting was selected, therefore, a particular region of the United States was not targeted.

Participants

The population that was of pertinent interest to this study was paid senior ministry leaders of evangelical churches who were involved in the hiring process and ongoing development of other paid ministry leaders within the church or the parachurch organization. Furthermore, the population of interest included those senior ministry leaders who had hired at least one ministry leader falling within the defined years of the Generation Z cohort (1995-2010) and had been employed by the church or parachurch organization for a minimum of six months. This criterion enabled the senior leader to have informed knowledge of characteristics that may be specific to a Gen Z leader in comparison to leaders from previous generations. For this study, both senior leaders and Gen Z staff members were interviewed as its aim was to understand what Gen Z leaders are like in terms of characteristics, as well as what they need to develop into more well-rounded and effective leaders.

The Christian organization was not sought through questionnaire, but rather through criterion and snowball sampling. Ministry settings that met the research criteria were selected from recommendations from district staff of the Assembly of God denomination in the state of Minnesota because of the researcher's access to these recommendations. Additional recommendations were intended to be sought through local pastors of evangelical churches in the Lakes region of Northern Minnesota, however, this became unnecessary as additional settings were acquired through snowball sampling, which is a method of qualitative research design sampling that identifies additional participants by "asking existing participants to refer or recruit other individuals (e.g., colleagues or acquaintances) who also have experiences and knowledge relevant to the topic under study" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 420). This snowball sampling led to a research site in the Illinois district of the Assembly of God that had significant ties to the

Minnesota district. Following observations and interviews of individual participants found in these settings, the analysis of collected data occurred. This analysis was critical in directing the researcher to additional participants and these participants were acquired through theoretical sampling.

Theoretical sampling is defined as "a process whereby the researcher samples based on the concepts that emerge in the data" (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 8). It is designed to expand on or further delineate categories and themes that were developed during purposeful sampling (Timonen et al., 2018). To this end, participants who could confirm previous findings were selected for interviews. Additionally, participants who could disconfirm what has already been seen to provide a negative case and maximum variation were sought (Lasch, 2018). Theoretical sampling continued until saturation was reached (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Charmaz (2014) considers the saturation point to be reached when collecting additional data no longer reaps new themes or additional insights. The data saturation point was achieved while still keeping the number of participants included in the study near the limited participant range that is characteristic of grounded theory methodology and established in this research study's protocol (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

As the study progressed, demographic data were documented in the following table as participants were selected and interviewed:

Table 2

Demographic Data

Demographic Category	Data	
Gender	Male - 12	Female – 5
		# or Participants:
Generational Cohort	Traditional:	0
	Boomer:	2
	Gen X:	3
	Millennial:	2
	Gen Z:	10
		# of Participants:
Years of Leadership Experience	0-2 Years	8
	3-5 Years	2
	5-10 Years	0
	10-15 Years	2
	15-20 Years	2
	20+ Years	3
		# of Participants:
Length of Time in Current Leadership Position	6 mo. – 1 Year	3
	1-5 Years	8
	5-10 Years	0
	10-15 Years	4
	15-20 Years	0
	20 + Years	2
		# of Participants:
Leadership Role	Senior Pastor	3
	Associate Pastor	3
	Youth Pastor	2
	Children's Pastor	1
	Music Pastor	1
	Other	7

Role of the Researcher

Classical theorists for grounded theory research were clear on the necessity for the researcher to be a "blank slate" (Timonen et al., 2018). This requirement insisted on disengagement from relevant literature or theories before the process of data collection (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Today the expectation of conducting a thorough literature review before research disrupts the ability of a researcher to remain a blank slate (Charmaz, 2014; Timonen et al., 2018). Additionally, since data analysis is extensively directed by the researcher when using grounded theory methodology, there is a real possibility that bias can be introduced into this process when searching for themes and the interconnectedness of the selected themes (Heydarian, 2016). Timonen et al. (2018) argue, "The key premise of GT is *remaining open* to the portrayals of the world as encountered and not forcing data into theoretical accounts: This can be done with awareness of existing theories" (pp. 4-5).

One bias that resulted from a survey of precedent literature that this researcher recognized is the belief that digital technology and post-Christian culture has detrimentally affected the biblical worldview formation of even Gen Z Christians who place their faith at the center of their lives (Barna, 2018; White, 2017; Esqueda, 2018; Dean, 2010; Smith & Denton, 2005). Acknowledging this bias was a critical step in ensuring it did not alter the ability to remain open "to the portrayals of the world" (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 4) that were encountered through the data collection for this research. In addition to clarifying the bias the researcher brought to the study, other steps outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2018) were implemented to combat researcher bias. The researcher triangulated data sources, using member checking, and rich thick descriptions, by presenting negative or discrepant information that ran counter to the themes and spent a prolonged time in the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 201).

Ethical Considerations

In full compliance with Liberty University's Institutional Review Board, no part of this research study was conducted before approval (Appendix A). Furthermore, all guidelines established and laid out by the *EdD in Christian Leadership Program Handbook* were followed.

When conducting research involving human subjects, three basic principles have been mandated by the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979): Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These three principles guided the ethical considerations of this study.

Respect for persons was demonstrated through voluntary participation, careful attention to maintaining the anonymity of individuals through the use of pseudonyms, and the researcher's view of each participant as a valuable image-bearer of God (Genesis 1:27). It was this perspective that upheld the ethics of beneficence through kindness shown towards each individual throughout the interviewing process. Furthermore, this researcher acted in such a way that the intent to bring about workplace and ministry benefits for those included in the study was evident at each juncture of the research process. Finally, the ethics of justice were displayed in the effort to make sure that no burden or risk was placed on the participants. Interview questions were carefully formed and selected to avoid any sense of manipulation or coercion intended to guide answers or conversations to a predetermined conclusion.

Since the nature of grounded theory research requires that the researcher does not remain detached from the research, "researchers should seriously consider the potential impact they may have on the participants and vice versa, and details of such interactions should be clearly mentioned in research proposals" (Sanjari et al., 2014, p. 4). With this in mind, the researcher, therefore, made a deliberate effort to disclose the nature of the relationship between the

researcher and participants as the research unfolded (Sanjari et al., 2014). As all ministry leaders were college graduates or completed a comparable post-high school preparatory program, no participants in this study were under eighteen years of age.

Throughout the research and beyond, electronic data was password-protected and kept isolated. Digital recordings of all interviews were transferred to a computer hard drive, and this was stored in a password protected safe accessed solely by the researcher. The researcher was consistently clear about the confidential nature of all interviews and data collection and maintained complete transparency on how the information that was provided was used.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data collection methods and instruments for this research were conducted following the grounded theory methodology. The purpose of selecting this methodology in the research of Gen Z Christian ministry leaders and ongoing leadership development was twofold. First, it was a highly useful methodology for when theories are undeveloped for a specific population or existing theories are underdeveloped (Figgins et al., 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2014). Both were true in this case: a theory on leadership development was undeveloped for the specific population of Gen Z Christian ministry leaders, and to this point, leadership development theories, in general, have remained largely underdeveloped (Day, 2000; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009; Popper & Lipshitz, 1993; Daniels et al., 2019). Since the purpose of this study was to generate leadership development theory for a specific population the methodology became an ideal choice.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), “One of the virtues of grounded theory studies and qualitative research in general is that there are many different sources of data” (p. 37). While other forms of qualitative research use observations and interviews to explore the subjective,

real-life experiences of subjects or a phenomenon and are, therefore, similar in approaches to data collection, grounded theory methodology is different in that it seeks to include as many other data sources as possible to provide an objective understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Admin, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Billups, 2021). After data is collected and analyzed, outcomes and findings are not just in written, narrative form as typically presented in other qualitative research methodologies, but visually represented in models or diagrams (Admin, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In grounded theory, rich data generates substantive theory, so gathering several types of data from multiple vantage points is an essential way of ensuring rich data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2014). This section will summarize the data collection methods, instruments and protocols, and procedures that were utilized in this research study to accomplish its intended purpose.

Collection Methods

Data for this study were collected from four ministry settings that were selected by using criterion sampling (Appendix B) to select information-rich settings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), snowball sampling - a sampling strategy designed to find further participants based on the recommendations of current participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019), and theoretical sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Once the first site was chosen the initial stage of data collection involved an on-site observation of the weekly staff meeting that involved all site participants. Billups (2021) posits these introductory observations are necessary, “When the interpretation of a setting is critical to understanding the phenomenon under study” (p. 134). This proved true when seeking to understand the environment that Gen Z leaders were in, understanding their level of preparedness, and discerning their needs for ongoing leadership development.

Observations were followed by face-to-face unstructured interviews that took place between the interviewer and the senior ministry leaders who oversee the Gen Z leaders. This process was supported by an interview protocol (Billups, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) designed to bolster dependability and confirmability.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with Gen Z leaders to gain their perspective on needed or desired aspects of ongoing leadership development. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior leaders and addressed perspectives on current or needed leadership development for the younger leaders, and targeted key concepts that were gleaned from the immediate analysis of data collection and initial open coding that takes place (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Theoretical sampling was used for including additional participants or to conduct follow-up interactions with previous participants as the study progressed and themes emerged (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As these more focused interviews unfolded, any documents or texts that participants used in relation to concepts of leadership or personal development were analyzed.

In addition to these documents, a research field journal was maintained that kept a detailed record of all the activities, summaries of the conversations, insights, and questions pertaining to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It has been noted that the research journal is a valuable resource for tracking the research process as it evolves over time (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In accordance with the iterative process of grounded theory methodology, data continued to be collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis until saturation was achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2014).

Instruments and Protocols

When collecting data, it is important for a researcher to begin with the understanding that "How we collect data shapes their content" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 33). In this grounded theory study "the researcher is an instrument" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 239), as were the participants themselves. It was through interaction between the researcher and the participants by way of observations and interviews that the research problem and questions were addressed, therefore, these were the instruments that become the primary source of data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Secondary sources of data to be utilized were documents that became relevant because of data collected in the observations and interviews, as well as the field journal (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Observations

Once ministry settings were finalized through purposive and snowball sampling, appropriate permissions were obtained for initial observations (Appendix C). Observations are a method of data collection that uses all the researcher's senses to study the behaviors, actions, and interactions of participants while at work in their natural setting (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Charmaz, 2014). As Lincoln and Denzin (2008) note, "Going into a social situation and looking is another important way of gathering materials about that social world" (p. 48). Billups (2021) posits that observations are critical, "When the interpretation of a setting is critical to understanding the phenomenon under study" (p. 134). This was true when seeking to understand the environment that Gen Z leaders were in, understanding their level of preparedness, and discerning needs for ongoing leadership development.

While the overall purpose of the observations was to get a bird's eye view of senior and Gen Z leaders interacting together in their ministry environment, there were other purposes for

beginning the study with observations. First, they were essential for the "hunches" (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 362) or sensitizing concepts (Charmaz, 2014) that provide initial, tentative ideas related to Gen Z preparedness for leadership and an ongoing leadership development theory. Second, observations were a method for purging biases (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014), "Just as the methods we choose influence what we see, what we bring to the study also influences what we *can* see" (p. 27). Third, observations were a critical way for this researcher to orient to the setting and not overlook the reality that "Research participants likely adhere to taken-for-granted etiquette rules in their settings or the cultural norms of their communities" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 29). Fourth, observations were an important way to make a broad sweep of the ministry landscape and the people who worked there. Finally, observations asked the fundamental grounded theory question: what is happening here (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) and "what is *not* happening" (Billups, 2021, p. 134).

When conducting observations for data collection it was important for the researcher to determine the level of engagement and participation (Billups, 2021). This researcher conducted the observations with two levels of participation in mind: as a participant but not a true member of the group, and as a complete observer who had no membership in the group under the study (Billups, 2021). This researcher respected the senior ministry leader's authority to determine which level of participation was appropriate for the observational setting. Extensive notes were taken with the use of an observational rubric (Appendix D). The notes taken on the observational rubric included descriptive, focused, and selective observations (Billups, 2021). These took the form of physical descriptions, descriptions of the participants, explanations of how the participants are interacting, notes about the observed activities, and observations concerning nonverbal communication and social cues (Billups, 2021). The observations were constructed to

accommodate these reflections. The initial observations greatly aided in preparing the researcher for the interviews that followed.

Interviews

Interviews are a way to "capture an individual's perspectives, experiences, feelings, and stories with the guidance and facilitation of an interviewer" (Billups, 2021, p. 36), and are, therefore, a critical part of answering the research questions. This process was supported in this research study by an interview protocol (Billups, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview protocol (Appendix E-G) allowed for the researcher "to guide, customize, and standardize the interviewing process" (Billups, 2021, p. 36) while still allowing for the flexibility and creativity needed in grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014). The interview protocol was critical for keeping questions and topics comparable between research sites.

Two types of interviewing methods were employed. The first type was the unstructured interview also described as intensive interviewing that "explores a person's substantial experience with the research topic" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 56). These interviews were conducted with senior Christian ministry leadership. It has been previously demonstrated that this type of interview is known to "provide the richest source of data for theory building" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 38) primarily because this interviewing allows for flexibility and control, open-ended enough questions for ideas and issues to arise, and they allow for immediate follow-up on any emergent ideas and issues (Charmaz, 2014). This proved true in this research process.

In these interviews, the role of the researcher was to facilitate open-ended questions that covered a set of overarching themes related to the research questions and then simply listen and learn while the participant talked (Charmaz, 2014). The key to these interviews was to facilitate a conversation that had fewer probes and merely "let the participant's story unfold" (Billups, 2021,

p. 48). The unstructured interviews targeted the first two research questions which explored the senior leaders' perspectives on how Gen Z's leadership preparedness compared to other generational leaders in the setting, as well as to what extent the erosion of the generational biblical worldview may have begun to manifest itself in the ministry setting. Questions that were utilized had open-ended wording such as "what are your thoughts about. . ." or what are your impressions of. . ." or "tell me a bit about your experience with . . ." (Billups, 2021, p. 45). These exploratory prompts were utilized to draw out the participant's thoughts on researcher-selected themes that were essential in answering the first two research questions.

Following the analysis of these unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews were also conducted for both senior ministry leadership participants and Gen Z participants. For these interviews the general sequence of questioning followed the protocol laid out by Billups (2021):

1. Interviewer opens with an explanation of the study, purpose, and background of the study, shares consent forms, addresses confidentiality measures, and answers any general questions asked by participants.

2. Asks open-ended general questions to establish trust and provide context for subsequent focused questions.

3. Ask specific, more complex questions that are at the core of the interview, address research questions, and are included in the interview protocol. Additional probes and follow-up questions to elicit rich and thick data will be prepared.

4. Ask a concluding sequence of questions that allow for debriefing, summarizing for clarity, and expression of final thoughts. (p. 44-45)

When interviewing Gen Z participants, research question four provided the overall purpose of these interviews. Gaining an understanding of what they perceived were their leadership or worldview development needs was a key aspect of successful research for this study. During the semi-structured interviews with senior leader participants, research questions three and five were targeted. These questions addressed what leadership development strategies

if any, were in place within the ministry setting. These semi-structured interviews also explored from the perspective of the senior ministry leaders what different needs, if any, Gen Z leaders have regarding leadership and worldview development that previous generations may not have needed. These interviews did lead to the necessity of including documents in the data collection process.

Document Analysis

According to Billups (2021), documents are the "readable, tactile, observable, and tangible evidence at a research site (p. 144). They are often undervalued in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2014), and this data may already exist, known as extant documents, or be created by the participant or researcher, commonly referred to as elicited or generated documents (Billups, 2021; Charmaz, 2014). For this study, documents related to leadership development that were utilized by the selected site were evaluated. Furthermore, through the iterative process of grounded theory methodology, the documents that become relevant as a result of theoretical sampling were collected for analysis.

Extant documents were collected with necessary permissions from senior ministry leadership or gatekeepers. The documents were recorded using a rubric that included components outlined by Billups (2021): self-created categories, locations where the document is stored, the author or creator of them, the original purpose of the document, and when the item was created.

Since the targeted end of this study was the development of a leadership development model that could be incorporated into the Gen Z ministry leader's job description, the Gen Z participants were asked to outline their job description and typical day. In some instances, this was an elicited document that was acquired for a greater understanding of time restraints and for

analysis that revealed some disparities between written responses and observed behavior, or written responses and established job descriptions as defined by the ministry site (Charmaz, 2014). This added another nuanced layer to addressing the fourth research question that focused on Gen Z perspectives. How they described their job and typical day served to uncover some perceptions of the level of preparedness for it and will potentially reveal patterns or themes that may uncover leadership skills that they lack or need further development. These findings will be discussed in Chapter Four which will address the findings for each research question in greater depth.

All extant and elicited documents that became necessary through the iterative data collection and analysis process customary to grounded theory were acquired via the consent of the participant and with prior approval of the dissertation committee. All documents were carefully recorded on the generated document rubric (Appendix H). No digital documents were collected. Written documents were kept in a safe and accessible only to the researcher.

Field Journal

At the outset of the study, a research journal was started that kept a detailed record of all the activities, summaries of the conversations, insights, and questions pertaining to the study. This journal was maintained throughout the course of the study and remained independent from the memo writing that is characteristic of the process of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It has been noted by previous researchers that the field journal is a valuable resource for being proactive on awareness of personal biases or assumptions, making decisions, and tracking the research process as it evolves over time (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Procedures

This section outlines and discusses the procedures that were necessary for data collection in this study. These include the process of securing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, information concerning participant selection and engagement, recording of observations and interviews, and confidentiality and anonymity.

IRB Approval

No part of this proposed study was conducted before approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Consent forms, interview questions, elicited document instructions, and an outline of proposed safety measures to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants was presented to the IRB for approval. All documents presented to the IRB at the outset and throughout the study conformed to the guidelines established by the IRB and documented on the website. This researcher maintained complete and transparent cooperation and coordination with the IRB and dissertation committee at all junctures of the research study.

Participant Selection and Engagement

The target number of sites for this study was three to five ministry settings that were either church or parachurch organizations. The researcher engaged enough participants across four sites to reach saturation of data while reaching and exceeding the targeted number of participants consistent with grounded theory methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Corbin & Strauss, 2015, Charmaz, 2015). Ministry settings that met the research criteria were initially sought through recommendations from district personnel of the Assembly of God denomination in the state of Minnesota, not because this denomination takes greater importance in the research but because this researcher has connections to this denomination's district staff. One setting was

acquired through snowball sampling. Once sites were selected and consent for participation in the study was acquired in full compliance with the IRB, the following procedure was used to engage senior leadership and Gen Z participants in the respective ministry settings: 1) contacted the senior leader to establish rapport, 2) obtained consent for observations and interviews, 3) scheduled interview time, 4) follow-upped with the participant as necessary (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Billups, 2021).

Informed Consent

Informed consent agreements (Appendix I-J) were signed by each participant and pseudonyms were used for each participant. Documents were not taken from the organizational setting without authorization or consent. The researcher was careful to "treat participants in a manner that they would want to be treated throughout the research process" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 45).

Recorded Observations and Interviews

Observations and interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Observations took place on-site. Interviews were conducted in person and in a quiet, controlled location to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis by the researcher using Otter.ai software. Once transcribed, participants were asked to review the transcript to verify accuracy and further solidify the trustworthiness of the research study.

Data Analysis

Strauss and Corbin (1998) aptly noted, "Analysis is the interplay between the researcher and the data" (p. 13). In this section, analysis methods that were utilized in the effort to develop a theory for leadership development applied to Gen Z Christian ministry leaders are described. Since theory development is central to the purpose of grounded theory, as Leedy and Ormrod

(2019) purport, “In no other design, then, are data analysis strategies more central to the entire research effort” (p. 351). Analysis methods described in this section will coding procedures, use of the conditional relationship guide, the reflective coding matrix, memo writing, constant comparison, and theoretical integration.

Analysis Methods

The following methods are presented in linear form; however, it is important to note that when employing grounded theory methodology, the analysis process is a back-and-forth endeavor between data collection, analysis, and interpretation, therefore, these strategies were implemented in a linear fashion (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The overall process of data analysis was conducted following what Creswell (2011) describes as the “data analysis spiral” (p. 183). This process moves raw data to the final report in an ongoing interaction with the data that organizes, peruses, classifies, and synthesizes each layer of data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Open Coding

Coding is essential to grounded theory methodology as it becomes “the process of defining what data are about” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 111). It is open coding that serves as the initial stage of analysis in grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This first coding endeavor is simply a way to make sense of the data by getting a grasp of what is happening and assembling patterns of concepts into categories that have identifying properties (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While open coding was used as the initial pass “through the data in an open-minded search for meanings in an effort to allow codes to emerge from and be strongly grounded in the data” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 346), seed codes, or preliminary codes that rise out of the research problem were initially addressed for

validity (Rowland & Parry, 2009). For this study, initial seed codes (Rowland & Parry, 2009) included themes related to a biblical worldview, post-Christian upbringing, leader preparation, and leadership skills. The researcher, however, remained open-minded throughout the data collection and analysis process in addressing these seed codes and readily dropped or tweaked them as other themes came to light (Charmaz, 2014) so the resulting categories identified the major themes of the study and guided its ongoing direction.

As major themes and categories emerged and were selected, data was further examined for "properties" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 35). These properties arose from the observations and interviews as adjectives or descriptive phrases that reflected specific attributes or subcategories of the major coded themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

To increase the trustworthiness of the study through the coding process the researcher recruited an independent coding rater to determine if similar coding themes were established from the collected data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Codes were found to be similar enough to verify trustworthiness.

Axial Coding

Through the process of open coding there emerged from the data a theme that became central to the research problem. This theme became the core category and "serves as an *axis* around which certain other categories appear to revolve in some way" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 352). Once the core category was identified it was the guide for further iterations of data collection and analysis as the process shifted towards identifying and organizing linkages and relationships between other themes and the core category (Scott & Howell, 2008). Through this linkage process the questions "who, when, why, how, and with what consequences" (Corbin &

Strauss, 2015, p. 92) were addressed and answered to shed more light on principles described by Leedy and Ormrod (2019) which are listed as follows:

- The context in which the core category is embedded
- Conditions that give rise to the core category
- Strategies people use to manage or carry out the core category
- Conditions that influence how the strategies are carried out
- Consequences of those strategies (p. 352)

Relationships were depicted in diagram form and the axial coding process continued and developed additional diagrams of other core categories as became necessary (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2014).

Conditional Relationship Guide

During the open and axial coding process recognizing or understanding the relationships between the emerging conceptual themes can often be difficult, therefore, this researcher utilized the conditional relationship guide (Appendix K). This guide, developed by Scott (2004) is a visual representation of Strauss and Corbin's (2015) what, when, where, why, how, and with what result or consequence questions (Scott & Howell, 2008). The format of the guide "is designed to ask and answer each relational question about the category named in the left column" (Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 3) and expands Corbin and Strauss's (2015) questioning format as follows:

- *What* is [the category]? (Using a participant's words helps avoid bias)
- *When* does [the category] occur? (Using "during. . ." helps form the answer)
- *Where* does [the category] occur? (Using "in. . ." helps form the answer)
- *Why* does [the category] occur? (Using "because. . ." helps form the answer)
- *How* does [the category] occur? (Using "by. . ." helps form the answer)
- With what *consequence* does [the category] occur or is [the category understood? (Scott, 2004, p. 204; Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 5)

This data analysis tool was used to move conceptual themes from the rudimentary stage of open coding into the linking phase of axial coding.

Reflective Coding Matrix

The reflective coding matrix is designed to "paint a picture of the central phenomenon, defining and describing it in a manner sufficient to account for the study data holistically as a narrative or story explain the substantive theory of the central phenomenon" (Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 7). It was used by this researcher to help "develop and contextualize" (Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 7) what emerged as the core category in the research (Appendix L). The steps in developing this conceptualization included stepping back and evaluating the processes, properties, dimensions, contexts, and modes for understanding the consequences (Scott & Howell, 2008). Through this process of reflection and evaluation, the pieces of the data puzzle were put together one piece at a time in the place that best-made sense of the whole (Scott & Howell, 2008). Once all these data pieces were organized selective coding began.

Selective Coding

Selective coding begins when "a single category is chosen as *the* core concept in the phenomenon" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 352). This final coding phase "integrates all the interpretive work of analysis" (Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 11). It is from out of this core concept and its relationships with its subcategories that a theory was developed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Charmaz, 2014).

Throughout the coding process this researcher mined the data by asking "sensitizing" questions outlined by Corbin & Strauss (2015) that ultimately addressed the research problem:

- What is going on here?
- What are the issues, problems, and concerns?
- Who are the actors involved?
- How do they define the situation?
- What are the various actors doing?
- Are their definitions and meaning the same or different?
- When, how, and with what consequences are they acting?

- How are the actions the same or different for various actors and in other situations? (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 92)

Theoretical Integration

In grounded theory research, once a saturation point has been reached, data collection and its analysis end, and theoretical integration begins. At this stage, theoretical coding is used to move saturated ideas into a grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It is in this phase of data analysis that this researcher utilized "theoretical questions" proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2015) which may include but were not limited to the following:

- What is the relationship of one concept to another?
- How do they compare and relate at the property and dimensional level?
- What would happen if?
- How do events and actions change over time?
- What are the larger structural issues here?
- How do these events play into or affect what I am seeing or hearing? (p. 92)

As the theoretical story unfolded, integration was initiated by taking the grounded theory back into the research setting for integration by the participants which was an important step in obtaining greater validity to the findings (Urquhart et al., 2010). Additionally, the researcher conducted a delayed literature review (Scott, 2009; Triad 3, 2016; Glaser & Strauss, 2017) "to contrast, compare, and integrate findings with relevant theories and constructs, to reduce conceptual overlap and confusion" (Figgins et al., 2019, p. 1830). The purpose of this process of integration was to substantiate a theory that was grounded in data.

Memo Writing and Constant Comparison

Memos are notes taken that summarize interpretations of what is being seen and heard (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Memos can be reflective in nature and are used to expose the researcher's personal biases or previous experiences and how these may impact relationships

with the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The memos may also be methodological and pertain to breakthroughs or challenges that are occurring as a result of the implementation of the grounded theory design. Additionally, memos may be analytical and record emerging themes or patterns, hunches that need to be followed up on, or descriptions of tentative theories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Memo writing is woven throughout the entire data collection and analysis process and is a critical method of tracking progress, narrowing focus, and linking relationships between codes and categories (Lempert, 2007; Triad 3, 2016).

Memos written during the data collection process naturally became an additional data source that yielded valuable insight through the data analysis process as memo writing reflected the process of distillation as data transformed into theory (Lempert, 2007). Memos became a valuable part of the researcher's audit trail.

Constant comparison is a way of breaking down the data into bite-sized, workable pieces so the researcher can view each piece individually and then begin to categorize or code the pieces based on similarities and differences attaching labels to various chunks of data that describe and give meaning to the particular segment (Charmaz, 2014). Constant comparison is a data analysis method that is used throughout the entire course of the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and compares one piece of data to another piece "in order to determine if the two data are conceptually the same or different" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 94). In light of these important characteristics, constant comparison was used by this researcher to reduce and develop concepts, guide further interview questions or observations, examine assumptions and biases, cultivate and nurture creativity, and facilitate the linking of conceptual themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Trustworthiness

The subjective nature of qualitative research requires that the researcher take deliberate care in ensuring the trustworthiness of the research and its findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Bowen, 2009). To accomplish this intentional practice, Leedy and Ormrod (2019) outline three widely recommended strategies: 1) Strive for balance, fairness, and completeness in data analysis and interpretation, 2) Carefully document your analysis procedures, and 3) Be upfront about personal biases (p. 427). The overall trustworthiness of a research study can be broken down into the specific subcategories of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Each of these is explained further and specific strategies that were incorporated to achieve overall trustworthiness are described below.

Credibility

A research study is considered to be credible to the extent that it is found by other researchers to be accurate, trustworthy, and plausible (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). For this study, several strategies were put in place to establish the credibility of the study. First, triangulation of observations, interviews, and document analysis was done to look for common themes, find the consistency among themes across multiple data collection methods, and, therefore, lend additional support to findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Second, respondent validation which involves taking conclusions back to the participants for verification was implemented throughout the course of data collection and analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Additionally, data collection and analysis of negative cases through participant interviews that contradict or serve as outliers in comparison to other data collected were included to challenge, refine, and substantiate findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Figgins et al., 2019). Finally, data

were collected from multiple settings that further substantiated the credibility of established patterns and themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Dependability

Bowen (2009) defined dependability as "the stability of the findings over time" (p. 306). Therefore, to bolster the dependability of a study the audit trail becomes a critical component (Bowen, 2009). An audit trail is an extensive and thorough document system that records every step of methodology and each choice and disposition of the researcher in moving from data collection to analysis, to theory (Bowen, 2009). The final compilation of all documents and notes into an audit journal does not just state that the research was rigorous and dependable – but it becomes a visible product of evidence proving the study's dependability and overall trustworthiness (Bowen, 2009). To that end, this researcher maintained an audit trail for all aspects of the research study and made available accurate and thorough documentation of all research to the IRB and the dissertation committee.

Confirmability

Another critical reason for maintaining an audit trail is to establish the confirmability of the study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) note that "Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but clearly derived from the data" (p. 121). Through the audit trail, it is demonstrated that this researcher remained neutral to the data and its interpretations. Additionally, triangulation of data that was conducted through data analysis provides checks and balances for the depth and viability of the researcher's selected concepts and themes. As data collection and analysis were conducted the search for and inclusion of negative cases that contradicted previous findings added additional strength to the confirmability of the study.

Transferability

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2019), transferability is most commonly defined by qualitative researchers as the "Extent to which a research study's findings might be similar or applicable to other individuals, settings, and contexts" (p. 421). While qualitative research studies cannot be perfectly replicated in the same way lab-based studies may be, they can ensure that there is a certain level of similar applications to other individuals, settings, or contexts. This study strove to enhance these possibilities by conducting the research in real-world, and in multiple settings. Korstjens & Moser (2018) recommend the facilitation of transferability through the use of thick description. This researcher provided rich and thick descriptions of the research so readers, or future researchers, may make well-informed judgments as to if the findings, or portions of them, may be transferred into their specific Christian ministry setting or another related setting where Gen Z members are currently leading and engaged in ongoing leadership development.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a description of the grounded theory methodology that was selected for this qualitative research study. In doing so, it has included a synopsis of the research problem, purpose, and questions that provide the critical framework for the study. Detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and role of the researcher were also presented to orient the reader to the overall context of the study. Following these details, a section concerning the ethical consideration for the study was included. The outline of data collection methods, instruments and protocols, and procedures provided specific details of the multiple data collection methods that were utilized within the study. The chapter concluded with a description

of the analysis methods the researcher used to evaluate the data and a discussion on how the trustworthiness of the study was maintained throughout all aspects of the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Having laid the groundwork for the research problem and the research design in the previous three chapters, Chapter Four turns its attention to the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into the following divisions: Compilation Protocol and Measures, Demographic and Sample Data, Data Analysis and Findings, and Evaluation of Research Design. Through these divisions and subsequent subdivisions, the story that emerged from the research will be brought to light.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

In this section of Chapter Four, the researcher presents a detailed account of the compilation protocol and measures that were taken in the conducting of the research study. The following protocols were used to assemble the necessary data for the study: Interview Question Expert Panel Protocol, Data Collection Protocol, and Data Analysis Protocol.

Interview Question Expert Panel Protocol

Having developed a list of questions for the semi-structured interviews that were being conducted with both Senior Ministry Leaders and Gen Z Leaders, the researcher selected three individuals to evaluate the interview questions in regard to the overall research questions to ensure that the questions being asked would be effective in revealing data that would answer the guiding research questions. Three individuals were selected for specific reasons. The first participant was a member of Gen Z and was selected to pinpoint if the language of the questions would be understood by the demographic and elicit the desired information. The second participant was a member of an older generation who works closely with and oversees Gen Z individuals in a similar capacity to a senior ministry leader. The third participant was selected for expertise in the field of Communications to evaluate the questions from that aspect. It is

important to note that the three participants were voluntary and were not participants of the research population. The interview questions were provided to the participants via email and each participant reviewed and evaluated the questions and then submitted feedback via email.

Participant 1 provided valuable comments as a member of the Gen Z population and indicated that the question referring to "post-Christian upbringing" would likely not be understood, or possibly misunderstood, and recommended that this be explained in further detail or simply reworded entirely. It was predicted that Gen Z members would assume that this meant they were not brought up Christian which for some who did come from Christian homes would be offensive in its misunderstanding. It proved to be valuable advice because some Gen Z interviewees did demonstrate considerable confusion when presented with the word "post-Christian." Before addressing the post-Christian culture in the Gen Z interviews, the researcher was careful to explain the definition and provide context, this proved prudent, as the more it was explained and understood the richer the responses became.

Participant 2 felt the questions hit the mark from a senior leader's perspective and did not offer any recommendations for rephrasing the questions. He believed they were sufficient for eliciting the needed information.

Participant 3 looked at the questions from a more semantics and grammatical aspect and offered several minor changes that allowed the questions to flow better and take on a more conversational tone. This was primarily beneficial for the Gen Z participants as the more conversational the tone, the more transparent they became, thereby, providing rich thick data. It was quickly discovered that an overly formal or professional tone caused them to be suspicious and quiet.

Data Collection Protocol

Following grounded theory research methodology, data was collected using an iterative process and was conducted in four separate phases. The following discussion documents the collection process through the use of an Observation Protocol, interview protocol, Elicited Documents Protocol, and the Field Journal Protocol.

Observation Protocol

Observations were the first on-site interaction with the participants. After arriving at the research location, the researcher checked in with the gatekeeper and then would speak with the senior ministry leader and meet the Gen Z leaders that were to be interviewed. During the staff meeting, the senior leader introduced the researcher to make the entire staff aware of her presence, and then at this point the researcher faded into the corner and silently observed with no further interaction. All observations were recorded but not transcribed as much of the meeting was multiple individuals speaking at once with side discussions or collaborative interactions. Site A was video recorded as this was the original intent for all staff meeting observations, however, there were significant challenges with getting the whole room into focus. At this point, it was determined by the researcher that it was not necessary to have a video recording to accomplish the overall objective of the observations which was to purge research bias and get an understanding of the demographic, culture, and environment of the research site. After completing research at Site A, all other staff meeting observations were audio recorded. Extensive notes were taken during the observation on the observation rubric (Appendix E) and these notes became an important part of the researcher's Field Journal.

It is important to note that Site D was the only location that did not involve a staff meeting observation. This site was included as a result of theoretical sampling and was not a

church site but rather was an interview that was conducted at the district level of the Assembly of God which is tasked with overseeing all Assembly of God churches that exist in the individual states. Throughout data collection, it became apparent that incorporating the perspective of a senior ministry leader who oversees district-wide Gen Z leaders would be a helpful perspective in understanding the preparation level and characteristics of these leaders, especially when incorporating ongoing leadership development. This is discussed in further detail in the Data Analysis and Findings section.

While the observation protocol for this study was initially designed to provide seed ideas, purge any research bias, orient the researcher to the site environment, and give a broad sweep of the research landscape, it was discovered quickly that the observations played a much more critical role in the collection of data than initially expected. It was during the meeting observations that a portrait of the church culture became readily apparent. As this culture came to light in the context of the meetings and was then overlayed onto the interview data, it revealed that the culture of the church was an integral, although often hidden component, that was woven into everything that was said later in the interviews. It became further evident that church culture was a key factor in leadership preparation and ongoing development.

Interview Protocol

Once observations were completed at the research site, interviews were scheduled and conducted with participating senior ministry leaders and their Gen Z counterparts. Each participant was given a consent form (Appendix K-L) that was discussed, signed, and collected prior to conducting an interview. A copy of the consent form was also given to the participants to keep for their records. Of the 17 participants, 16 interviews were face-to-face and conducted at the respective research site. One interview was conducted via Zoom and consent was obtained by

emailing the consent form to the participant and then receiving the signed document via email before the interview. This interview was with the district senior ministry leader who was included through theoretical sampling at Site D.

Two interviews were conducted with the senior ministry leaders. The first interview was unstructured and followed an interview question protocol (Appendix F). These interviews were crucial in gathering data related to the preparation level and biblical worldview of Gen Z leaders. They were also used to further orient the researcher to the culture and history of the church which brought another layer of understanding to what was being seen and heard throughout the interviews with each participant. The second interview with senior ministry leaders was a semi-structured interview that used an additional set of interview questions (Appendix G) that were used to establish what leadership development strategies were currently in place within the research site. The questions also targeted what different leadership development was needed to target the specific needs of Generation Z. It was in the semi-structured interview that additional probing questions concerning the church culture that had been observed in the staff meetings were asked. Due to time constraints of the senior ministry leaders, these two interviews were conducted on the same day with short breaks in between the unstructured and semi-structured portions.

Interviews with Gen Z ministry leaders were conducted with one semi-structured interview that followed an established interview protocol (Appendix H). The protocol was most closely followed with Site A as this included the first two interviews conducted with Gen Z participants. As subsequent layers of data collection and analysis progressed, themes that emerged from a previous layer were probed as necessary with ensuing layers. This, however, did not significantly change the interview questions. It was quickly discovered that the questions

were effective in eliciting the data necessary for answering the research questions. It was also discovered that the data the Gen Z participants offered across the research sites coincided greatly. Each participant merely added more subtle nuances to the patterns and themes that emerged from previous interviews, therefore, although each interview was unique in the data that it collected the interview question protocol remained intact throughout the course of data collection.

The interview protocol for the district senior ministry leader was a slightly modified version of the senior ministry leader questions. Since only one interview was conducted with this participant, questions from the unstructured and semi-structured interview sets were selected and merged into one set of relevant questions (Appendix I).

Interviews with senior ministry leaders and Gen Z leaders did not follow a particular established order but were based on the schedules of the participating leaders. The original intent was to conduct interviews with senior ministry leaders before interviewing the Gen Z leaders, however, this was not always possible, and as research progressed it was determined that there was no benefit from having interviews follow any established order. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in their entirety. Following the transcription process, interview transcripts were emailed to each participant for evaluation to confirm that they were accurate and that no given information needed to be changed. The researcher offered each participant the option to have transcripts, emailed, mailed, or hand-delivered given the confidential nature of the interviews. All participants expressed the desire to have the interview transcript emailed. None of the participants in this study requested that the interview transcript be amended in any way.

Elicited Documents Protocol

During the study, there were only three elicited documents that were logged on the Document Record (Appendix J). As documents that proved necessary to be included in the research came to light, permission was obtained from the necessary participant and then carefully logged on the Document Record.

It was at first anticipated that an elicited document would be gathered from the participants that outlined their basic job description and daily schedule. This aspect of the study was included in the event that there may emerge in the data some type of pattern that would indicate there was a discrepancy between the senior ministry leader and Gen Z leader's interpretation of the job description or daily schedule. There was no such pattern and, therefore, it was quickly discovered as data collection progressed that this was unnecessary to the answering of the research questions. All participants were asked to briefly describe their role and what a typical day looked like at the beginning of the interview.

As data was collected from each site there was only one instance where there seemed to be any significant discrepancy between what was expected from the leader and what the job description outlined. This came from the only part-time participant. During the interview, this topic was explored, and it was determined that it was not necessary to elicit a document from this participant. The option of eliciting this document remained throughout the course of the study, however, it was not utilized.

Recorded Documents. Besides the printed staff meeting agenda that was given to the researcher at the start of the staff meeting conducted at Site A, there were only two other documents that were elicited during the study. First, a document that was utilized by the participants during the staff chapel time at Site B was included. The researcher included this

document because of its relevance to the spiritual growth development aspect of ongoing leadership development that became a component of the study's theoretical model. The second elicited document also came from Site B and was repeatedly referenced in one of the interviews with a senior leader at the site. This document titled "Staff Roles and Responsibilities" was a very detailed list of specific tasks that were assigned to each staff member. It also included which staff member(s) oversaw those tasks being done and which team lead was responsible for the person who had been assigned the tasks. This document was included in the document record because of its relevance to themes that emerged within data collection that pointed to Gen Z leaders' desire to avoid particular tasks or claim they did not know they were responsible for a specific task. This document was the solution to those issues within research Site B. It was determined through data collection and analysis that no other documents were needed for the successful answering of the research questions.

Field Journal Protocol

Throughout the entire study, the researcher carefully maintained a field journal that included detailed records of all the observations, summaries of conversations, questions that arose as the study progressed, insights that were discovered, and issues that emerged throughout the study. As these items were collected, all relevant information was added and ultimately compiled into a three-ring binder. It proved to be a valuable resource for the tracking of progress that led to making critical decisions for additional data collection and analysis. Furthermore, it became a way of providing integral documentation of the entire research process that became a key part of the audit trail. During the entirety of the research study, the field journal remained independent from the memo-writing process.

Data Analysis Protocol

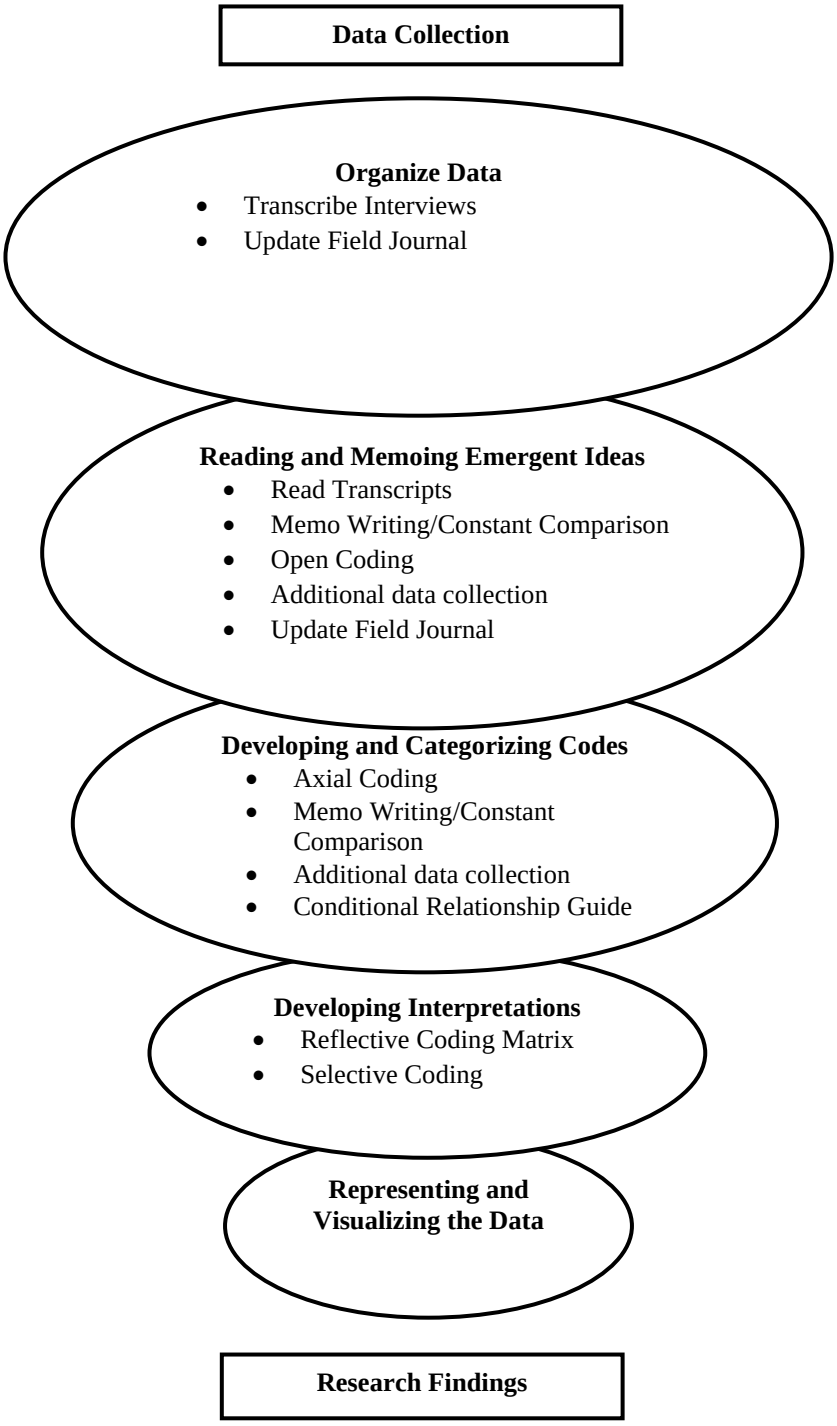
Data analysis protocols followed what was expected of grounded theory research methodology. For this study, the protocols included a Data Spiral Protocol, Coding Protocol, which was comprised of open, axial, and selective coding, theoretical integration, and finally, Memo Writing and Constant Comparison. Within the coding process, a conditional relationship guide and reflective coding matrix were used to aid in identifying the salient patterns and themes that rose to the surface during the analysis process.

Data Spiral Protocol

Data analysis for grounded theory is not a linear process, therefore, analysis was conducted using the strategies Creswell (2011) describes as a "data analysis spiral" (p. 183). For this study, as data collection and analysis transpired, each layer of collection and analysis was added to the spiral moving ever closer to the overall findings of the study. The process by which this was done is outlined in the data spiral depicted below:

Figure 1

Data Spiral Protocol



Coding Protocol

As interview data was collected and transcribed, coding progressed through the iterative processes of grounded theory research. The specific steps for this research study are described as follows:

Open Coding. Open coding involved making a first pass through the interview transcripts and breaking the information down into smaller pieces based on the themes and patterns that emerged. This researcher started the process by using Atlas.ti qualitative coding software but found it to be cumbersome and had a learning curve that was determined to not be worth the struggle or within the researchers learning style. The researcher found the process of systematically and manually interacting with the data by reading and clumping data to be more beneficial to remembering and marinating in the information. The first pass through the data mined the following list of codes that emerged from Site A:

Table 3

Open Coding Example - Site A

Open Coding
Site A:
Unprepared for ministry
Learn ministry by doing
Lack of people skills
Don't see the big picture
Immaturity/inexperience of age
Post-Christian worldview
Passionate for a cause
Undervalue older generations
Need/want mentorship
Desire to develop people
Generational erosion of biblical worldview
Need more hands-on experience
Pastor is my boss
Spiritual stagnation
Polarization
Strengths are weaknesses
Desire for further skill training

The second pass through data captured additional categories and themes that emerged from Site B's observations and interviews. During this phase of the open coding process, data collected from both Site A and B identified additional categories. The researcher then refined overlapping codes and compiled data into spreadsheets for each category with a brief summary of the data and corresponding names and time stamps for where it was found in the data. The following table shows an example of this process:

Table 4

Open Coding Category: Lack of People Skills

Name	Time Stamp	Summary
Evan	6:25	Gen Zers lack people skills; "pastoring is a verb, not a noun"
Matt	31:59	Not prepared for the people part of leadership; lack people skills
Natalie	15:26	Poor people skills; don't see the big picture of people
Natalie	19:04	Don't want to step on toes; don't want conflict
Natalie	21:42	Poor communication; don't see the big picture so don't use communication as a means of heading off bigger problems
Hailey	32:34	Don't realize the loving people involves a lot of behind the scenes work that no one sees
Henry	6:34	Unprepared for dealing with parents
Henry	30:19 31:41	Everything is conducted through social media; Face to face communication is hard – they aren't used to it
Scott	14:10	Discovered that his high expectations of people have become a challenge that has to be overcome
Scott	16:39	Finding it difficult to motivate people; learning you have to give them ownership over it and make it fun.
Mike	5:38 6:55	Unprepared for dealing with the people's problems
Mike	11:13	Social media has dramatically affected people's ability to connect
Allison	19:56	The challenging part is how needy some people can be
Brittany	31:41	It's a people job – people are hard

In the final stage of open coding, the researcher further refined code labels and categorized them under the research question that would be most relevant. As data was gathered in further layers, additional codes that came to the surface were added to the open coding codebook. What resulted from that process is represented below:

Table 5

Open Coding Codebook

RQ1: From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, to what extent, if any, are they seeing a difference in the leadership preparedness of Generation Z as compared to other generational leaders	
Code	Descriptive
1-1	Unprepared for ministry
1-2	Learn ministry by doing ministry
1-3	Lack of people skills
1-4	Work hard to not work hard
1-5	Have to be motivated differently
1-6	Don't see the big picture
1-7	Age vs. generation
1-8	Don't know what they don't know
RQ2. To what extent, if any, has the documented erosion of biblical worldview development and post-Christian upbringing of Generation Z manifested itself in new Gen Z Christian ministry hires?	
2-1	Post-Christian worldview
2-2	Polarization
2-3	Strengths are their weaknesses
2-4	Work hard to not work hard
2-5	Need to know the why behind the what
2-6	Lack ownership but need ownership
2-7	Unhealthy focus on Gen Z
2-8	Technology/social media
RQ3. What, if any, ongoing biblical worldview and leadership development strategies are in place to further prepare and develop newly hired Generation Z ministry leaders, and what are the components of these strategies?	
3-1	Staff devotions/chapel
3-2	Book/podcast recommendations
3-3	Church culture
3-4	Mentorship
3-5	District Conferences
3-6	Self-directed
3-7	Lack intentionality

RQ4. From the perspective of Gen Z ministry hires, in what specific areas of leadership skills or worldview formation do they feel they require or seek further development?	
4-1	Need/want mentors
4-2	Developing people/team building
4-3	Navigating cultural issues
4-4	Skill/role training
4-5	Being coached vs. micromanaged
4-6	Want to be part of the process
4-7	Age not used against them
4-8	Spiritual growth investment
RQ5. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, what different leadership preparation and development, if any, is needed for Generation Z as compared to previous generations?	
5-1	More hands-on experience
5-2	Coaching/collaborative
5-3	Being part of the process/ownership
5-4	Mentorship
5-5	Equipped for cultural issues
5-6	Expansion of apologetics
5-7	Firm foundation of truth

This codebook represented all the major patterns and themes that emerged from the data and became the springboard for further analysis.

Conditional Relationship Guide. Utilizing a conditional relationship guide became a critical part of moving the themes found in the open coding process into another layer of analysis. For each code that was established in the process of open coding, it was brought through a series of questions that gave the concept more shape and identified the implications that the theme had within the research setting. The questions that were utilized in moving through this process were as follows:

- *What* is [the category]? (Using a participant's words helps avoid bias)
- *When* does [the category] occur? (Using "during. . ." helps form the answer)
- *Where* does [the category] occur? (Using "in. . ." helps form the answer)
- *Why* does [the category] occur? (Using "because. . ." helps form the answer)
- *How* does [the category] occur? (Using "by. . ." helps form the answer)

- With what *consequence* does [the category] occur or is [the category understood? (Scott, 2004, p. 204; Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 5)

As these questions were asked for each code, the data was compiled into a conditional relationship guide table. An example of this table is given below and the completed relationship guide for all the categories that were acquired from open coding can be seen in Appendix M.

Table 6

Conditional Relationship Guide

Conditional Relationship Guide						
Category	What	When	Where	Why	How	Consequence
Learn ministry by doing ministry	Learning that is not in the context of formal Bible College preparation programs	Happens once hired and in the workplace	In the context of working as a paid staff member of the church	The discovery that there is learning that can only take place in the context of where one is actually doing the job and not in the classroom	Part of further preparation and development Happens outside of formal learning	Bible College preparation is only one part of preparation Further development happens within the work context
Don't see the big picture	Senior leaders describe it as a failure to see the interconnectivity of the church body as a whole	It is an ongoing issue that is present among Gen Z staff	Happens within their specific roles	Failure to see how what they do impacts other roles Failure to see how the smaller mundane things entwine with other jobs, tasks, roles, people	How it shows up: Don't include others outside a specific area who might be impacted Lack of Communication	Important tasks are left undone Important communication doesn't take place Frustration with a process Other generations overlooked or undervalued

This relationship guide proved pivotal in the analysis process for several reasons. First, it allowed the category to move from just a label into a concept that had more shape and depth. Second, it allowed the researcher to take a look at the category from multiple angles and

ultimately see it from a 360-degree view which helped understand the implications of each category in the overall picture of what was happening in the data. Finally, from this analysis categories began to intertwine and form relationships with each other pushing the process of open coding into the next layer of analysis.

Axial Coding. The Conditional Relationship Guide served as the transition point between the open coding process and the axial coding process. This guide brought to the surface relationships between categories and, therefore, the first step in axial coding was to merge and rename redundant codes.

During this overall process, an additional layer of data was collected from Site C. Based on the emergent themes from opening coding and the initial stages of axial coding there was a more focused direction in the observations and interview process at Site C that took on two forms. First, through data analysis from Site A and B, it became apparent that church culture played a critical role in the unintentional development of ministry leaders in the work setting, therefore, there was a heightened awareness and focus on this aspect in the data collection at this site. Second, since this site was used for data triangulation, the core categories that emerged during the initial steps in axial coding were probed to determine if data saturation had been reached or if new patterns or negative examples emerged that should be added into the analysis process.

After data was analyzed from all three sites it was clear that data saturation had been reached and during the axial coding process, the open coding categories were distilled down into five key categories: Age vs. Generation, Biblical worldview erosion, Generational characteristics, Underdeveloped, and Church culture. These key categories were further broken into subcategories. Each subcategory was then defined and key quotes and examples that were

found in the data were compiled to confirm that these categories and subcategories were data-driven and not the conclusions of a biased researcher. The following table represents an example of the Axial Coding Codebook. The complete codebook can be found in Appendix N.

Table 7

Axial Coding Codebook

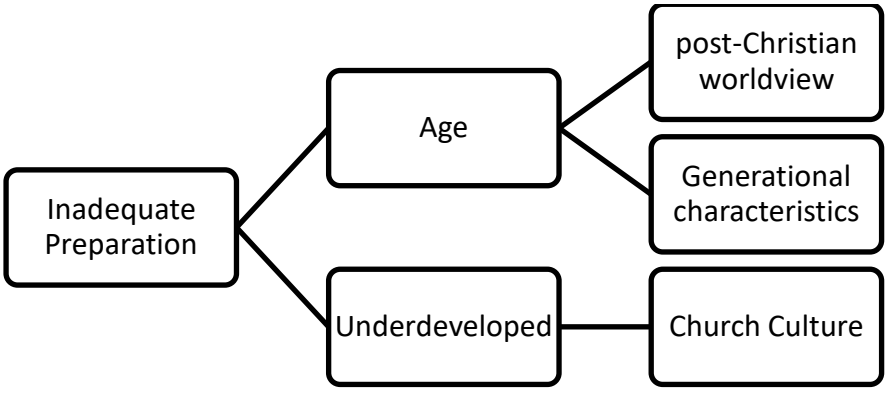
Code	Full Name	Overview	Example/Quote
Underdeveloped			
1-1	Bible College too academic	Bible Colleges focus too much on academic learning and not enough on practical, real-world experience. Missing the people aspect of training.	[Allison, 21:58] "Bible college is a bubble. . .. need to do a better job of preparing students for life outside of college. . . students going into ministry need to learn how to get into the dirt."
1-2	Limited hands-on experiences	Need more practical experience during formal education	[Matt, 37:57] Learning needs to be hands-on [Scott, 6:25] Hands-on approach is best
1-3	Learn ministry by doing ministry	The job is best and most fully learned on the job	[Evan, 22:30] appear more prepared from a Master's Commission [Henry, 5:20] Not prepared at school – prepared at an internship [Matt, 11:32] "learned ministry by doing ministry" [Rick, 16:48] "I think the only way that I ever would have been prepared for some of the things that I wasn't is just – the only way you get prepared is just doing ministry."
1-4	Professors disconnected from practical experience	Many professors have been out of practical ministry for too long	[Matt, 37:04] Learning is theoretical from professors who have not been practicing
1-5	Missing critical components in education	Not learning essential practical skills needed in the church and not learning how to deal with people	[Mike, 5:38] Unprepared for dealing with the people problems [Henry, 6:34] Unprepared for dealing with parents [Matt, 45:17] "Don't know how to tackle big issues" [Dara, 34:58] Inadequate training – Bible school education only takes you so far. [Rick, 19:42] "Oh 100% anything that has to do with social media or photo editing. I didn't have any preparation for that, and that is a huge part of ministry."

Since this table represented the end result of axial coding following theoretical saturation, the next step was to move the five key categories towards the selection of one overarching category that emerged as the primary critical issue that represented the recurring trend in the data.

Selective Coding. Once five key categories were determined through the process of axial coding the process of determining the big idea of the data began. Through analysis and comparison, it was clear that what rose from the data is that the five key categories told a bigger story. Stepping back and looking at the big picture of what all participants communicated, it was noted that the one thing that both groups – the senior ministry leaders and the Gen Zers – all agreed upon, without any real intention of doing so, was Gen Z leaders were not fully prepared for ministry. There were, of course, many reasons for this that were communicated, and depending on the group, there were varying factors that had led to this outcome, but what emerged from the process of analysis was that the five categories were the five key variables that were entwined in such a way that they pointed to the overarching issue: Gen Z has had inadequate ministry preparation. The following model represents the relationship between the five key categories as they entwine to result in the overall outcome:

Figure 2

Selective Coding Model



From this model, it can be visualized how each variable impacts the others and the cumulative result is that no one thing has been the cause of Gen Z's inadequate preparation for ministry, rather, a combination of factors had contributed to the reality of the situation these leaders and their senior leader counterparts now face. This is further discussed at length in later sections of this chapter.

Reflective Coding Matrix. The Reflective Coding Matrix is often described as a ". . . loom for waving a storyline of the many patterns discovered in the Conditional Relationship Guide" (Scott, 2004, p. 120). This tool was, therefore used in pushing the five key categories out of axial coding and into selective coding. Furthermore, it is a great resource for moving the data from analysis into the formation of a theoretical model. The following table represents the work product of this process:

Table 8

Reflective Coding Matrix

Reflective Coding Matrix					
Core Category:	**Gen Z Limited Ministry Preparation**				
Processes (action and interaction)	Focus and limited experience	Technology Post-Christian Upbringing	Technology Post-Christian Upbringing	Formal prep and influences	Church mission and goals
Properties (characteristics of category)	Age	Biblical Worldview Erosion	Generational Characteristics	Underdeveloped	Ministry leadership culture
Dimensions (property location on continuum)	Don't know what they don't know Age vs. generation Emerging Adulthood	Post-Christian Affects Tolerance Lack of firm biblical foundation	Unhealthy focus on Gen Z Strengths are their weaknesses Pendulum swings Work hard to not work hard Conflicting/competing characteristics	Bible colleges too academic Limited hands-on experiences Learn ministry by doing ministry Missing components in education	Lack of intentionality Continuing education is undervalued Focus on getting the job done Focus on pushing forward a specific mission Loss of critical influences Self-directed development
Contexts	Intergenerational Experiences	Biblical knowledge and application development	Intergenerational Awareness	Practical experience	Intentional development
Modes for understanding the consequences (process outcome)	Seeing beyond self and own experience	Firm foundation of Biblical truth	Seeing through other generational lenses	Learning from others	Developed leader and leadership Thriving Church culture

Memo Writing and Constant Comparison Protocol

Through all stages of the analysis process, memo writing, and constant comparison were used as critical tools for pushing the data through the coding process. Memos were written after each observation and interview conducted at each site. They documented the questions, struggles, highlights of emerging themes and patterns, and recommendations for further analysis or data collection. Memos served as an overall "debrief" that distilled a large quantity of information down into a manageable portion. An example of the memos written throughout the data collection and analysis process can be found in Appendix O.

Constant Comparison. Constant comparison was also an essential component of the analysis process and occurred at all levels of coding. During open coding, constant comparison was utilized as a method of comparing excerpts of transcript data to create the initial list of codes. During axial coding, constant comparison was implemented as a means of comparing codes with codes to determine where they overlapped and where they could be merged to refine the list and ultimately create categories that connected them. In selective coding, comparison was employed to compare each category with the others to determine relationships that existed in the process of determining one overarching theme that made sense of all the categories.

The primary benefit of constant comparison is it allows for the determination of expansion, contradiction, or support for selected codes and categories (Delve, 2022). During the comparison process in this study, there was no contradiction among the codes, therefore, no codes needed to be adjusted for this reason. As iterative layers of data collection proceeded, constant comparison expanded many of the codes that were initially selected. For example, as more interviews were conducted the initial code of "wanting to be part of the process" which reflected a desire for ownership and being trusted to do their job was also nuanced by the fear

that age was being used against them and their perceived "need to prove their credibility." Through constant comparison, each layer of data allowed for more dots to be connected until a cohesive, rich, and thick picture emerged.

The combination of these protocols provided the stepwise process through which this study progressed. It is believed that through this detailed explanation this study could be effectively replicated with integrity.

Demographic and Sample Data

The data collection for this study was conducted at four research separate research sites and included a total of 17 participants. The participants were comprised of two primary groups: Senior ministry leaders (N=7) and Generation Z ministry leaders (N=10). The following section provides greater detail of demographic data by providing descriptions of the Site and Participant Data.

Research Site Data

Research sites were selected through criterion sampling as ministry locations were required to have at least one senior ministry leader who had hired and directly supervised at least one Gen Z paid ministry leader for a minimum of six months. Based on this criterion three research sites were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling. The final research site was selected through theoretical sampling. The following descriptions provide a more in-depth view of these settings.

Demographic Overview

Table 9

Demographic Site Data

SITE	DESCRIPTION	SIZE	YEARS IN EXISTENCE	# OF PAID STAFF	# OF PARTICIPATING SENIOR LEADERS	# OF PARTICIPATING GEN Z LEADERS
A	Church	0-500	6.5	5	2	2
B	Church	1000-1500	14	22	3	6
C	Church	500-1000	88	14	1	2
D	District	N/A	100	N/A	1	0
TOTAL					7	10

Site Descriptions

Site A. Site A was selected through snowball sampling as it became a potential site through the recommendation of a senior ministry leader who was aware of its qualifying Gen Z leaders. It became the first research site due to the first availability of all its participants. It is an Assembly of God church in the Midwest that has an average attendance of around 250-300 people. The church began as a church plant six and a half years ago and remains without its own church building. The church offices are located in rented business space and the church itself currently meets in available rented space located throughout the community. At this location, the participants included the lead pastor and associate pastor. The lead pastor was a member of the Millennial generation, and the associate pastor was a member of Generation X. Both were considered senior ministry leaders as they oversee the Gen Z participants and are or would be an integral part of the leadership development process. The Gen Z participants at this location included the youth pastor and the worship pastor.

Site B. Site B was selected through purposeful sampling. After having reached out to the Minnesota District of the Assembly of God staff for information on churches in the state that would have Gen Z ministry leaders, this church was on the list as potentially qualifying. The

church was planted by the Assembly of God denomination a little over fourteen years ago, and currently has an average attendance of just over 1000 people. Senior ministry leader participants were the lead pastor and two associate pastors. These three were part of the four-person Executive Team. Of the three senior ministry leaders, two were members of Generation X and the third was considered a Millennial. All three worked directly with and oversaw the Gen Z participants. The fourth member of the Executive Team was not interviewed as he did not work directly with the Gen Z participants. The site included a total of seven Gen Z ministry leaders. Six of the seven members of Generation Z participated in the study. One was on maternity leave and, therefore, unavailable for participation. The participants represented a diverse conglomeration of ministry leadership roles including a youth pastor, technology leaders, and creative team leaders. Each participant leads and oversees other teams of people under them, and all were in some way involved with younger Generation Z members.

Site C. Site C was selected through purposeful sampling and based on the recommendation of district personnel. The church is considered an established Assembly of God church having been in existence since 1934. It was located in the rural Midwest and maintains a current average attendance of around 1000 people when both in-person and online formats are considered. One senior ministry leader was interviewed and was the leader who hired and directly oversaw the Gen Z participants. This senior ministry leader was the lead pastor and is a member of the Baby Boomer generation. Two Generation Z members were screened for participation in the study and included a Youth pastor and a Children's pastor.

Site D. Site D was selected by theoretical sampling. It became apparent through the iterative process of data collection and analysis that including a site at the district level of the Assembly of God was pertinent to the study. After reaching out to the district, one participant

was selected for a semi-structured interview. This participant, a member of the Baby Boomer generation, was believed to be the most knowledgeable on the issues that were addressed in the study and would be directly involved in the implementation of an ongoing leadership development model for Gen Z ministry leaders. The interview protocol that was used for senior ministry leaders was adjusted and questions that were selected were based on themes that emerged from axial and selective coding.

While there was no observation conducted at this site, it was clear that there was a culture that was trying to be intentionally cultivated across the district. The vision statement for the district includes four prongs: Church planting, healthy churches, healthy pastors, and missions. The district has been and is currently implementing some key initiatives that focus on the whole person development of church staff. Many of these are still in their beginning stages and have only involved a handful of ministry leaders, but a growing culture of leader and leadership development was being established to combat what is believed to be an undervaluing of continuing education in pastoral ministry as a whole.

Demographic Participant Data

The following data table offers a compilation overview of the participants. The demographic data is followed by individual descriptions of each of the participants. The participants were given pseudonyms and are listed alphabetically rather than by site location to further protect their identities.

Table 10

Demographic Participant Data

Generation Z Participants						
Name	Generation	Gender	Full or Part Time	Role	Years in Leadership	Preparation for Ministry
Allison	Gen Z	F	Full	Admin/Creative	2	Bible College
Brittany	Gen Z	F	Part	Worship	4	Bible College
Dana	Gen Z	F	Full	Creative Lead	2	State College
Henry	Gen Z	M	Full	Youth	3	Bible College
Lance	Gen Z	M	Full	Children's	7 mo.	Bible College
Mike	Gen Z	M	Full	Tech	2	CC/MNSOM
Rick	Gen Z	M	Full	Youth	2	Bible College
Scott	Gen Z	M	Full	Tech	2	Hands-on
Thomas	Gen Z	M	Full	Tech	1	CC/MNSOM
Trey	Gen Z	M	Full	Youth	7 mo.	Bible College
Senior Ministry Leader Participants						
Allen	Baby Boomer	M	Full	District Staff	40+	Bible College
Brandon	Baby Boomer	M	Full	Lead	30+	State College
Chris	Gen X	M	Full	Lead	20+	Bible College
Evan	Gen X	M	Full	Assoc.	20+	State College
Hailey	Gen X	F	Full	Exec/Creative	14	Bible College
Matt	Millennial	M	Full	Lead	15	Bible College
Natalie	Millennial	F	Full	Exec/Assoc.	14	Bible College

Generation Z Participant Descriptions

The following descriptions are of the Generation Z participants and give a general overview of how they came into ministry and what type of preparation was involved in their training for ministry. The participants are in alphabetical order to match the above demographic table.

Allison. Allison grew up as a pastor's kid and in 5th grade moved from an established church to a neighboring Minnesota community where her parents planted the church where she is currently employed. Growing up she was very affected by legalistic views in the church, and these were the catalyst for a period of rebellion that is common to pastor's kids. After renewing her relationship with God, she was called into ministry at the age of eighteen. She went to an Assembly of God Bible college for a year and declared that she hated everything about it. She

loves authority when it makes sense and felt that authority there just did not make sense. In addition to this, she felt the college was fake and treated people differently and she again struggled with what she felt were legalistic views. Leaving this school, she transferred to a Bible college outside the denomination and in another country. This environment offered a more hands-on experience and taught her "how to think" rather than "what to think" which challenged her worldview development. She believes that had she stayed at her initial Bible college she would not have been as prepared for ministry as it was too much of a protective bubble that she believes does not prepare people for working in the real world. Having graduated in 2019 she has now worked at the church for two years.

Brittany. Brittany grew up in an environment where church was a fundamental part of life. Most of her K-12 educational experience was in a private Christian school. Her desire to become a worship pastor was a natural process that arose out of her love of music. She received a four-year degree from an Assembly of God university and interned at the same church for all four years. Many of her peers wanted to find positions at huge churches that had great resources, but Brittany decided to take a different direction. She felt that in the larger churches you were, "so unneeded . . . . you're never getting used, you're never getting experience. . . .I wanted to go somewhere that needed help, you know, actually needed people and had a need. . . .and you are seeing the practical side of things or like, the practical side of churches under 1000 people. . ." She worked full-time at a church for three years as the worship pastor and in the last 18 months has taken a new position as a worship pastor in a church with an average attendance of 250-300 people.

When asked what she felt unprepared for in ministry there were two aspects that rose to the surface of her experience. First, the challenges of working with people who are always

difficult and continually demand your attention and focus. Another primary challenge was the spiritual toll that ministry takes. It has been difficult for her to adjust to the fact that her pastor is now her boss. This requires that the influence and role her pastor previously had in her life needed to be replaced in another way.

Dara. Dara went to a local state university and graduated in 2019 with a major in Studio Art. Working in a church was never in her life plan. In 2019 she began this church and quickly got involved in young adult ministry. Not long after arriving at the church, she submitted her resume to the pastors. It took a long time to get to where she is, but last summer they created a position for her and she has been working in her current location for 9 months. She began as an Administrative Assistant, but her role is now switching to be the assistant to the Creative team leader. She is excited about being able to put her degree more to use while taking on a leadership role.

As she has become an active part of vocational ministry, she reflects that she was largely unprepared for the spiritual toll ministry would take. She always communicated that the challenges of navigating cultural issues in youth ministry can be overwhelming and she recognizes the need for more development in that area.

Henry. Henry grew up in the church at which he is now employed. He dedicated his life to Christ as a teenager in the youth group. His current senior leader to whom he directly reports was his youth pastor growing up. After high school, he went to an Assembly of God university for all 4 years and majored in Pastoral Studies. He interned at a church near the school for all four years of college. He was initially hired at this current church as a part-time Children's pastor and transitioned into Youth pastor a little over a year ago. He feels he became prepared for ministry through his internship and the mentoring he received from the youth pastor during his

internship. He posits, “This prepared me so much more than any classroom content could at Bible college. Not that it wasn’t good or valuable, but there’s just a different level of learning that comes through experience, especially in ministry, then sitting in a classroom. . .”

Lance. Lance grew up in a strong Christian home in rural Minnesota and his desire to be in kid’s ministry was born out of a desire to not have to go to the adult service when he was in the sixth grade. His father left the heating and air industry and took a full-time position as a Children’s pastor, and at that point, Lance began to become more serious in his own pursuit of God’s calling on his life. Being so heavily involved in Children’s ministry for most of his life, there came a point in his senior year of high school where he questioned if his desire to continue in Children’s ministry was his desire or God’s desire for his life. It became clear, however, over the next year that God was guiding him in that pursuit. His passion for his calling was validated when he entered an Assembly of God university and applied himself academically in a way he had never done in high school. He graduated in 2021 with a major in Children and Family Ministry and a minor in Christian Studies. He interned at two churches during his education, one of which was at the church in which he is currently employed.

Overall, he believes that his Bible college did a good job of preparing him for ministry. Once in full-time ministry, however, he began to understand that much of what he had learned in the classroom was overlooked or not fully understood because it lacked the context of actually being in the position.

Mike. Mike planned his entire high school career to go to a nearby Assembly of God university to major in business. Having grown up as a pastor’s kid, he never cared to be a pastor. Despite this, he acknowledges that there was a long-term stirring in his heart to go into vocational ministry that took some time for him to accept. After Covid-19 hit, he came home and

determined he would not pursue business but also decided not to go back to the Bible college to pursue Pastoral Studies. He stayed at home and received his two-year associate degree at a local tech college. He is currently working on formal credentialing through the Assembly of God.

Having come into vocational ministry through a more scenic route, he has discovered that he was unprepared for the challenges of helping people through difficult life challenges. He also has struggled with the spiritual stagnation that has resulted from losing church as a means of spiritual growth once it became his place of employment.

Rick. Rick grew up with "an old school Assembly of God background." He dedicated his life to Christ in second grade and remembers being in church whenever the doors were open. Having also come from a family with a long military tradition, he was passionate about the military and the plan for his life was to do whatever it took to become part of a military special forces unit. In his senior year of high school, he knew God was redirecting him into full-time ministry and although he was determined to do what God had called him to do, it was difficult to give up a long-held dream. He followed God's call and attended an Assembly of God university. He graduated with a four-year degree and was immediately hired as a youth pastor at a church that was only a handful of years into existence. He has been working at the church for approximately two years. He loves where he is at, and believing in the importance of longevity, he plans to stay as long as God allows him to be there.

Now having a little ministry experience under his belt, he has discovered how unprepared he was for the challenges of dealing with people in the ministry setting. He also has struggled with the spiritual stagnation that has come with church being the place of employment. Being a highly driven individual, he has taken self-directed, proactive steps to combat these challenges.

Scott. Scott grew up Lutheran and dedicated his life to Christ during his sophomore year of high school. By the end of high school, he was involved in three different churches. During this time, he was asked to help in planning Wednesday night services at his home church to attract more young people. He quickly discovered the church did not want change. Through this difficult experience, the pastor at the Lutheran church encouraged him to choose one church and one ministry to pour his efforts into. Taking this advice, he came to the church he is currently working in as a young adult and took on a volunteer leadership position quickly. He has since graduated with a two-year degree at a community college and is now finishing up his ministry credentials through the Minnesota School of Ministry (MNSOM) for pastoral licensure. He plans to remain in vocational ministry but does not plan to go to Bible college since he prefers to "learn by doing" and hopes to continue to do that in his current position.

Thomas. Thomas is currently 22 and has been in ministry for two years now. He was raised Baptist and in a Christian home. He dedicated his life to Christ when he was around the age of eight. He was in church every time the doors were open and felt that he really grew up around ministry. After high school, he went to a state college for a year to major in business. During that year he felt the Lord was telling him that he was not where he was supposed to be, so he went to live with his brother who was already a part of the church where he is now employed. Eventually, he began to work at the church full-time and has really learned on the job. He is happy where he is at, as this is his dream job. As to what the future holds, he is just waiting and praying for what comes next.

He believes that learning the job while on the job has better prepared him for the rigors of ministry. He still, however, struggles with the spiritual impact of working at church on Sundays rather than simply attending church on Sundays. He believes his strong Christian friends have

been a significant help in holding him accountable as he has traveled through a spiritually dry season.

Trey. Trey came from four generations of Assemblies of God pastors. His grandfather pastored the church he currently works in over 25 years ago. Having grown up in this type of vocational ministry environment he always loved ministry and felt a strong pull to continue the family legacy. He does not recall a particular moment or emotional experience where he felt God called him into ministry but recognizing the gifts and passions God had given him throughout his life, he took a step of faith and enrolled in Bible college. Trey graduated in 2021 with a major in Pastoral Studies and minors in Bible and Theology. He was highly sought after from Assembly of God churches around the country having graduated as the Pastoral Studies Graduate of the Year but was happy to come to a more rural church.

While at Bible college he realized that cultivating spiritual growth would be an integral part of being an excellent spiritual leader and, therefore, has worked hard to combat the spiritual stagnation that he discovered was part of vocational ministry. He communicated that his preparation for navigating cultural issues with the youth has been inadequate and he would love for more training and development in this area.

Senior Ministry Leader Participant Descriptions

Allen. Allen has been involved in vocational ministry for over forty years. He graduated from Bible college, was hired as a youth pastor, and worked his way up to senior pastor of an established church. He has been working at the district level of the Assemblies of God for the past ten years and he oversees the churches and pastors across the entire state. He was selected as a participant for his 30,000-foot view of ministry leaders and specifically Gen Z leaders.

Brandon. Brandon has been the lead pastor of his current church for 21 years and has a total of 31 years of ministry experience. He was not initially trained as a pastor. Having obtained a master's in College Administration, he worked in Student Personnel Services in another state. He ended up being a Director of Juvenile Court in that particular state and then moved to Minnesota and worked as an administrator in a suburban Minneapolis school district. In his 30s, he began to attend an Assemblies of God church where he later accepted Christ. Shortly after that, he was hired at the church as the Business Administrator, however, he was routinely assigned more ministry-related tasks. Realizing that doing both resulted in doing neither of them well, he made the leap into vocational ministry and sought his pastoral credentials. Ultimately, he came to be where he is now in 2001.

Chris. Chris is the senior pastor and church planter of his current church. After completing a four-year degree at an Assembly of God Bible college he worked as a corporate pilot until God called him into full-time youth ministry. He remained at the church that initially hired him for about two years and then worked for ten years at an established church as the youth pastor and later the associate pastor. Following his time there, he left with his family to a larger Minnesota community and planted a church. He is now beginning his fifteenth year of ministry at this thriving planted church.

Evan. Evan is currently a senior ministry leader at a medium-sized church plant in the Midwest. He has a background in mental health and holds a master's degree in Psychology. After a conversation with his former pastor, he was offered a position as a youth pastor. He had no formal training or development in vocational ministry and completed his pastoral licensure through the International Ministerial Fellowship (IMF) and then later obtained his credentials through the Assembly of God. He ultimately learned and prepared for pastoral ministry on the

job while being mentored by his senior pastor. Not having intended to go into vocational ministry he did not feel well prepared for the job. He had not grown up in the church and he discovered quickly that he felt inadequate in Bible knowledge, he related that ". . . I did not lack people skills, and I didn't lack, I don't think leadership skills. I lacked ministerial skills in the fact that I didn't know – I didn't know Scripture that well. So, for me, that was a big challenge." As he has gained a greater understanding of the Bible, he has discovered that it is not necessary to go toe-to-toe in knowledge with someone who has a biblical degree, he knows how to take care of people. For him, "pastoring is a verb, it's not a noun." He has been in pastoral ministry for over 15 years.

Hailey. Hailey describes her arrival into pastoral ministry as less about planning it and more just falling into it. She completed a four-years at an Assembly of God Bible college with a degree in Psychology. She was involved with planting the church with her husband and through this process, she turned her attention to vocational ministry. She is currently on the Executive Team and oversees the Creative Team.

Matt. Matt was saved as a teenager, and this radically changed the focus of his life. Within the first year of his new relationship with Christ, "he felt the call of ministry in my life, and I never detoured from that moment forward." He went on to complete a four-year degree at an Assembly of God university. He is currently in his 15th year of ministry and is a senior ministry leader of a church plant in the Midwest. Although he felt as though he had a good idea of what it looked like to be in pastoral ministry and feels that his schooling and practical experiences had prepared him well, he discovered that nothing really prepares you for the hard things in life that people you serve are faced with, such as conducting funeral services for the child who died at the hands of a drunk driver or taking daily trips to the hospital to visit the

deacon's wife who rolled her car. Another challenge that is difficult to be prepared for is the reality that "the higher the level of leadership, the lonelier it gets."

Natalie. Natalie is currently a senior ministry leader and has been at the church in this role for 14 years. Planning to go to college to enter vocational ministry, she initially started college at a Baptist Bible college. After completing her first year, she transferred to a nearby Assembly of God Bible college believing that "it just made more sense." She graduated with a four-year degree in Youth Development. She chose this degree program because she believed it was "safe," as she admits that she was terrified to step out pastorally. She is now an associate pastor who oversees the "Next Gen" programs which includes all newborn through young adult ministries.

It was through these four sites and the seventeen participants interviewed within them that the data for this study was compiled. After the collection and analysis of data in Sites A and B, the researcher had met the targeted number of participants and it was believed that data saturation had been reached. Site C was used for triangulation of the data and as verification that data saturation had indeed been obtained. Site D was selected to add another nuanced layer to the data as it became increasingly apparent through the course of the research that part of the theoretical model that was developed as a result of the study would best be implemented at the district level of the Assembly of God denomination. This site was also used for triangulation of the research collected from the Senior ministry leaders believing that the district staff person who oversees all ministry leaders could offer a unique bird's eye view of the Gen Z ministry leaders. The interview data from Site D further confirmed that theoretical saturation had been reached.

This section was designed to give the reader a demographic overview and a general description of the research sites and participants. It is believed that these descriptions will provide context for a greater understanding of the journey through the data analysis and findings.

Data Analysis and Findings

In this section, the data analysis and findings that were found from the research are discussed at length. The discussion addresses the individual research questions that guided this research, and the section concludes with a summary of the findings as they related to all the questions and the overall purpose of the research.

Overview of Analysis and Findings

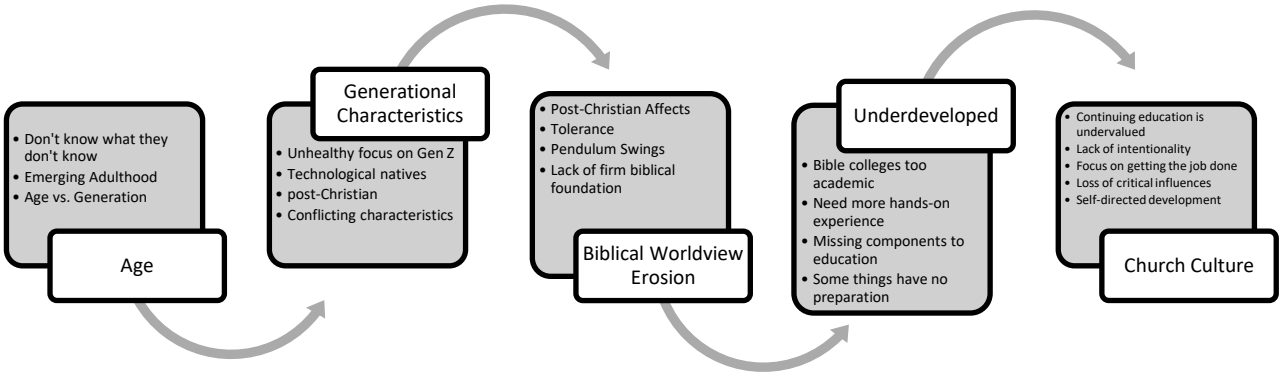
At the onset of this research study there were three overarching questions from which all five research questions were born: Is this different generation prepared to lead, has it been assumed Gen Z leaders are bringing to leadership a well-developed biblical worldview, and how ready is the church to continue ongoing leader and leadership development? Communicating an answer to these seemingly simple questions is not easy. The uncomplicated answer is Generation Z is not prepared for ministry leadership, worldview has been affected, and the church is in large part unprepared for ongoing development, but this simple answer does not tell the complicated story. The hurdle to overcome in recording the narrative is the limitations that words written in a linear manner have in painting a three-dimensional picture that involves the intertwining of so many variables. The narrative itself is as entwined as the people who live it. As research analysis unfolded, it was discovered the themes and patterns that emerged in one research question often showed up again in others, this makes the discussion of individual research questions a delicate balance between showing the overlap without becoming redundant.

Two additional challenges came with the endeavor. First, the variables involved in the unpreparedness of Gen Z leaders often overlap and are sometimes mixed in a way that made it difficult to isolate them from each other and place them into a specific research question. Another challenge in effectively relating the findings by research question was how the perspectives of the two groups of ministry leaders meshed together. As research questions are discussed, therefore, it often became necessary to include the perspective of both groups even in questions that specifically targeted the perspective of one group. Doing this gives greater credibility to the findings and paints a more in-depth picture of the research.

As depicted in the figure below there was a slow churning of the key variables that were involved in the leadership unpreparedness of Gen Z and their underlying causes that all served as landmarks in the overall findings.

Figure 3

Variables Involved in Unpreparedness



This figure serves as a roadmap for the excursion into the findings of this research as they are woven throughout all five research questions.

RQ1. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, to what extent, if any, are they seeing a difference in the leadership preparedness of Generation Z as compared to other generational leaders?

For this research question, a general presentation of what emerged from the data will be given followed by a discussion on the recurring themes that presented themselves as key variables leading to the difference in leadership preparedness. Underdevelopment in formal education, age, generational characteristics, and church culture were found to have an impact on the change in preparedness levels. Biblical worldview erosion was also a key variable that impacted leadership preparedness, however, this variable is discussed in the context of research question two.

As the discussion for the first question begins some of the responses of the Gen Z participants, when asked how prepared they felt they were for ministry, are included as this researcher believed it added additional credibility to the responses of the senior ministry leaders.

Unprepared for Ministry

The answer to the research question based on the findings of this study was there was a difference seen in Gen Z leaders' preparedness for ministry leadership. The best way to establish a picture of the landscape was to let the participants tell the story themselves. The following table gives the responses of all seven senior ministry leaders when asked during the interview if they believed Gen Z leaders were prepared for ministry:

Table 11

Interview Question – Are Gen Z leaders prepared for ministry?

Participant	Time Stamp	Quote
Evan	21:39	"Absolutely not."
Chris	20:13	"No!"
Natalie	9:32	". . . I mean, there is a lack of preparation."
Hailey	30:30	"No. But I don't think any of us really, were prepared for ministry. But especially more now. . . . But I think because this generation is so - not me focused, but 'what's in it for me? How can I save the world?'"
Matt	36:24	"I think even in my time, they [Bible colleges] were out of touch even then. Just, just being honest, and, and I do think that that affects why so many of them don't make it in ministry."
Brandon	23:52	"I would just say overall, it feels like the soft skill abilities of kids these days are, are less developed than when I was in school . . . . but how I learned, and what I could learn was different than now. I think, I don't think kids are coming out and, again, not everybody, obviously. But I think, overall, I that that bar has dropped a little bit and they're not coming out nearly as polished."
Allen	24:44	"We don't have that pathway [for good preparation] anymore."

Having been oriented to the simple answer, we will now dive further into the complicated variables that were involved in bringing the participants to this answer.

Underdevelopment in Formal Education

The consensus from senior ministry leaders was that vocational ministry preparatory programs were a factor in the under preparation of the Gen Z ministry leaders, although these viewpoints were limited by the fact that only two Assembly of God universities were represented within their perspectives. Nonetheless, it continued to be a recurring theme within the data that warranted its inclusion as a factor in Gen Z's readiness level for ministry. There are several reasons that are discussed in the ensuing conversation.

Bible Colleges Too Academic. While it remains a valuable component in preparation, it was of the opinion of the senior ministry leaders that it is often too heady and theoretical leaving them unprepared for the realities of the actual ministry environment. Evan commented:

> Bible college is a waste of time in a lot of ways because they teach you how to know the Scripture, but they don't teach you how to lead. I mean, then you're thrown into that, and unless you have a good lead pastor that will mentor you it's hard. I think it's always been

> a challenge for someone to go from Bible college to full-time ministry, but I think this generation in particular has more challenges because there's more discourse in the church.

Another older Millennial senior ministry participant reflected that even during his time in Bible college the academic program seemed to be out of touch. This was often thought to be because professors, who at one time may have been in vocational ministry, were now years removed from that experience and this affected their ability to adequately prepare students today. He commented, "I think many of them aren't fresh enough, they are out of practical experience. I get his theory, and he can get good ideas from what he's hearing from other people, but unless you're in it you don't know, and he might be teaching what he did 15 years ago." Ultimately, the perspective was - books smarts do not make a good employee. One senior ministry leader related that the Gen Z leader who had continued on with education and obtained a master's degree in leadership was probably the weakest, therefore, many of the senior ministry leaders commented that when they hire someone, they want someone with practical experience.

Most of the Gen Z leaders who had completed their ministry preparation by attending Bible college confirmed what was said by the senior ministry leaders. While they enjoyed their Bible college experience and felt it had prepared them for much of the ministry role, for Gen Z leaders now being in the leadership position, this was their first recognition that school is only one aspect of preparation. All participants emphasized the need for an extensive amount of hands-on experience in the preparation process.

Need for More Hands-on Experience. The overwhelming belief held by all participating senior ministry leaders as it related to hands-on experience was two-fold. First, they all agreed across the ministry sites that Bible colleges, at least the ones that were attended by the participants in this study, did not offer enough hands-on experience. This is not to say that the

internships provided in the preparatory programs were not valuable, they were just not believed to be enough, rather there needs to be more of an emphasis on practical experiences. One senior ministry leader summed up the overall consensus when he said,

> So I don't know totally what it's like not, but I think that they don't have enough hands-on experience, I think that you can get book knowledge, and you do an internship . . . . but that does not mean you're getting a better employee . . . . you're just getting someone who learned the system . . . . someone who knew what they needed to do to pass or get a good grade.

Second, it was believed the Gen Z leaders who had been prepared through a more hands-on experience and avoided Bible college altogether were better prepared for dealing at least with the challenges of working with people that seem to be prevalent in this age group of leaders. This route may have included a hands-on immersion program such as a Master's Commission, common in the Assemblies of God denomination, or direct on-the-job training while acquiring ministry credentials by attending a Community College and Minnesota School of Ministry (MNSOM) a credentialing program for the Assemblies of God.

Overall, the senior ministry leaders felt that Bible college played a valuable role in ministry leadership preparation it was just a limited one. In the words of one of the Gen Z leaders, ". . . it is inadequate training, it only takes [us] so far." It was mentioned in every interview across the board, senior ministry leaders and Gen Z leaders alike, that everyone enters vocational ministry unprepared in some way because as one leader so aptly stated, "The only way to really learn ministry is to do ministry."

Missing Components in Formal Education. One of the other aspects that factored into the unpreparedness of Gen Z leaders from the perspective of participants was important components of a ministry preparation program that seem to be missing. There were three major

themes that emerged. First, education overall, appeared to be less rigorous than it was in previous generations. One senior ministry leader summarized it by saying,

> I would just say overall, it feels like the soft skill abilities of kids these days are, are less developed than when I was in school . . . . how I learned, and what I could learn was different than now. I think, I don't think kids are coming out, and, again, not everybody obviously, but I think overall, I think the bar has dropped a little bit.

Another missing component that was repeatedly expressed by every participant in both groups was the limited preparation for dealing with people. Every senior leader participant expressed the fact that the Gen Z leaders struggled with interpersonal skills. Part of this was seen as a lack of formal training that should be included in a degree program that is training people for a people job. A disclaimer to this, however, is a generational component that reflects their struggle with interpersonal skills, therefore bringing into formal education an impediment that has been amplified as a result of this generation's specific differences. This topic, therefore, overlaps with the discussion on how generational characteristics have impacted their ministry preparedness. To add another layer of validity to that belief was every single Gen Z leader participant expressed in some way that they were not adequately prepared for dealing with people. A brief sampling of these types of comments can be seen in the following table:

Table 12

The Challenges of Dealing with People

Gen Z Participant	Ministry Role	Time Stamp	Summarization or Direct Quote
Henry	Youth	6:34	"I was unprepared for dealing with parents"
Scott	Young Adult	16:39	Finding it difficult to motivate people; learning you have to give them ownership over it and make it fun.
Mike	Other/Youth	5:38	Unprepared for dealing with the people's problems
Brittany	Worship	11:11 31:14	Not prepared for navigating challenges with other staff members Unprepared for how difficult people can be – "It's a people job – people are hard"
Rick	Youth	42:54	Unprepared for knowing how to develop other people/train leaders
Dara	Creative/Youth	8:32	Didn't know how to set boundaries with people
Lance	Children's	24:59	Unprepared for dealing with the unexpected difficulty of working with other staff members
Trey	Youth	14:19	"I think like, greater like interpersonal relationships or intelligence when it comes to that, I think would have been a great tool that I could have learned."

The third missing component of formal educational training relates to basic job skills. While the senior leaders had little to say about this, Gen Z leaders commented repeatedly on the need for better training in job-related skills. The best example of this was in technology-related areas which points to how there is a different level of preparedness that is required for this generation. When asked what they wished they had been better prepared for one Gen Z leader summed it up for several when he responded, "Oh, 100% anything that has to do with social media or video or photo editing. I didn't have any preparation for that, and that is a huge part of ministry." This sentiment was reiterated by many of the Gen Z leaders,

Some Things have no Preparation. One of the key points that added to the topic of lack of preparation is one that every senior ministry leader alluded to either directly or indirectly during the interviews. It must be further noted that it was also pointed out by all ten Gen Z participants - some things just cannot be prepared for in any context of leadership preparation.

One of the senior ministry leaders who had been in leadership for the longest period of time said it like this:

> I feel like when it comes to the practice of ministry, it's no different than when I jumped into ministry. It's like jumping off a dock and all of a sudden you're swimming, and you're like, 'Oh my gosh, somebody just called me in the middle of the night and said someone committed suicide.' Yeah, what do you do? There's no textbook for that. There's no, like, practicing scenarios of anything like that. So we joke around here quite a bit, you know, when we're doing crazy stuff . . . . and we say, 'They didn't teach you this at Bible college, did they?' . . . . and it's not a rip on Bible college, it's just a joke because there's just no class that teaches this.

Age

Another recurring theme concerning preparedness levels that came up in the interviews with senior ministry leaders was the difficulty in determining if what they were seeing in some aspects of their lack of preparation was an age issue or a generational issue. It was conveyed by all the senior ministry leaders in some fashion that age definitely plays a key role in their preparation level, they simply lack wisdom and experience that can only come with time.

Emerging Adulthood. Every Gen Z participant fell between the age of 21-26 and these years are known to be a time of life that is self-focused (Arnett, 2000). One Gen Zer related that she could see she is very self-focused because she is still single, lives on her own, and is away from other family members so the only person she really has to focus on is herself. It is a struggle she fights within herself.

Emerging adulthood is also a period of development when influences in your life change. All Gen Z participants alluded in some subtle fashion through the course of the interview that this was something they were dealing with in their life. They were struggling to replace professors, mentors, pastors, parents, and friends who had formally been strong influences in their worldview development, accountability, and leadership training. These influences were now disrupted because of the physical moves and life transitions that had taken place. It was

quickly apparent that most of those key influences for spiritual growth, worldview development, and leadership training had not yet been replaced.

Don't Know What They Don't Know. Another reality that comes with being young and inexperienced that was repeatedly brought up was explained by one senior ministry leader as "sometimes people are just unprepared because you don't know what you don't know. It isn't until you have on the job ministry context that something learned in a classroom is going to make sense." This reality made it often difficult to determine if what was not known was a function of age or generation.

Throughout the duration of the interviews with senior ministry leaders, there were specific characteristics that were brought up that they found difficult to differentiate between age or generation. The following table shows a summarization of those characteristics:

Table 13

Characteristics that Could be Related to Age

Senior Ministry Leader	Time Stamp	Characteristic(s)
Evan	9:58	Entitlement
	11:55	Social awkwardness
	18:12	Lack of awareness
	23:05	Limited organizational skills
Matt	16:06	Limited organizational skills
	19:15	Can't see the whole picture
	22:57	Entitlement
Chris	18:31	Laziness
Natalie	9:32	Lack of preparation
	11:55	Tunnel vision
		Inability to commit
Hailey	27:04	Laziness

In the challenge to determine if some of these were age-related or generational, it was repeatedly emphasized by the senior ministry leaders that, although age certainly was a factor, as is upbringing, what seemed to be true for this generation was the world these leaders grew up in had made these typically age-related characteristics more amplified. Chris stated, "Every older

generation looks at the young generation and says, ‘you’re lazy and entitled,’ but yet, in this generation, things seem to be magnified, you know, more so than before. Now you’ve got a generational component and an age component sort of meshing at the same time” Evan echoed this sentiment in relation to many of the characteristics that were compiled in the above table. He summed it all up by saying, “I think those characteristics are present in all generations or all people at that age. But I think the unique situation that Gen Z has grown up in exacerbates it all.”

Generational Components

Another variable that came out in the research that must be included as an indirect factor that contributes to the level of unpreparedness are generational characteristics that are attributed to Generation Z.

Unhealthy Focus on Gen Z. Data analysis for this research revealed there were two areas where an unhealthy focus on Gen Z has manifested itself and, therefore had the unintended outcome of inhibiting a more robust level of leadership preparation. First, in the church culture itself. According to Evan,

> . . .one of the biggest issues he has seen in the context of the churches is they’re targeting everything towards younger people. . . .they used to hit the middle range, and then it would hit ten years above and below, but we swung so far so a lot of stuff is targeted to, I believe, Gen Z, because they don’t know how to reach them any other way, so we try to put all our eggs in that basket.

The unintended impact of this is it is often difficult for Gen Z leaders to recognize and embrace the value of older generations. Furthermore, according to Matt, in their passion for their ministry role, which was for this study, entirely focused on youth, “they forget that their job is to reach the whole church – not just the people in their wheelhouse.”

The other area where the unhealthy focus manifested itself was in their upbringing. It was repeatedly brought up by the senior leaders, many of whom had raised Gen Zers, that as parents

the world tended to revolve around them as children. This concept was also repeatedly brought up and validated by the Gen Zers themselves. They see that while growing up everything was done for them by their parents which has led to a reality that Allison described as them pretending that they see the big picture while also expecting the world to be given to them. This fact, brought up by a Gen Z participant validated the senior leaders' perspective that Gen Z leaders have a significant struggle with following through on the mundane, tedious aspects of their jobs. Gen Z leaders, as both participant groups agreed, "work hard to not work hard." They are quick to try and pass off the burden of tasks they do not want to do or are not passionate about, to other staff members or just leave them undone entirely hoping someone else will do it for them. They want quick success and easy fixes. One of the significant unintended outcomes of this that has affected their level of preparation was the disconnection with the big picture of church ministry which is discussed later in the chapter.

Technological Natives. All senior leader participants believed the generation's status of never knowing a period of life without technology has had formative effects on their leadership. They have grown up in a culture where face-to-face communication is an increasingly lost art form that has led to handicaps in effective communication. Additionally, the nonstop dialogue on social media has created a hyper-critical environment that has resulted in a culture that Natalie describes as one, ". . . where everybody's offended by everything." This has affected emotional and mental health as well as cognitive ability such that Natalie continued the conversation by saying,

> I think it's given them an inability to process things in a slow, I mean, there's just absolutely no way you can process things as fast as they're coming at us; and so, it is like, the bandwidth is way taken up, and it's overwhelming and like, for them to just know how to do that in a healthy way. I think that has been really one huge thing. And like, the being present and okay with like, 'I don't have to be on my phone or see what's going on around me.

The constant distraction of technology was very real among the Gen Z leaders. Rick shared that he can often get around 1000 texts in one day. Natalie, who oversees a handful of Gen Z leaders commented that they are constantly distracted by technology, and "these distractions begin to look like so many things . . . apathy, uncommittal . . . they're distracted in a way that looks different to us because they can handle a lot of distractions and their attention is shorter. They can like, bounce, bounce, bounce."

All of these underlying effects accumulate and while not always seen, have manifested themselves in little and big ways within their leadership in several forms. Poor communication strategies, tunnel vision, and inability to commit were specific issues that were frequently mentioned by senior ministry leaders throughout the data collection.

Post-Christian. Along with the unique characteristic Gen Z has of being the first generation of complete digital natives, they are also the first generation raised in a post-Christian society as elaborated upon in previous chapters. This has, at least to some perceived extent, been a hurdle in Gen Z leader' overall preparation for their roles that has been different from previous generations. The Gen Z leaders expressed that there is a new level of hostility to Christianity in their generation that they are still learning how to navigate. Furthermore, as all of the Gen Z leader participants work with children, youth, or young adults in some capacity the job of leadership has been made more difficult by the post-Christian climate. Henry expressed that it has ". . . made it more difficult for students to engage in their own personal relationship with God because it's no longer woven into society."

As Christianity has been written out of society's institutions, what has been replaced is a worldview that has exchanged God for self-focus and instant handouts. Natalie summarized what the other senior leader participants also communicated, "They come from a worldview of

participation trophies, entitlement, and things being handed to them. They see what they want and assume they can just get there without having to do the work to get there."

Conflicting Characteristics. Another repeated theme that emerged as it related to general characteristics of Gen Z that impacted their leadership was a merging of strengths and weaknesses that do not show up as one here or one there, but rather as a conflict that manifested often at the same time. For example, one senior ministry leader commented that one of the crazy things about the generations was they could be "completely selfish and yet completely selfless" at the same time. This type of conflict of characteristics showed up in some way across both groups of participants. Mike, a Gen Z participant, expressed a desire and a little frustration because he wanted senior leaders to depend on him and trust him to do projects that he really wanted to do, but then shared a few moments later in a different line of questioning that he defined Gen Z as being highly undependable and he can see that in himself. The Gen Z participants typically did not make the connection that what they wanted was also what they had difficulty providing.

Another example related to this was a Gen Z participant who believed Gen Z was known for being individual thinkers. In a new line of question, he described how it is important for generational members to go along with what anyone says in a particular setting to not be accused of being intolerant or confrontational. Again, in this instance, there was no connection made between the two conflicting characteristics.

The table below summarizes some of the other conflicting characteristics that emerged from analyzing the data:

Table 14

Conflicting Characteristics

Ministry Leader	Participant Group	Time Stamp	Summarization of statement
Allen	SML	36:38	Love people better than other generations, but at the end of the day their purpose is more important than people
Matt	SML	39:25	Passion for the cause itself trumps passion for people
Chris	SML	4:37 5:11 18:31	Most selfish and yet most selfless Dreamers but can't see the big picture Work hard to not work hard
Natalie	SML	11:55 19:04	Want to commit but don't because of a fear of missing out Don't want to offend but offended by everything
Hailey	SML	20:13	Have the passion but don't want to do the work
Dara	Gen Z	31:24	Seek attention but not from people – want likes and comments
Henry	Gen Z	26:36	Individual thinkers – but go along with anything to not be accused of being intolerant
Mike	Gen Z	25:20	Not dependable – but want to be depended on
Thomas	Gen Z	1:01	Sensitive but brittle
Allison	Gen Z	18:32 27:26	"We think we can shoot for the moon – then wait for everything to be given to us" Want relationship but don't engage in relationship
Rick	Gen Z	50:41	Want ownership but don't take ownership

It was agreed that this conflict stems largely from the effects of technology, as Sean commented, "everybody is trying to grab for their attention," social media has "forced the extremes," and left them confused. Additionally, the diversity of the generation has polarized them into extreme tolerance that is at the same time intolerant. Allen, the district senior ministry leader, explained that this conflict plays out in their fear ". . . to stand against the individual in their own group, but they're not afraid to stand against individuals in other groups." There is a constant need to be something for one group of people and another for another group of people, leaving them living in what Allison, a Gen Zer, described as "a culture of dishonesty," that has ultimately left them conflicted without even being aware of it.

Church Culture

Another factor that emerged from the data seen as having contributed to the inadequate preparation of Gen Z ministry leaders was church culture. All senior ministry leaders recognized the limited or complete absence of intentional ongoing leadership development for paid ministry leadership staff and believed much of the onus for this fell on church culture at least as it pertains to the Assembly of God denomination.

Undervalued Development. Gen X and Baby Boomer senior ministry leader participants each brought up the idea that ongoing leadership development for pastoral staff has been undervalued in older generations, therefore, a culture has been bred that promotes the idea that it is not necessary, and any development that does take place should be self-directed. Although brought up by other participants, Allen, the participant who had been in vocational ministry the longest felt that was "a fairly accurate generalization. . ." From his vantage point, it is a situation that is,

> . . .also probably found more frequently in midsize and smaller churches. Large churches, usually, their pastors realize they have to continue a CEU [Continuing Education Unit] program because the people in their church all have CEU programs, and they have to learn things, new skills, especially with technology that they've not known before. The younger generation, I don't know that they love the CEU idea, but I know they love the mentorship idea. They love that feeling of being on the inside.

Expressed throughout the interviews with all participants was the theme that regardless of the specific reason, ongoing leadership development had been undervalued in the church.

Lack of Intentionality. Another factor that has been perpetuated in church culture that emerged from the data was a lack of intentionality. It was clear that *some* leadership development initiatives were taking place within the sites, but there was an acknowledgment that it was not very intentional in its implementation. Senior leaders often made comments like "we should do a better job at that," "we haven't been very intentional about that," "we could target

that better," or "we should think about that more." There are just so many other pressing needs that need to be attended to, that there is a lack of prioritization for this type of initiative. It was expressed at all three church sites that additional help from the district would be very welcomed as the sites felt the pressures of time, money, and/or other resource constraints. It was believed that leadership development initiatives that came from the district level would more efficiently address common issues all churches across the district were experiencing and "level the playing field of resources."

Focus on getting the job done. An additional aspect that is part of church culture that has eroded the urgency for and implementation of ongoing leadership preparation was the intense focus on just "getting the job done." As Chris put it, ". . . we're always striving." That need to push forward was incorporated into all of the church site cultures. Chris summed up the general theme by saying,

> So, if you're not bringing wins to the table, so it's almost like a positive motivation. It's like I want to contribute. And we have a vibe around here. Like, in the culture where we're going to win, we're going to do it bigger and better than last time, and if last time was phenomenal, this will be even better this year.

There is significant pressure to keep moving forward, not stagnate in what is being done at the ministry site. Unfortunately, that same focus on growth and expansion was not focused on leadership growth and expansion. The one exception to that pattern was Site C, where there had been recent recognition of the correlation between growing leaders and growing members. With the recent formation of a staff position dedicated to leadership development, Brandon posited, ". . . the hope is that by growing our staff, we will then by extension, grow the church."

Loss of Critical Influences. A final theme that came out in relation to church culture as a variable for inhibiting leadership preparedness was the critical influences that are lost once entering vocational ministry. Gen Z leaders shared they had lost the influence of mentors as they

made recent life transitions. They have also lost the influence of the pastor as their shepherd, as Brittany shared, “the pastor is now my boss.” Additionally, senior leaders reflected on the “loneliness of leadership.” These feelings were somewhat mitigated in Site B because of their intense focus on cultivating a relational culture, however, it was communicated across the research sites that once in vocational ministry, and common to leadership in general, there to some extent, is a loss of community that has not been replaced among paid leadership staff.

So many factors play into the preparation and lack of preparation of any leader, and the same is true with the Gen Z leaders. Along with that, among those variables, some are within control, and others are beyond control when it comes to intentional preparation. Additionally, it is important to note that some of the challenges Gen Z leaders encountered in preparing for leadership are realities for leaders in all generations. With these things considered and discussed with participants the data overwhelmingly points to the understanding that this generation brings with it a different preparedness level than previous generations.

RQ2. To what extent, if any, has the documented erosion of biblical worldview development and post-Christian upbringing of Generation Z manifested itself in new Gen Z Christian ministry hires?

As addressed above, post-Christian upbringing remains a factor that is woven into this generation and impacts many aspects of leadership to varying extents, depending on a variety of variables. It is, therefore, beyond the scope of this study to address all of those things with great specificity. The scope of the research, did, however, look on a general level at how post-Christian culture had impacted biblical worldview development in ministry hires and to what extent this may be impacting leadership.

Biblical Worldview Erosion

At the outset of addressing this research question, there were some challenging aspects that need to be mentioned. First, since no formal biblical worldview testing was conducted, and

the research was based on the perspectives of senior ministry leaders, the findings are rooted in just that – perspectives. The intent of this study was not to document a score on a test but to look for manifestations of the erosion of biblical worldview that have made an appearance in the organic setting of daily ministry. During the interviews with senior ministry leaders, this researcher asked the question, "Do you think the post-Christian culture and access to digital technology has had any impact on their [Gen Z leaders] worldview?" Five of the seven senior leaders responded in the affirmative. The other two senior leaders were unsure, and their responses can be seen below:

Table 15

Biblical Worldview Responses

Senior Ministry Leader	Time Stamp	Summarization or Direct Quote
Chris	25:32	"Yeah. I haven't noticed. I can't point say I put my finger on any, any particular level, of, of seeing that. I do feel like overall, our, the worldview – and this might be more because of chemistry – but the worldview that I feel on our crew, we all think very much the same. . . .because you breed a culture where you're looking for a strong biblical worldview without actually, you know, saying that it's part of what you're looking for."
Matt	52:36	"I don't know if there is erosion because I wasn't really looking"

As the interview progressed with both Chris and Matt, they both later admitted that they could see subtle manifestations of biblical worldview erosion among the leaders. The best overall summarization of what was communicated by the senior ministry leaders was in the interview with the district-level senior leader who oversees all churches and pastors in the state. When asked if post-Christian upbringing had affected the biblical worldview of the Gen Z ministry leaders in the state, Allen's response was, "Oh, huge - in a couple of ways."

The first way had been manifesting itself as some were entering Bible college. Allen gave a summary of a Bible knowledge test that had been given in recent years to incoming freshmen by a regional accrediting agency of some of the Assembly of God universities, one of which he serves on the Board of Regents. Most of the incoming freshmen at the Bible schools flunked the test with scores in the 40s and 50s. He summed up this first issue by saying, “They have no biblical worldview because they have no Bible knowledge.”

The second issue Allen related was concerning evidence that Gen Z leaders preparing for ministry are accepting of the term “hybrid biblical worldview” not understanding that “. . . a biblical worldview cannot be compromised, it either is or it’s not.” This does not mean these issues were specifically manifested in the Gen Z leaders participating in this study, but Allen’s wide vantage point of Gen Z ministry leaders across a state did point to the realization that the erosion of a biblical world does manifest itself at least to some extent in Gen Z ministry leaders because of their post-Christian upbringing.

Post-Christian Affects. What was quickly found in the course of the research was that while most senior ministry leaders did believe there was an erosion of biblical worldview amongst Gen Z ministry leaders, they at the same time felt like their Gen Z counterparts in these research settings had solid biblical worldviews and trusted them to preach and teach. This made it challenging to fully answer this research question with only data provided by the senior ministry leaders, so this researcher decided to pose the question to the Gen Z leaders to see if they could provide some thicker, richer data. The interview protocol for the Gen Z leaders was tweaked to add the same question that was asked of the senior leaders. The combination of both perspectives provided a more well-rounded picture that made it possible to better answer the research question.

Of the ten Gen Z leaders, eight of them had been raised in strong Christian, ministry-oriented homes. The other two had been raised in church and had been saved as teenagers. All ten of them believed their church background and upbringing had significantly impacted their ability to maintain a strong Christian faith despite their post-Christian upbringing. The senior ministry leaders also confirmed separately that they believed, although they saw erosion of a biblical worldview, they also believed the Gen Z leaders had solid biblical worldviews because of their strong Christian upbringing. Brandon summarized this sentiment best by saying, "I think it's [strong Christian upbringing] certainly mitigated the effects that it could have. We all still suffer from it. . ."

One of the repeated themes that continued to emerge throughout all the participant interviews was how the post-Christian culture's fixation on tolerance has been the primary culprit leading to biblical worldview erosion. Brandon described:

> Because you're bombarded daily, with this whole idea of radicalized individualism, I have my rights, and you have your rights too, your rights just can't - can't impinge upon mine. . . . we've actually redefined tolerance because tolerance isn't anymore – 'Okay, I'm going to tolerate the fact that you're wrong or we just disagree' - tolerance now is, well there is no right or wrong.

Tolerance. Evan felt that "There's a level of tolerance in this generation that I don't see in other ones, and I think that's become part of their biblical worldview." Dara, a Gen Z leader agreed and believed that this has permeated the church in an unhealthy way. Carrying that thought even further, Evan stated, "I think there's so many things that are taught that is not biblical, and they don't realize it."

This redefinition of tolerance has led to such careful attention to "loving people" that Henry, another Gen Z leader, described the subtle shift, even inside the church, that Christianity has become more about just "being good" and this idea is birthed out of the need to look tolerant

to a society that has become hostile to Christianity. One of the Gen Z leaders provided more of an example of how this might look in the leadership setting. Brittany described how she appreciated the new level of tolerance that has entered the church in the following statement:

> I think there's less, like, legality in kind of how I think people see God now. . . . because, like, you know, I see so many of my friends – people I know – and it's like, you know, like, nobody really cares if you swear, like, if you drink or don't drink, like, because I feel like there's just almost this, this common, like understanding of just like, we love the Lord, and like, live our lives, like in relationship with him. Like, that doesn't change that you know. . . .I feel like there's less just like, guilt and shame, like, put on things like that, or just like condemnation of just like, you're a bad person for this and that it's like you know, the Lord knows my heart and he knows like for me, I love him and like, I love other people and I'm pretty sure those are the two like greatest commandments.

The emphasis on loving people, avoiding guilt and shame at all costs, has led to the idea that one needs to adapt to the world to reach the world for Christ. In response to how post-Christian effects of tolerance are being seen in the Gen Z leaders, one senior ministry leader related it shows up in how they reconcile how to teach difficult issues that are not part of a biblical worldview. For example, how to handle a student in the youth group who is a girl but is now identifying as a boy and reconcile how to love that student and navigate that issue. She stated, "Gen Z leaders come from an interesting perspective in their generation that is different in previous ones. Where she would have been less patient and called it out right away – "the Gen Z leader in this case simply adapted to calling the girl, a boy."

One of the senior leaders believed that the new generation's embracing of tolerance in the church stems from watching the responses of previous generations to things that are so prevalent in our society today and they have adapted and adjusted their approach. Evan explains:

> I think the previous generations, I'll go back to like, with at least the gay/lesbian, that I think the previous generations, the church had such a hard stance, sin, sin, sin, sin, sin. They could not connect with the person without seeing the sin. So they, they hated the person, instead of hating the behavior. . . . So, I think that is a huge thing for this generation. The purity, the holiness, I think has been watered down misconstrued, changed into some kind of bastard version of what - pardon my language - of what it used

> to be. And I think part of that again, is because we tried to be too holy. . . .the pendulum has swung the other way.

Pendulum Swings. The idea that the pendulum has swung to the other side was shared by senior and Gen Z leaders alike. Sean, a Gen Z leader, believed this generation is "a generation of extremes." One reason for this, Rick believed, was because "there are too many competing things that erode your biblical worldview." These competing influences have caused one Gen Z participant to encounter what Hailey, the senior leader, described as "a whole crisis of belief. What do I believe? Why do I believe it, you know, and came out with maybe not such a perfect biblical view. . ." From the anecdotal accounts of several Gen Z participants, this is not an isolated problem. When asked if this was seen a lot among other students at Bible college, Lance recounts the following:

> Yeah, a lot. I see - so, optimism is a good thing and I think it's important that we have it. But we, the problem is, people need to be responsible with their optimism and that's where it's dangerous. Going to Bible College, and like, it's a pretty, it's an AG school, you know, it's a Christian school, and listening to some of our future biblical and theological majors and their views on crucial key points of our religion, and what we believe in, being false is super scary. I think I saw a lot of that at Bible college, and you really have to, you would think being at Bible college, it is a place where you can be vulnerable, to allow yourself to learn, but you also need to be on guard of what you believe in. And I think a lot of people come from different backgrounds, and they're experimenting in what they do because for the first time ever, professors are calling into question what your parents have told you. And so like, I remember, there'd be professors that would ask me questions, and like, almost against what my parents taught me and like, not in a bad way, but more in getting you thinking, and if you're not guided in the right way, that can be super dangerous. I think a lot of people leave Bible college with a different viewpoint of Christianity.

Hailey, a senior leader from another site, expressed similar examples and determined that this outcome is often, ". . . because of everything that's opened up to their eyes, they can go a different way, you know, and, well, if this wasn't true, and this wasn't true, then God's probably not true either, and so I'm gonna, you know, deconstruct my faith, which is huge with this generation."

This trend, applied in another Bible college led one of the Gen Z participants down a path that challenged her belief in the infallibility of God's Word. The idea was presented in class that the Bible is both fallible and infallible and she has since adopted this view – a relevant example of what Allen referred to as a "hybrid biblical worldview."

Lack of Biblical Foundation. Further exploration into why it was believed there have been such extreme pendulum shifts in worldview for this generation which have to some extent affected Gen Z ministry leaders led Rick to explain what he had seen frequently while in Bible college:

> I think it's because their faith was never really their own. I think it's because they're just like, I believe this because it's what dad said. I believe this because it's what grandma taught me. And then they don't know why it is they believe it, which I think that's just like a broad theme of Christianity as a whole. There's so many people where their faith is not their own, their faith is their pastor's faith, their faith is their parent's faith. And when they encounter some adversity of, you know, say they came in super conservatively, and they meet a professor who's super conservative, or someone in a church, who's super conservative, and they think they believe all the same things, and they do something that hurts them, instead of them saying, hey, no, no, like, I, my faith is my own, I'm secure. I've got deep roots. Yes, what he did was wrong. But that shouldn't mean that I should completely turn my back on, you know, on Christianity, or, you know, conservative Christianity and just completely jumped ship. . . . I think it's because their faith isn't their own, to be honest. Yeah, even kids who go to Bible school, their faith isn't their own a lot of times.

After stating this, Rick also shared that just that morning he had seen social media posts of at least four students who he had attended Bible college with now coming out and identifying with the LGBTQ community, listing their new pronouns and demonstrating an overt hostility to what had just recently been their Christian beliefs.

In the overall answering of this research question, it was difficult to ascertain any quantifiable extent to which erosion of biblical worldview had taken place among Gen Z leaders, but there was consensus that it was happening. As Brandon, a senior ministry leader, pointed out it is happening to any of us, it may be happening to all of us. Evan summed up what all senior

ministry leader participants believed, “Leading the church is more challenging today than it’s ever been.” They are coming from a post-Christian society. . . .and that is brought into ministry.”

RQ3. What, if any, ongoing biblical worldview, and leadership development strategies are in place to further prepare and develop newly hired Generation Z ministry leaders, and what are the components of these strategies?

Through the course of the research conducted at the ministry sites, Sites A, B, and C were church settings and Site D was the district offices of the Assembly of God. Each site provided a different array of opportunities for ongoing leadership development, but it should be noted that none of the four sites included any type of intentional ongoing biblical worldview development.

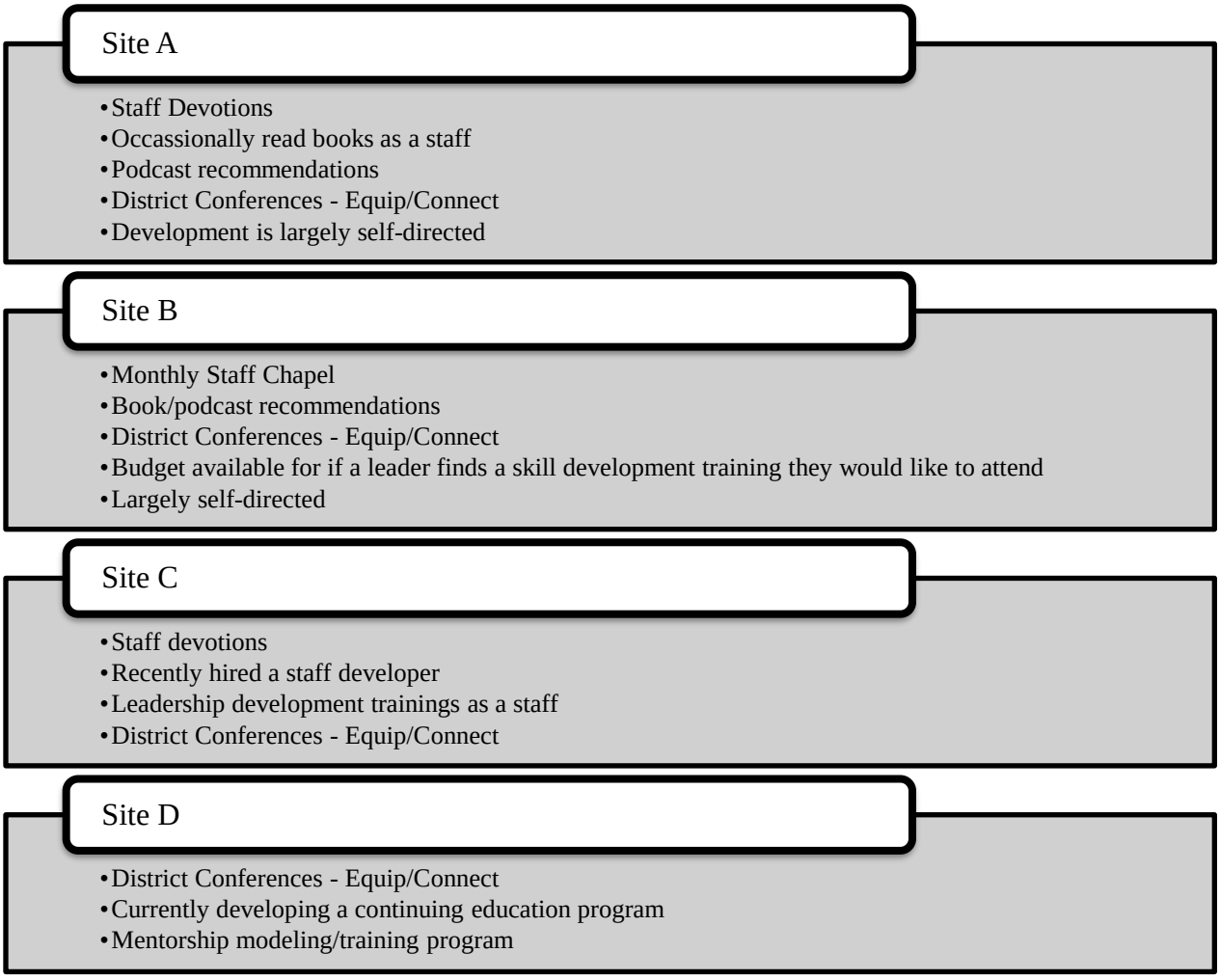
Ongoing development within the research sites took on two forms: Intentional development that was limited across the sites, and unintentional development that was accomplished through the cultivation of a particular church culture. It should also be noted that none of the leadership development strategies that were part of this discussion were targeted specifically at Generation Z ministry leaders, but rather included all paid leadership staff regardless of generation. Data analysis that was conducted specifically for this question was broken down into two categories such as they were seen in the research settings themselves: Intentional development and unintentional development strategies.

Intentional Development Strategies

The following is a table that outlines the specific opportunities for ongoing leadership development as communicated by the senior ministry leaders at the specific sites which will visually orient the reader for the discussion that follows.

Table 16

Development Strategies in Place



Site A. Site A is a burgeoning church plant in the Midwest that is still limited in the size of its staff and resources that can be devoted to ongoing leadership development. Participants at this site included two senior ministry leaders and two Gen Z leaders.

The staff meeting that was observed during the data collection stage did not include a staff devotional that week, however, the lead pastor did say this was a common practice at other staff meetings. The staff was getting ready to start a book study together on the book *Designed to Lead*.

Ongoing leadership development was largely self-directed except for occasional book studies that were done together and other leadership books or podcast suggestions that might be given out by the senior ministry leader. It had been recommended by the senior ministry leaders that both Gen Z leaders seek out a mentor. One Gen Z leader has been deliberate about following that instruction and has reached out to other youth pastors in the area. The other Gen Z leader had not followed through with this instruction. The Gen Z leader, having shown a difficult time relating to church members in older generations, had been instructed to seek out and spend time with ten people who were older than her over the course of six months. At the time of the observations and interviews, the Gen Z leader had not followed through with that instruction.

The state districts of the Assembly of God offer two conferences each year for paid staff and other volunteer leadership in the church. The Equip conference is designed to accomplish its namesake. Large group vision casting sessions are conducted as well as breakout sessions for various roles within church leadership that provide some leadership training or skill training on how to address common issues in the church. The second conference is the Connect Conference, and this two-day conference is designed to increase the connection of pastors with like roles across the state. These conferences are highly recommended, however, are not mandatory.

Site B. Site B was also a church plant that was considerably further along in the process in comparison with Site A. Participants for the study included three senior ministry leaders who comprised the Executive Team that oversaw all other pastoral staff. There were six participating Gen Z leaders at this site location.

This site conducts a staff chapel once a month which happened to take place during this researcher's staff meeting observation. The chapel opened with prayer and a time of worship and

then a member of the church who was home from the mission field led the entire staff of 22 people through a read/reflect/respond activity on Psalm 116.

The church budget does include a line item for paying the expenses of an outside leadership development or skills development workshop/event that a staff member may find and wish to attend. It was communicated by the senior ministry leaders that this was not often utilized.

Aside from this activity the intentional development strategies of Site B looked the same as those at Site A, with leadership book and podcast recommendations being the most frequent development strategy. Although mentorship is encouraged, there was not an intentional mentorship framework in place for the ministry staff, although there was a women's mentoring initiative in the church that was utilized by church attenders. Aside from the district-sponsored Equip and Connect conferences there were no other leadership development strategies that came from a district level.

Site C. Site C was an established church that had been in existence since 1934. Research participants at the site included one senior ministry leader and two Gen Z ministry leaders.

Weekly staff meetings include a staff devotional that is led by a rotating staff member. During the staff meeting that this researcher observed one of the participating Gen Z ministry leaders led the devotional by giving a ten-minute talk on a passage of Scripture. During the all-staff portion of the meeting, the senior ministry leader conducted a leadership development session based on the book *The Ideal Team Player.* The senior ministry leader pointed out that this portion of the meeting was often used as a time to incorporate leadership development topics.

The senior ministry leader at this site expressed a desire to intentionally develop leaders to have good character, be professional, and be competent. To this end, the church had recently created a staff position to focus on paid staff leadership development.

No intentional mentorship program was in place, although the senior ministry leader encouraged Gen Z leaders to find a mentor. This was self-directed as well as any other skill development training the leaders desired. As was true with Site A and B the only leadership development strategies that were provided at the district lever were the Equip and Connect Conferences. These were also highly recommended but not mandatory.

Site D. Site D was unique in that it was selected through theoretical sampling and was not a church site. The inclusion of this site was two-fold: to get a broader view of what patterns, if any, were being seen in Gen Z leaders across the state that may give more insight into the development of a theoretical leadership development model and to see what leadership development strategies came from a district level that were made available to the leaders at the church sites within the state. Besides the previously mentioned Equip and Connect Conferences that are planned and funded by the district there were several other leadership development initiatives that were being conducted or implemented.

One of the key initiatives that was taking place within the district currently is the development of a college that prepares leaders for vocational ministry in a cheaper and more practical manner. The target date for the official beginning of this initiative is 2023. Its goal is to provide a more hands-on, cost-effective, and well-rounded educational experience that serves as a better pathway to vocational ministry.

Another initiative that was being developed is the incorporation of continuing education requirements for ministry leaders in the Assembly of God. This is not happening at the national

level of the Assembly of God, however, according to the district research participant, this has been recognized at a state level as a needed and missing component of vocational ministry that exists across all other business, medical, legal, and educational institutions.

The district has implemented a mentorship program that mentors eight to ten ministry leaders above the age of 40, and also trains and pairs them with a ministry leader under the age of 40 to then mentor. These trained mentors, of both age groups, are then encouraged to take the model and training into their specific local church setting for implementation.

Finally, the district has included in its vision an intentional focus on nurturing healthy pastors. This involves intentional care of families through providing mental health counseling, as well as financial training and counseling. These resources are provided to all credentialed ministry leaders across the state.

Throughout the data collection process each senior expressed the recognition that more intentional development of paid staff needed to take place within their site, however, no other strategies were offered as a means of doing this. It was expressed at each site that further leadership development opportunities from the district level were needed and would be extremely welcomed.

Unintentional Development Strategies

Much can be said for the quiet, unintended impact of church culture on ongoing leadership development. Throughout the staff meeting, observations and the subsequent interviews with senior ministry leaders, it became apparent that there was ongoing leadership development that was both unrecognized and unintentional but had resulted in positive leadership development outcomes. The iterative layers of data collection in grounded theory research design provided the perfect opportunity to explore this emergent theme and further

probe the senior ministry leaders to discover strategies that they had implemented that they did not realize had further development outcomes.

Site A. During the observations and interviews, although merely a snapshot of the total picture, some characteristics of the church culture were revealed. First, it was clear that the church culture was one driven by authenticity. This is a core value of the lead senior ministry leader, and he repeatedly communicated in the staff meeting and in the interviews that he worked hard to model that trait and build that culture within the staff, and among the congregation as a whole. The culture of authenticity had unintentionally created a level of transparency and accountability that enabled the Gen Z leaders to be honest about their weaknesses and need for further growth.

Being a church plant with limited staff and resources it was also clear that there was a culture of survival. Getting the job done requires people to be spread thin and this definitely impacted the ability to incorporate an intentional leadership development plan.

Site B. During the site observation, it was abundantly clear that the culture that had been deliberately cultivated at this site focused heavily on the value of relationships. In the interview with the lead senior ministry leader, he related the following:

> "I would say if anything that I will fight for is just culture because I can't fake culture. And if we don't like each other in that room – we used to have to sit on a pulpit and I'd have to sit next to people I didn't even like and then pretend like, 'Oh, here's a great pastoral team' and I just, I don't do fake."

As a result of this previous experience, "culture is everything" and they have "fought to have a culture where it's fun." Throughout the interview process at this site, the phrase "work hard, play hard" was heard repeatedly and put into practice. The staff frequently incorporates fun events that include their families as part of their work routine. It has led to an environment where they are "literally like a big old family in the room." For anyone who walks into the church, whether

staff or member, it is a high priority that they feel they are valued and part of a relational community.

Because of the focus and value of relationships, there was considerable development that was taking place within the context of ministry roles that was happening without intentional focus. The relational culture had become a "hidden curriculum" for accountability and coaching among the leadership teams. One of the critical ways this had happened was through the development of the "Roles and Responsibilities" document. There had been building frustration over tasks that were being left undone and then when addressed the excuse would be given that the individual did not know that was his or her responsibility. It was expressed that this happened more commonly with Gen Z leaders. One of the Executive members who was interviewed related watching a business presentation and said:

> . . .I remember hearing the guy say, 'you can't hold people accountable to things you haven't made explicitly clear,' and I remember looking at John and saying, 'That's our problem we have.' That was pre our "Roles and Responsibilities," that was pre really like giving some definition. But I was like, you're trying to hold them accountable to stuff that we have not made clear on, and then we're frustrated that they just didn't see the bigger picture – that they just didn't kind of fill in the gap. They just didn't realize that there was a big need there and we needed them to step up.

As a result of this realization, the senior ministry leaders began to spell out roles more explicitly, and on paper so everyone knew exactly what was expected from them. What has been cultivated through this process is the unintentional development of accountability among all leadership staff and especially Gen Z leaders.

Another unintentional leadership development strategy that has been born out of the relational culture of the staff was each ministry leader's requirement to submit a list of "90 Day Goals" to their team leader/direct report. These goals are discussed during a personal meeting between the individual and the team leader and then revisited after the 90 days. The goals are

largely related to their job duties and pushing forward the mission of the church, but they aid in the push forward and avoidance of becoming stagnant in their roles. This strategy, again, although unintentional, has created a level of accountability that has pushed Gen Z leaders to keep developing, improving, and even seeking outside opportunities to continue learning. Furthermore, the development of 90-day goals has provided the opportunity for senior ministry leaders to provide some coaching to the Gen Z leaders that have added additional, yet unintentional, opportunities for their development.

Site C. The research observation at this site revealed there is a burgeoning culture of leadership development in the church. The senior pastor recently created a staff position that is devoted to staff development which will ultimately target the "whole person." Currently what has been implemented was primarily aimed toward expanding leadership skills, but there is the vision to expand that beyond just leadership concepts and into the realm of leader development as well.

To keep the focus on moving forward, the senior ministry leader has taken the growth mindset into the congregation at large and is working to develop processes and curricula that move individuals beyond where they currently are spiritually. Being a church with a long history, there was an expressed struggle to find a balance between keeping traditions and adapting to new things. The senior ministry leader remarked that he has ". . . people in this church who were here, you know, for years before I was, and we're gonna honor them. Now, they won't hold us back either." He used the analogy that,

> . . . it would not be okay if you repeated the same year over in school, that would make no sense. I'm gonna - here, I'm doing fifth grade for the sixth time, you wouldn't do that. But we'll do it here - or repeat this, and we have, I know we have, people sitting in our pews who've probably repeated the same year spiritually for the last 20 years.

This culture that places a significant value on growth and development was in its beginning stages at this site, but among the Gen Z staff it has been noticed and they express excitement about the opportunities to grow as leaders.

Site D. Because this researcher did not conduct an observation at this site, as it was selected to explore relevant themes and patterns that had emerged in the church sites that were believed to impact the development of a theoretical model of ongoing leadership development, the culture of the site, and therefore, unintentional development strategies that were present cannot be addressed.

To summarize the overall findings for this research question, there are ongoing leadership development opportunities that are provided at each research site. They are, however, limited, and senior ministry leaders communicated a need to be more intentional about the development of the staff, as well as the need for the district personnel to provide more frequent opportunities for senior ministry leaders. Data analysis also revealed that church culture played an important part in developing leaders without it being an intentional focus or opportunity. Although senior ministry leaders recognized the value and the need for ongoing leadership development, time and resources were expressed as significant factors in their limited implementation.

RQ4. From the perspective of Gen Z ministry hires, in what specific areas of leadership skills or worldview formation do they feel they require or seek further development?

The following Table represents the key topics that were presented by the Gen Z ministry leaders throughout data collection. Overall, they each expressed similar answers to this research question. The subsequent distillation of information from the Table is represented in a Figure that reflects five key areas of leadership that they believe they require further development. Following the visual representations of the information, a brief discussion follows on the five components of ongoing leadership development the data analysis revealed.

Table 17

Further Development Needs – Gen Z Perspective

Gen Z Leader	Time Stamp	Summarization or Direct Quote
Allison	50:20	Discipleship
	52:49	Ongoing skills training
	1:00:04	
Brittany	53:09	"I want more room just to be like, more creative."
	55:52	Spiritual development through Bible studies incorporated into the workday.
	59:47	Mentorship/Encouragement from someone outside the church
Dara	14:00	Spiritual development
	34:27	Training on how to navigate cultural issues
	57:43	Identifying issues that need to be changed
Henry	6:34	How to deal with real-world issues in the church
	19:30	Mentorship – Spiritual development Practical applications of personality tests/StrengthFinders tests
Lance	17:34	Spiritual development
Mike	5:38	Walking people through difficult issues/problems
	7:24	Spiritual development
Rick	19:42	Skill development – tech and social media related
	33:55	Mentors in the church and at the district level - "just people pouring into you. Sure, you know, to help you succeed in what you do in all facets of that, you know, personally.
	45:59	Training on how to develop other leaders
Scott	6:01	Spiritual development
	8:17	Mentorship
	21:46	Training leaders/developing people
Thomas	15:04	Training and developing other leaders
	21:01	Mentorship
	22:04	Making the gospel appealing to the next generation
	28:19	Navigating cultural issues
	33:31	Coaching – discipleship; ". . .It's important to have somebody holding your hand in front of you and some, somebody who you're holding that hand up behind you. . ."
Trey	14:19	Interpersonal/Relationship skills

The following Figure condenses the above information into the major overarching categories that served as the umbrella under which all other themes fit.

Figure 4

Expressed Development Needs

Spiritual Development. When Gen Z participants were asked what they had discovered as being the most challenging aspect of vocational ministry, nine out of the ten participants expressed the difficulty of overcoming the spiritual stagnation of "doing" church. The struggle that all nine of them communicated was summed up eloquently by Dara, who said:

> . . . working in a church setting, you wouldn't think that that would take away from your personal relationship with the Lord and your personal time of pursuing church and making time for yourself to be poured back into. So, when I first started working here, it was a lot of trying to find a balance of Dara that works here, and pours into people and serves and all these things, because, like I was serving, all in all of these different areas. . . . and so, I was here every single weekend, I'm here every single day. That balance was really hard to come by, and I was never here just to be here and to go to church and to worship, and so that took a lot out of me as an individual. So, while I was technically arriving at work, and in ministry and pouring into people, I was withering away, and so that is a challenge that has taken me months to kind of overcome and figure out how to take care of myself [spiritually] again . . .

The only outlier on this particular aspect was a Gen Z leader who had come from four generations of vocational ministry leaders who had the realization in college that this was an area of his life that he would have to be very intentional in nurturing. He stated:

> I think it's grown like a desire in me, which I think was birthed at North Central where it's like, I'm not just doing this to do this. I'm doing this for myself because I can't pour out what I don't have in me. Yeah, you know, and that built a fire in me where now it's like, I was told that before, and I'm like, I should be excited about this. I need to do this. I need to do this for me . . . . I need to do this for the students . . . . I just don't get how you couldn't do that, you know what I mean? How you couldn't prepare yourself and how you can't continue to grow yourself because these students are facing new challenges every, every week, and they need somebody pouring into them that knows God's Word and knows their culture and knows what they're facing.

The other nine participants expressed that spiritual growth was a significant challenge for them and, although they recognized that it was a specific area they needed to take the initiative in, they longed for a community of believers to come alongside them and help them through it with accountability, mentorship, or opportunities in the workplace.

When the topic of ongoing worldview development was addressed, all ten participants believed that current post-Christian culture had been a significant factor in leading to biblical worldview erosion in the generation as a whole and two of them specifically recognized some erosion in themselves. They were the two who expressed a significant need for this type of development to be ongoing and suggested two forms that this could take. First, to have a broader ". . . new course on worldview perspectives." Allison continued to explain there was a need for ". . . a non-Christian course, and a Christian course, so two of them. If I could say a practical thing because the world is not Christian. And if we stay in that bubble, we're gonna keep losing people because we don't know how to interact."

The second suggestion for ongoing biblical worldview development was offered by Dara who believed there was a critical need to expand familiarity and depth of biblical knowledge so the foundation of truth is strong enough to withstand the cultural challenges.

Skills Training. Along with the expansion of biblical knowledge, Gen Z leaders also expressed that expanding their skills in their specific roles was needed for ongoing development. Four of the ten participants expressed a need for skill training in social media/technology-related skills. They had realized that these were increasingly necessary skills in ministry, and they were completely unprepared for this through their respective ministry training programs. Much of what they learn now is self-taught through YouTube videos. Another participant recognized that ongoing skill development was an endemic part of other business industries but has been largely lacking in the church community. She stated:

> I think, like, I mean, another practical thing that could be done are hands-on things. You look at a hairstylist, they have to redo their course, every, every so often – and a lot of other professions, you have to get, or you have to relearn some things that you can stay in the know on the times because times are constantly changing and I think that's where the world outside of the Christian world has it right because they're always moving forward.

Navigating Cultural Issues. Among the Gen Z leaders, there was a tangible desire to continue to keep moving forward and understand the culture so they can impact the culture. All of the participants expressed a need to have training in navigating cultural issues. One participant commented, "I think you, you are so equipped for so much, but you have no understanding on the world." Many of the youth leaders were dealing with significant challenges with students who were beginning to adopt alternative pronouns and different genders and the leaders felt overwhelmingly unprepared for how to deal with these issues and be unwavering on the truth of God's Word while loving the individual. Mike expressed the following:

> I think, understanding the cultural realities of how they're - and how they're changing every few months, every few years. Yeah, having a rundown of that would be awesome,

> or some tool that is explaining that. How to - having possibly surveys of students and having that interaction with students. And that's where you build the relationship with the students to like, 'Hey, how do you feel you best receive this? How do you feel you best receive that?' And I mean, we do that in the business world all the time – 'how do you best receive criticism? How do you best receive this?' You know, and I don't think people are doing that for students and are continuing to grow in that. Because God's Word's the same today, yesterday, and forever, and we can continue to grow and learning his Word, which I think is crucial. But if you don't learn how to keep communicating to each generation to come, then it's pointless. Yeah, it doesn't carry the weight because they won't ever see it in that light. They'll see it as the old book, or their parents' faith or their grandparents' faith - and that's not changing God's word. That's just learning how to use God's word to get inside their minds and for them to truly understand truth.

Gen Z participants communicated an urgent need for help in navigating cultural issues and desire more experienced leaders to help them in this endeavor.

Mentorship. All ten participants communicated the value and the need for mentorship although almost all of them did not have a mentor. The lack of a mentor stemmed largely from two factors. First, they had recently moved from their Bible college location to the place of employment, and they still felt new to their area, therefore, they do not feel they know anyone well enough to ask him or her to be a mentor. The second factor was, that they are in a strange life stage where the mentors they had growing up no longer have the same type of influence on them in their new stage of life. This points back to the challenges of emerging adulthood. Regardless of the reason for no longer having a mentor, they overwhelmingly expressed that the lack had taken its toll. Henry summed up the sentiment of all of them by stating,

> I miss it because it was really good for me spiritually, so it is something I wish I had more of - that is on me. I know that I need to go look for it because it's not something someone's gonna say, 'Hey, can I be your mentor?' I gotta go look for that, but I think just the nature of my job stuff just gets so busy, and I feel like I should be doing that for somebody else, but I know that I also need that.

Another key theme that emerged through the data analysis as it related to the topic of mentorship was the necessity of it being a layered activity, meaning as Rick reflected, "You should always have somebody you're learning from and somebody that you're going into." Scott

summed up this common theme by saying, “It’s important for, like, for people who are like me who are going into ministry, and we’re trying to reach the next generation, like, it’s important to be discipling somebody, but also be discipled yourself, you know what I mean? And that’s a constant.”

Gen Z leaders are motivated by collaboration and coaching and have a deep desire to be developed through consistent, ongoing mentorship. Of the ten participants only two felt as though this need was adequately being met in their personal situations, the remaining participants recognized it was a key element of their ongoing development that they needed help in addressing.

Dealing with People. On the flip side of needing a mentor, one of the overriding aspects of the ministry role that all ten participants expressed as a critical need for ongoing leadership development was dealing with people. Depending on the specific leadership role the nuances of what they needed help with changed. For example, the youth and children’s pastors responded with similar requests for help expressed by Rick:

> I think probably dealing with parents or dealing with difficult students is probably another big one. Honestly, you can just sum it by saying dealing with people, yes, we learned so much about like, oh man, how to prepare the best message or, you know, hermeneutics and homiletics, and all these different things that are awesome things to know, but at the end of the day, like, the majority of my job isn't those things, like it is like, I need to write a message and I deliver it, but that's for 15 minutes on a Wednesday night, you know, whereas, a big piece of my job is dealing with students and, okay, I have a student who's dealing with some big depression stuff right now and I need to talk to them, or I have a student who just found out that their mom has brain cancer, and I need to call them on the phone and talk with them. I have no idea how to do that, you know, and those are stuff that I'm learning as I go. But it's not stuff I learned how to do at North Central, you know? And so, I think those kinds of things, just the real-world issues, yeah, was stuff that I wish I would have learned more about.

For other leaders, the most pressing need as it related to dealing with people was how to disciple and develop people to become competent leaders. These leaders are doing what they are doing

because they have a passion for God and people, therefore, they, “would 100% love training on how to develop leaders.”

Through the course of data collection and analysis, it was abundantly clear that Gen Z ministry leaders have a deep desire to continue to learn and expand their skills in these various areas. There were two major obstacles that presented themselves in their ongoing development: time and knowing *how* to do this intentionally while accomplishing the pressing task of ministry itself. All participants expressed excitement about the possibility of an ongoing leadership development model being incorporated into their job description.

RQ5. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, what different leadership preparation and development, if any, is needed for Generation Z as compared to previous generations?

With a similar structure to addressing research question four, the following Table gives an overview of responses given by the senior ministry leaders regarding the unique needs for further leadership preparation and development in Gen Z. Following the Table is a Figure that summarizes the main development areas that were expressed as needed. A brief discussion of each category follows.

Table 18

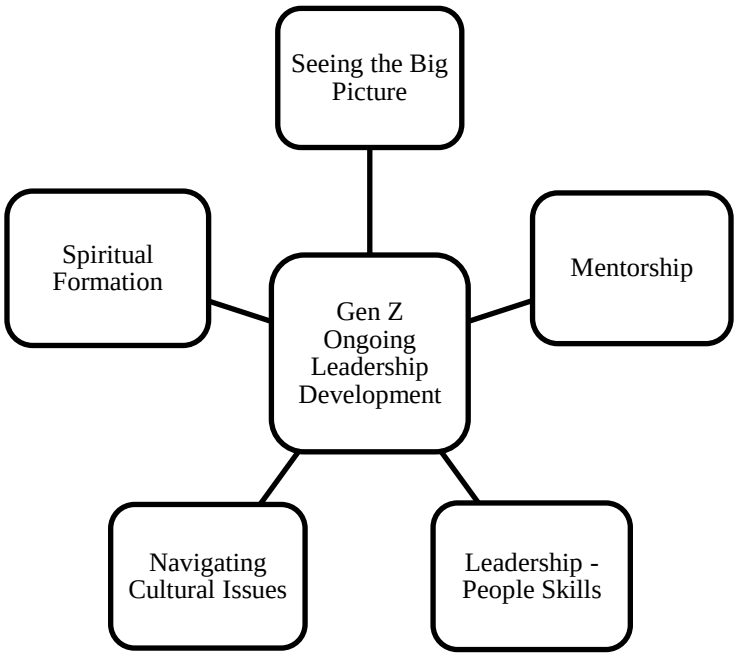
Ongoing Leadership Development – Senior Ministry Leader Perspective

Participant	Time Stamp	Development Need
Allen	7:16	Mentorship
	36:38	Long term strategy; Seeing the bigger picture
	47:18	Spiritual formation/Firmer Biblical foundation
Brandon	1:13:04	Interpersonal skills
	38:18	Developing people
		Leadership competency
Chris	18:31	Seeing the big picture
Evan	9:58	Ability to see beyond the immediate/big picture
	28:21	Navigating cultural issues
	47:20	Leadership skills/working with people; accountability
	55:18	Mentorship
		Collaborative coaching
Hailey	34:29	Broader apologetics
	48:45	Skills development – district level
	48:45	Seeing the big picture
Matt	19:15	Seeing the big picture
	28:49	Mentorship
	31:59	People Skills
	41:52	Spiritual development
	47:52	Leadership skills
Natalie	1:02:47	Mentorship
	1:04:33	Seeing the big picture

From these response topics, it was found that what the Gen Z leaders expressed as needs for development were remarkably similar to what the senior leaders expressed with the major difference being “Seeing the Big Picture.”

Figure 5

Key Components – Senior Ministry Leader Perspective



Seeing the Big Picture. As data collection and analysis progressed, there was a clear theme that emerged indicating that from the perspective of senior ministry leaders, Gen Z leaders have a difficult time "seeing the big picture." The following Table condenses the information and shows the pervasive prevalence of this issue.

Table 19

Missing the Bigger Picture of Ministry

Participant	Time Stamp	Not Seeing the Big Picture Reflections and Comments
Allen	36:38	Don't understand long term strategy; Seeing the bigger picture when it comes to, not just loving but valuing all generations in the church
Brandon	5:34	They don't always see the value in what is important to other generations – for example keeping the choir
Chris	13:43	Don't do things that they aren't passionate about and fail to see how leaving things undone affects other people and ministries around them
Evan	9:58	Lack of ability to see beyond the immediate/big picture
	11:55	They see things differently – there is a disconnect
	18:12	Lack of awareness of other people around them
Hailey	28:42	Hard to get them to think ahead – need constant coaching
Matt	18:03	They believe their way is the right way and don't value the ways of older generations
	19:15	"They can't see the whole picture. . .they don't even know what it looks like."
	21:53	They often don't see that their job is to reach the whole church – not just the people in their wheelhouse
Natalie	10:38	They don't' see the big picture
	11:55	They have tunnel vision
	15:26	"They miss the big picture. . .they are with people, but they struggle to engage with people."

Comments similar to Hailey's were interspersed throughout the interviews with all senior ministry leaders:

> They think they get it, and they, they love the big picture. Yeah, like they want to do the big picture, but they don't always get all the pieces that it takes to get there. And I think some of that is just 20 something, you know, you don't know what you don't know, you know? But it does seem to be more emphasized I guess in this generation, there's just something still that's deeper than just age.

After several iterative layers of data collection and analysis, this researcher sent a follow-up question back via email to previous research sites for clarification on how senior leaders defined "the big picture." In response to the question "In your words, what do you define as the big picture?" the responses from different sites all communicated the same idea defining the big picture as ". . . how the body of Christ functions. Each generation has something to offer and is essential for the body to function as God intended it to function." When it comes to Gen Z the communicated struggle was "They can't see beyond their own world/generation." The inability

to capture this picture has led to some issues that senior ministry leaders believe need to be remedied through further development. The following statement from Natalie alludes to some of the challenges that are manifested:

> I would boil it down more towards they don't see the value of the interconnectivity of the church or people. A very general statement obviously, but I do feel like there is a disconnect to see the domino effect, good or bad, to their leadership. And again- this could be a 20's problem, not just a Gen Zer? But that seems to be the overarching theme for me- not that they can't see it eventually...just that they have blinders and don't see the full scope of the situations they work with, leadership decisions they make . . . development of ideas and such. . .

This struggle to see how their ministry roles fit into the bigger picture of the church as an interconnected body was a key manifestation of their unpreparedness for leadership according to all senior ministry participants, but it also took on another aspect. It was conveyed repeatedly that Gen Z leaders often have a difficult time implementing systematic process that are needed to accomplish a large task or goal. This was described by several senior ministry leaders as alluded to in Table 19 above and was also recognized by Gen Z leaders themselves.

Mentorship. After development targeted at seeing the big picture, the other ongoing leadership development strategy that all participating senior ministry leaders felt was absolutely essential, especially for this generation was mentorship. A relationship with an older individual from a preceding generation that can come alongside them and coach, hold them accountable, and as Evan reflected, “value them as a person.” It was believed that mentorship would be an important step in opening their eyes to the bigger picture. Senior leaders also communicated that mentorship helps to avoid crossing the line between boss and too close of a friendship, so they often encourage their younger leaders to seek mentorship outside the workplace with someone who is older and further along in ministry.

Leadership – People Skills. The data indicated that Gen Z leaders are not adequately prepared for the people part of leadership. They do not possess solid communication skills that are effective across generations and, therefore, "do not know how to use good communication as a means to head off bigger problems." They do not want conflict and are careful "to not step on people's toes," and the unintended consequence of this is the creation of the very conflict they were trying to avoid. One participant reflected that they do not yet understand that "pastoring is a verb, not a noun."

Navigating Cultural Issues. One participant surmised that "Leading the church is more challenging today than it has ever been." This new generation of leaders has been and will continue to be faced with cultural challenges that no one saw coming, therefore, equipping and training them for these new realities is essential. That being said, the senior leaders posited that since culture is bringing such dramatic changes so fast, they themselves struggle to know how to navigate the issues so "we are all kind of learning as we go."

Spiritual Formation. As they all learn as they go, it was believed that the best way to approach the navigation of difficult post-Christian cultural issues was to make an intentional investment into the spiritual growth of the Gen Z leaders, as it is believed the only successful way to face these challenges was with a firm grasp on biblical truth. Hailey stated, "I think we need a bigger and broader apologetics sort of teaching. How to agree and disagree at the same time with someone and still be loving."

In summation, this study looked at if Gen Z leaders were adequately prepared to lead in ministry and concluded – no. The study looked at why they are unprepared and found five common variables that presented among these participants in these specific settings. The study

also looked for specific areas where they were unprepared and discovered a prevalent spiritual stagnation, struggle with people issues, and limited grasp of the big picture in ministry.

Without a doubt, ongoing leadership development is not a need that is limited to Gen Z leaders. All leaders interviewed recognized that further development was always needed to continue to push forward the mission of the church. There are, however, specific areas of need within leader and leadership development that this new generation manifests given the different post-Christian technological society this generation has been raised in that, if addressed, would set them up for additional success in impacting the kingdom of God.

Evaluation of the Research Design

In his commentary on grounded theory, Corley (2015) uses a cooking analogy to paint a word picture to illustrate the important difference between the inductive reasoning that is critical in grounded theory methodology and the deductive reasoning used in other research designs. Corley (2015) describes that deductive reasoning is like baking a cake, whereby, ingredients are whipped up and thrown in the oven. Once the baking process begins, making adjustments to the recipe is no longer an option and you get what you get. On the other hand, inductive reasoning is like cooking up a fine stew. Through the course of the simmering process ingredients are added, taste testing occurs, and flavors are adjusted based on the tastes and preferences of the cook. In short, grounded theory is like cooking up a pot of stew (Corley, 2015).

Reaching the final stages of utilizing this research methodology, this researcher has discovered the stew comparison is an apt description of the process. The iterative means by which the researcher goes back and forth between data collection and analysis allows for unique adjustments that bring out rich flavors in what may appear to be initially bland. Being a novice in this research design, the frequent taste tests of data analysis acted as a safety net that kept this

researcher actively engaged and alert throughout the study. As themes and patterns began to emerge the research design allowed for the flexibility to go back into the research field and probe these emerging discoveries to see if there was more flavor that needed to be extracted. On the other hand, if interview questions were found to be inadequate or some were missing, they were adjusted for efficacy. While there are many moving parts in grounded theory methodology, this researcher believed they were useful in keeping research on track and allowed for reflection and course correction for a researcher who was learning as she went, thereby, keeping the analysis and conclusions firmly grounded in the data and not in personal bias.

One of the challenges of the design was the large quantity of data that it produced. There were times when there seemed to just be too many "flavors" and it was difficult to not go down a rabbit trail that was outside the scope of the research problem and its guiding questions. Another challenge was the subjective nature of the labeling and identification of categories in the coding process. There were times of frustration wondering if these labels were based on the researcher's own bias or if they were actually the best labels to be attached to the chunk of data. Both of these challenges, however, provided their own solution - the data itself. Although sometimes overwhelming in quantity, the data provided the means to keep the research grounded in the actual research problem and its subsequent questions as every label was backed up by participant words.

Along with being a beneficial design for this novice, the research methodology was an excellent choice for the research problem given it dealt with a new phenomenon. The exploratory nature of grounded theory allowed for thick descriptions that could then acknowledge outliers or areas of contradiction. Upon reflection and with some experience now under the proverbial belt, it was concluded the grounded theory research design was an excellent choice for bringing out

the rich flavors of this research problems stew and it is believed that the “time in the kitchen” has served up a product that has the ability to provide nourishment and health to the Christian ministry environment.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter presents a summary of the study and identifies important conclusions that were drawn from the data that was presented in Chapter Four. Empirical and theoretical conclusions and their implications are presented and the theoretical model for ongoing leadership development for Gen Z that was formed from these conclusions is explained and applied. Following this section are recommendations for stakeholders who may be impacted by the findings and conclusions of this research study. The chapter concludes by addressing the research limitations and making recommendations for further research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the leadership preparedness and worldview formation of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders so as to inform the development of a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development for senior leaders who are onboarding these new leaders into Christian ministry leadership roles. For this research study, Generation Z was defined as the birth cohort born between 1995 and 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Leadership development for this study included both leader development which targets the growth of the individual (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2010; Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009), and leadership development which focuses on developing a repertoire of leadership skills that expand the capacity to serve the community (Hrivnak, Jr. et al., 2009). The theories that guided the study were Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory which provided a basis for Generation Z being a history-defining generation that is causing paradigm shifts in societal institutions, and the Hrivnak, Jr. et al (2009) leadership development model which offered a basic framework for the construction of a leadership development model that can be used in specific contexts.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the data collection and analysis of the research study and are listed as follows:

RQ1. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, to what extent, if any, are they seeing a difference in the leadership preparedness of Generation Z as compared to other generational leaders?

RQ2. To what extent, if any, has the documented erosion of biblical worldview development and post-Christian upbringing of Generation Z manifested itself in new Gen Z Christian ministry hires?

RQ3. What, if any, ongoing biblical worldview, and leadership development strategies are in place to further prepare and develop newly hired Generation Z ministry leaders, and what are the components of these strategies?

RQ4. From the perspective of Gen Z ministry hires, in what specific areas of leadership skills or worldview formation do they feel they require or seek further development?

RQ5. From the perspective of current senior Christian ministry leaders, what different leadership preparation and development, if any, is needed for Generation Z as compared to previous generations?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

A broad survey of past and present leaders would undoubtedly reveal that it is unrealistic to believe that any leader enters leadership fully prepared for the rigors of leadership. In a world that is unpredictable and filled with unpredictable people, there are just some things that defy preparation. In this respect, the unpreparedness of Gen Z leaders is no different than any generation. The generation is, however, different in the specific causes of leadership unpreparedness and their subsequent effects.

The findings of this research revealed there were five key variables that impacted the preparedness of Gen Z leaders and were found to be age, formal preparation, church culture, biblical worldview erosion, and generational characteristics. Within these variables were aspects that can be controlled and some that cannot be controlled when it comes to ongoing leadership

development in the ministry setting. That being said, the factual presentation of the findings revealed there were some identifiable gaps in leadership preparation that have been making their ability to lead more difficult than necessary. Their lack of readiness has led to spiritual stagnation, struggles with people issues, and missing the big picture in ministry. Furthermore, the findings reveal that while ministry sites did have some development strategies in place across the sites, the church is, to varying degrees, unprepared for providing continuing intentional ongoing leader and leadership development. With these findings at the forefront, the conclusions, implications, and applications that have emerged from them these findings are now addressed.

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

The conclusions that were made from the findings are delivered in a layered approach. First, the conclusions that were reached within each research question are briefly and simply communicated. Second, the conclusions are theoretically integrated into previous and relevant research to demonstrate their grounding not only in this researcher's data but also in the broad spectrum of research on Generation Z. This is a critical component of grounded theory research methodology. Following this two-pronged approach to the presentation of the conclusions, the implications are outlined, and the theoretical model is introduced, explained, and applied.

RQ 1 Conclusion

The overall conclusion that was drawn from the research findings was an undeniable difference in leadership preparedness of Gen Z as compared to other generational leaders. The data from the study confirms what previous empirical and theoretical research has already concluded: Generation Z is a very different generation. Not just in the way that all generations are different, although that is certainly always true or there would be no way and no need to define separate generations. The differences in Gen Z, however, go beyond the usual changes in

characteristics across generational cohorts as technology and post-Christian culture have brought some paradigm-shifting, “the-world-will-never-be-the-same” types of differences.

RQ 2 Conclusion

While strong Christian upbringing and a deep passion for Christ and vocational ministry have significant mitigating effects, erosion of biblical worldview has still manifested itself within Gen Z leaders, although typically in more subtle ways. Gen Z leaders in this study had solid belief systems and did not display overt warning signs of any infiltration of false beliefs that would trigger alarm bells from a pulpit, but the subtle effects of the post-Christian world in which they have grown up have manifested themselves, nonetheless.

Another overarching question that was the impetus behind the purpose of the study was: Can the church assume that its new Gen Z leaders are bringing to leadership a well-developed worldview? Overall, the Gen Z participants of this study reflected solid, although still developing biblical worldviews, however, stories from the participants and senior ministry leaders that were included in Chapter Four, point to the need to not just assume that a biblical worldview is well-developed just because they possess vocational ministry credentials.

RQ 3 Conclusion

The findings on what ongoing biblical worldview and leadership strategies were in place to further prepare Gen Z leaders were two-fold. First, no research site included in this study had any biblical worldview formation strategies incorporated into the leadership development components they already had in place. Second, the leadership strategies that were included were both intentional and unintentional. Intentional components included personality tests, reading and discussing leadership books, and podcast recommendations. Unintentional leadership development strategies that emerged were related to church cultures that incorporated a hidden

curriculum of relational coaching and accountability. The overall conclusion was there is limited intentional leadership development for paid staff taking place within church settings. This conclusion is in line with what relevant research has found.

RQ 4 Conclusion

From the findings that were presented in Chapter Four, it was clear that Gen Z ministry hires recognized the need to be further developed. Figure 4 gave an overview of the common themes that emerged across all research sites concerning Gen Z ministry leaders expressed needs and desires for ongoing leadership development. The most significant discovery was that the Gen Z leaders shared a common and prevalent struggle with spiritual stagnation and people issues. These two issues have been largely unaddressed in ongoing leadership development initiatives that were in place. Findings within this research question also led to the conclusion that Gen Z leaders are eager to continue their development as long as they know the "why behind the what." Furthermore, placing a high priority on collaboration and coaching as learning methods, they want to be a part of the decision-making process on what their continued development would include.

RQ 5 Conclusion

There was no disagreement with the idea that ongoing leadership development was a good idea. It was unanimously expressed that Gen Z leaders come with some different leadership development challenges and have some different leadership challenges that are different from previous generations. The findings of the study lead to the significant conclusion that Gen Z leaders have difficulty seeing the big picture of church ministry. They are passionate and creative when it comes to their own areas of ministry, but they often fail to see the interconnectivity of the church as a whole and become "siloed" in their specific ministries leading to a tunnel vision

that fails to capture how what they do fits into the entire intergenerational, missional functioning of the church as a whole. They also struggle with seeing the big picture of a project of large goal and knowing how to accomplish it with systematic, step by step processes. Additionally, the conflicting characteristics that are prevalent within the generation have created the reality where they want to be developed, but they do not necessarily relish the work that development takes and, therefore, are often difficult to motivate.

Conclusions and Relevant Research

One of the key aspects of grounded theory research design is making sure that findings, conclusions, and the resulting theoretical model is firmly grounded in the data as well as in previous relevant research. To that end, the above conclusions can be shown to be not only be grounded in the data that was collected and analyzed in this study but were also consistent with, and push forward, what previous research has revealed about Gen Z. To reflect this, a more expansive discussion will marry the two based on the theoretical and empirical characteristics.

Theoretical Conclusions

Two theories played an important role in guiding this study. The first was Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory which served as a basis for understanding Gen Z's potential of being a history-defining generation that is causing paradigm shifts in social institutions. The second was the Hrivnak, Jr et al.'s (2009) theoretical leadership development framework which served as a jumping-off point for a more well-developed leadership development model that targets the specific, data-driven needs of Gen Z ministry leaders that emerged from this study. The theoretical conclusions that have been researched from this study about these two theories are addressed in this section.

Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory. Strauss and Howe's (1991; 1997) generational theory that was discussed in previous chapters points to a four seasoned cycle of generations that, at the end of the fourth season, crescendos into a time of social chaos where institutions in their current form crumble and a society in crisis longs for the benefits of being part of a strong community. As new paradigms rise from the ashes of the chaos, a new cycle of seasons is ushered in by a leading generation. If the theory holds true, it is believed by many that Generation Z will be the leaders of this shift and new research continues to provide validating evidence. The president of The Center for Generational Kinetics, Jason Dorsey (2020), stated following the release of the findings for the most recent study on Gen Z that this cohort continues to demonstrate it ". . . thinks and acts VERY differently," primarily because they are a generation that has never drawn any real distinction between the physical and virtual world. They have initiated a paradigm shift that has charted a path toward a world that is fully digital (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020). In line with the Strauss and Howe (1997) theory this shift, led by Gen Z, has the potential of ushering in a new season and resetting the Saeculum described in detail in Chapter Two.

This path towards a fully digital world, a world that once used the internet primarily as a means to access information has now shifted to using it as a means to access people and entertainment. It has been so deeply woven into personal identity that 58% of Gen Z believe that within the next five years the internet will be the primary determinant of what they do on a day-to-day basis (The Center for Generational, 2020, p. 9). Selig (2020) posits "If you're not providing Gen Z with entertaining, engaging digital experiences, someone else most certainly is—the endless amount of choices available online is not lost on this generation" (para. 12).

While this sounds cutting edge and compelling it becomes a difficult sea of change to navigate for churches that include a wide range of ages and generations.

Empirical Conclusions

As indicated within the Chapter Two literature review, there are many characteristics that define Generation Z, however, for this study, there were three primary characteristics that were believed to have considerable influence on Gen Z as leaders in the church: Gen Z as a digital generation, a diverse generation, and a post-Christian generation. It is believed that the empirical conclusions of this study fit well within current and relevant research.

A Digital Generation

It was communicated by all participants in this study that technology has had a powerful impact on defining the generation and, thereby, has played a significant role in their leadership. One of the senior leaders told a story of her own lightbulb moment that spoke to the shift that has occurred in this generation. While visiting Gen Z students in a mental health unit, a few of them related to her that they had tried to commit suicide because their parents had taken away their phones. Certainly, it is no secret that addictions to technology abound across all generations, and having technology taken away would cause degrees of withdrawal for most people, but what she unexpectedly discovered that day was technology use had gone beyond addiction for this generation. It is so prevalent, so integrated into their identity, that to have it taken away is equivalent to being removed from your community, it is a sentencing to solitary confinement. To have technology removed now from an individual requires a recovery that would be similar to amputation of an integral part of the body. This is different from previous generations and surveying the findings of this study and relevant research, it can be concluded that the effects

that this shift has made, have permeated into the leadership of Gen Zers in several ways affecting their leadership.

Cognitive Affects. Some characteristics came to the surface concerning Gen Z leaders in this study that validated the research that shows Gen Z thinking has become less and less linear (de Langhe et al., 2017; Castillo, 2014; Carr, 2010 Sparks & Honey, 2015; Barna, 2018; Wallis, 2010) impacting their ability to critically think, make decisions, and systematically work through processes. There are three significant ways that this has shown up in the Gen Z participants of this study. First, they have a difficult time committing. They are addicted to options because they have a fear of missing out on something. So much information and so many choices are coming at them at once that they often sit in a holding pattern waiting to make decisions until they are forced to. The need to wait and see if something better will come along leads them to avoid jumping into doing tasks in ministry that are mundane or tedious. As a result, critical components of leadership are left undone or passed on to other leaders with the expectation that someone else will do the task for them.

The second conclusion was technology's impact on physiological cognitive development has made it difficult for them to systematically work through large projects. Both senior ministry leaders and Gen Z counterparts verified their limitations in understanding all the little pieces of accomplishing a big task. This finding is also verified by current research.

The University of Washington tied the overstimulation of developing brains to constant use of digital media to a loss of ability to focus attention (Christakis et al., 2004). Other researchers believe that this loss of attention can be linked to increasing demand to cognitively multitask (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Greenfield, 2009). There are constant interruptions from texts

or other social media notifications rapidly redirecting attention back and forth from one task or topic to another (Steyer, 2012).

One research study found that while on a single device a user switched to different media sites on average every 19 seconds and spent less than a minute reviewing the text or information on the majority of the visited sites (Yeykelis et al., 2014). This has a cascading effect as multitasking erodes the brain's ability to process what is being taken in, leading to cognitive overload and burnout which leads to further alterations in the structure of the brain (Carr, 2010; Small & Vorgan, 2008; Steyer, 2012). Over time, as attention spans become shorter, memory capacity shrinks, and the ability to synthesize large amounts of information effectively is reduced (Firth et al, 2019; Greenfield, 2009; Cavanaugh et al., 2016). This leads to the handicapping of memory, recall (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Carr, 2010), and increased difficulty in the ability to read, write, or communicate well-formed thoughts and ideas (Steyer, 2012).

Placing this information in a practical situation, one Gen Z leader shared that he may receive 1000 texts in a day. Each of these texts represents an interruption in a task or thought, verifying the constant jump from one cognitive train of thought to another. This resulting erosion of linear processing has created a situation where they can at times lack common sense. Another outcome was that while they are dreamers – they can come up with extraordinary ideas and be very passionate about accomplishing them, they lack the ability to see or understand the small steps and processes that are required to get to the end result. This did not mean that Gen Z leaders do not eventually get there, but the process was not easy and requires a great deal of coaching and oversight from senior ministry leaders which was time-consuming and frustrating.

Multitasking and shortened attention spans can continue to evolve into a condition that Turner (2015) describes as "full engagement in nothing while trying to follow everything" (p.

111). Researchers Small & Vorgan (2008) posit that "continuous partial attention" can result in a preoccupation that produces the unintended consequence of an individual's loss of awareness of people around them (p. 18). From a ministry aspect, this loss of awareness can cause the leader to "miss pieces of the bigger picture of ministry" as Natalie described, as well as compromise interpersonal skills (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Sparks & Honey, 2015; Turkle, 2011) and erode the leader's ability to be fully engaged making it, ". . . hard to appreciate where you are when you're perpetually distracted by where you're not" (Sparks & Honey, 2015, p. 35).

Interpersonal Effects. Falling in line with the above research, the findings of the study also led to the conclusion that technology has impacted the interpersonal skills of the Gen Z leaders. The erosion of interpersonal skills was woven throughout the perspective of senior ministry leaders as well as Gen Z leaders and points to three conclusions.

First, the erosion of interpersonal skills believed to be caused by technology does not preclude an erosion of the priority placed on relationships. In fact, quite the contrary. Gen Z places a very high premium on relationships, and this was quite evident throughout the research. The Gen Z leaders were passionate about the people they minister to and work hard to develop relationships with them. This is validated in the universal response of Gen Z participants that they have a deep desire to learn how to develop and train the people they lead. Their passion for people is in most cases what brought them to vocational ministry leadership in the first place.

Second, the findings lead to the conclusion that technology has impacted Gen Z leaders' ability to communicate and relate to older generations. It was abundantly clear that they love people in older generations, but they often do not value them primarily because older generations do not view technology as an integral part of everything like the Gen Z leaders do. The senior

ministry leader who works with Gen Z ministry leaders on a statewide level summed this conclusion up by saying,

> Gen Z has an ". . .almost absolute reliance on technology, which I think is great. But they have little passion for people who that have difficulty with technology, they have little patience to teach them. . . or explain how it works, or why it's important for them. A person who's not technologically driven is often seen as not valued in other areas of their life - that Gen Zer's life. That's not that they don't love them. In fact, in Gen Z there's probably a higher capacity to love people. . .

Gen Z participants in this study worked almost exclusively with kids, youth, and young adults, therefore their interaction with older generations was primarily with the parents of the students they were leading. There was limited interaction with older generations in other settings which created an environment where the Gen Z leaders have become "siloed"- or isolated - in their ministry area. Some senior ministry leaders reflected those tensions across generations in the church had become more heightened in the last year. They believed there were several possible reasons for this, but they included in those reasons the inability of the Gen Z leaders to see any value in what older generations valued, and therefore, left the older generations with the impression that they were not valued at all.

Spiritual Growth Effects. One of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from this study is the toll that has been taken on spiritual growth when Gen Z leaders come into ministry. In a cascading effect, cognitive effects impact interpersonal relationships and this trickles into the rate of spiritual formation (Pettit, 2008). All but one of the Gen Z ministry leaders discovered that the business of "doing" church every week significantly affected their spiritual growth. They were no longer engaging in church as a way to worship and grow spiritually, church now became part of the job, and they were forced to find other ways to fill the hole that this made in their lives.

Many were still struggling with this aspect, but those who were seeking to find new ways to replace the role of church in their life had gone to online strategies to fill this void. Although online churches and podcasts are valuable tools, they further isolate these Gen Z leaders from the community that they have been essentially cut off from now that their interaction with that community has changed, leaving them vulnerable spiritually and, as many of them communicated, desperate for someone to come alongside them and pour into them.

The radical shift to a fully digital world will not fail to continue to have a profound impact on the church. The broad spectrum of generations that occupy the same space each week and must unify in a meaningful way to accomplish the mission of spreading the gospel will have to reflect godly wisdom to overcome the challenges that will inevitably arise. Gen Z ministry leaders, whose "identity and technology are fused in a way never before seen in any generation" (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020, p. 14) are going to need to be guided by senior ministry leaders who are intentional about developing these new leaders in such a way that their eyes are opened to the value and wisdom of older generations. In a noisy world that is proclaiming to older generations that, "The only real choice you have is to get on board and meet this generation where they are" (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020, p. 14), Gen Z ministry leaders must be continually nurtured and developed in such a way that they see the value of all generations in the body of Christ despite what radical paradigm shifts may continue to emerge from this transformational generation.

A Diverse Generation

Another leading characteristic of this generation that was believed to have significant impacts on the church was its status as being the most diverse generation to date in national history (Barna, 2018; Fry & Parker, 2018; Parker & Igielnik, 2020). While this has some

profoundly positive effects in ministry such that Gen Z leaders have deep compassion for people, it has also had some limiting effects that further solidify the need to come alongside them in further development. There is such a focus on being tolerant of different religions and lifestyles and such a strong push for equity and fairness that what has resulted has been an environment Allison described as one where, “There are just too many voices.” This has led to the erosion of the ability and willingness to communicate in a meaningful way, concluding here that Gen Z ministry leaders need help in navigating cultural issues.

All of the participating Gen Z leaders recognized that the diversity of the generation and the tolerance that is required within it is going to continue to be one of the leading challenges to deal with in Christian ministry. Adding further difficulty to navigating through that is the current cancel culture which heaps more obstacles onto the playing field of being able to communicate in any meaningful way.

As expressed by the Gen Z leaders, the difficulty in communicating cannot just be blamed on technology, but also on the conditioning of the generation that they must be very careful about what they say, especially as Christians, because if they say the wrong thing they will be canceled rapidly and fiercely.

A post-Christian Generation

The third characteristic that this study believed would have many ramifications on the church and its leadership was its classification as the first generation to grow up in a post-Christian culture in this nation. The landscape of the cancel culture addressed in the previous section has sprung up from a post-Christian society that has demonstrated a new and increasing hostility to Christianity that has not been seen in the older generations. The Gen Z participants

were very aware of this hostility, and it has affected them personally as leaders, and in their leadership roles.

As leaders, the relevant literature, and these research findings conclude that the post-Christian culture has impacted, at least to some extent, the biblical worldview of Gen Z ministry leaders. There are many factors that play into to what extent this is manifested, such as upbringing, preparation, personality, and other environmental influences, but the reality remains – post-Christian culture has had its effect. As one senior ministry leader posited this may be more amplified in Gen Z leaders, but "it affects all of us."

The post-Christian society does not just make vocational ministry more difficult on a personal level it also makes it more difficult within the leadership role itself. Henry, a Gen Z youth pastor has discovered that the post-Christian culture has, "Made it more difficult for students to engage in their own personal relationship with God because it's no longer woven into society." The prevailing idea that has emerged according to the Gen Z ministry leaders who work with youth is that Christianity has been diluted down to just being "good." Maintaining the integrity and truth of the gospel in the face of this post-Christian belief is a challenge that Gen Z ministry leaders will continue to need help with to face cultural challenges.

When the problem that guided this study was addressed in earlier chapters there was a fundamental question that arose that was the compass for all other questions: Is this different generation prepared to lead and how ready is the church to continue ongoing leader and leadership development? Above all else, this study sought to answer that question. Capturing all these theoretical and empirical conclusions into a condensed summarization, technology, diversity, and the post-Christian culture have made their way into the leader and leadership of Gen Z ministry and have affected their overall preparation, readiness, and worldview

development. Though many of the effects seen in the broader spectrum of the generation are mitigated because of the strong Christian upbringings and more solid biblical foundation of the Gen Z participants, it is undeniable based on relevant literature and the findings of this study that to varying extents Gen Z leaders are unprepared and underdeveloped and that has implications for the churches in which they work and serve.

Research Implications

The primary theoretical implication that looms large from this study is that Gen Z leaders are different leaders from previous generations. While it is true that unpreparedness for leadership, in itself, is not different from other generations, what they are unprepared for and the manifestations of that lack of readiness that have presented themselves have significant practical implications for the staff with whom they lead and the churches in which they serve. To that end, we circle back around to the five research questions to shine a spotlight on the potential implications of their unpreparedness, biblical worldview development, and limited development opportunities.

Research Question 1

Three of the major manifestations of leadership unpreparedness have been their spiritual stagnation, struggles with a variety of people issues, and their limited grasping of the bigger picture of ministry. The limited efforts to address these issues and further develop Gen Z leaders will ultimately have implications on the entire ministry setting and all the people who occupy it. Within this question, Gen Z leaders' lack of preparation to deal with people issues, and their limited grasp of the big picture are addressed. The implications of their spiritual stagnation are discussed in research question two.

The number one challenge that Gen Z leaders felt unprepared for and the consequences of which have manifested themselves in the ministry setting, lies in the struggle to navigate people issues. This has serious implications when working in a role that is all about serving and leading people through vulnerable and difficult life issues. Their weaknesses in interpersonal skills may result in the employment of poor or underdeveloped communication methods that can lead to conflict, division, and avoidable disruption. Additionally, having limited life experiences because of their age, combined with inadequate preparation for the challenges of leading people through difficult personal or cultural issues, may cause them to not show the proper sensitivity and heap additional difficulties into the situation potentially eroding their influence as a leader. These further difficulties, conflict, division, and disruption will inevitably fall into the lap of the senior ministry leader and add to already heavy workloads.

Another difference in leadership preparedness that has manifested itself with practical implications is the struggle Gen Z ministry leaders are having in seeing the bigger missional picture of the church. As addressed in Chapter Four they often fail to see the interconnectivity of the entire church body and do not see how what they do in their specific ministry affects those around them in other areas. This can impact small things like scheduling meetings for parents of the youth for something that should also include parents of the younger children simply because they do not look over into the other ministries to see how to best utilize time, space, and resources.

Missing the bigger picture can also spill over into broader implications like the unintentional marginalization of older generational groups. These young leaders are driven and passionate about moving forward with creative new strategies and cutting-edge technologies – often good things - but also often at the expense of older generations who have different values

or desires. This may drive wedges between different generational groups as they start to disagree on critical issues making the gaps between age groups grow wider rather than smaller. Additionally, it may lead to the Gen Z leader's loss of influence outside his specific ministry area.

Research findings reflect that Gen Z leaders are intensely passionate leaders who love people, but they are driven by purpose and making an impact, and this can be at the expense and marginalization of people who do not value what they value. Developing Gen Z leaders in such a way that they look at their ministry role in the context of the church as a whole, rather than as a compartmentalized aspect of church ministry, will further enable them to fulfill their purpose and make an eternal impact that goes beyond the boundaries of their specific ministry areas leading to the greater health and wholeness of the church.

Research Question 2

While it is important to note that the Gen Z ministry leaders who participated in this study reflected solid biblical worldviews, it was communicated by the senior ministry leaders, and the Gen Z leaders themselves, that the post-Christian culture they were brought up in had definitely taken its toll on biblical worldview formation. This has consequential implications for the church. One of the significant questions framing this research study asked if the church could assume that its new Gen Z leaders are bringing to leadership a well-developed worldview. It is a dangerous assumption to make as the research finding pointed to an erosion of a strong biblical foundation and the adoption of false beliefs even while in Bible college.

Since worldview is developed over a lifetime, it is important that the church be working to intentionally guide the worldview development and spiritual growth of its leaders as the worldview of the leader will inevitably serve to form and be manifested in the worldview of the

church body, making the implications of an eroded biblical worldview wide and vast on the health and influence of the church.

Implications of tolerance. One of the primary pieces of evidence of the erosion of a biblical worldview of Gen Z ministry leaders is the high levels of tolerance and inclusion that are endemic across the generation. This inclusion and acceptance of people who come from different backgrounds and lifestyles can certainly be a powerful strength within the church as it reflects the love of Christ for all people. If guided by an eroded biblical worldview, however, it can quickly become a powerful weakness when it begins to blur the lines between right and wrong in an effort to tolerate and accommodate people's feelings and cultural sensitivities. Young Gen Z leaders who are largely unprepared to deal with difficult cultural issues and struggle to deal with people interpersonally need further development from wise godly leaders, so the church's influence on a broken world is not eroded.

Implications of spiritual stagnation. When it comes to ongoing biblical worldview development one of the other issues that must be addressed is the spiritual stagnation Gen Z leaders are experiencing when they enter Christian ministry. Spiritual stagnation is inevitably a serious threat to the effectiveness and influence of the spiritual leader. As they begin ministry it is challenging to replace the role of church in their spiritual formation when going to church for them means going to work. This reality has caused stasis in their spiritual lives that leads to cascading effects. It is no secret that a leader can only take people as far as they themselves have gone so this issue must be addressed within the ministry setting. Furthermore, to wither away spiritually quickly leads to burnout which contributes to the high attrition rates of young pastors.

For Gen Z leaders, the stagnation also leaves them spiritually vulnerable and susceptible to outside influences that are bombarding them at a rate that makes it impossible to filter out

harmful elements. During a time when their worldview is still developing it is critical that this stagnation be addressed as it may lead to further erosion of the biblical worldview.

Research Question 3

From the literature review and this research study, it was confirmed that there are limited intentional worldview development and leadership development opportunities being incorporated into the Gen Z leader's work environment. There are multiple reasons for this, some of which are valid, but it is unavoidable that the limited investment into leadership development will have implications that will affect leadership health and consequently church health. Neglecting the investment into further leader and leadership development has the prevalent implication of leading to leadership burnout, washout, and wipeouts.

As leaders become stagnant, burnout is typically quick to follow leading to the loss of otherwise good leaders. Additionally, intentional, and ongoing leadership development can head off failures that could have been avoided that impact the entire organization. Ongoing leadership development is an essential part of organizational health. If this were not the case, there would not be such high priority and tremendous resources placed on leadership development across the business world and other institutions outside the church.

Research Question 4

As part of this study, the perspective of Gen Z leaders was sought to give them a voice to speak to what they felt they needed regarding further leadership development. These leaders are creative, highly collaborative, want mentorship, and deeply desire to be invested into as leaders. They recognize their spiritual stagnation, and their need to learn how to nurture and cultivate people, and they long for older and wiser leaders to coach and mentor them. They see many of the problems in their leadership, but do not necessarily know where to go for the solutions to

those problems. Failure to help them find solutions leads to the problems going unsolved entirely or leaves them to have to seek out solutions on their own and in places that maybe be helpful in the business or corporate world but limited in their application to the unique spiritual environment of the church.

Another implication of not investing in their development is the message that it communicates. For some, the absence may lead them to believe they do not need it – they are doing just fine on their own - well-prepared and fully developed. For others, the lack of intentionality in their development may communicate a lack of value in their success as a leader – unintentionally turning them into an employee rather than an integral and growing member of the body of Christ.

Research Question 5

Senior ministry leaders and Gen Z leaders overlapped in the expressed areas of need for further ongoing development, however, there were two areas that senior ministry leaders unanimously expressed as areas where Gen Z needed further development and without it there would be long term implications for the ministry setting. The first was missing the big picture of intergenerational connectivity in the body of Christ which was previously discussed. The second was another facet of missing the big picture such that they have the limited ability to recognize the finer processes of working through a large project in a stepwise, organized fashion.

Systematic Processes. The research findings reveal that Gen Z leaders are passionate dreamers, but they struggle to know how to move in a stepwise, systematic process to accomplish the dream. The inability to work through a large task in an organized manner leads to considerable frustration among all stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation of goals and projects as many tasks are overlooked or not done in the workplace leaving other

leaders to pick up the slack. This leads to avoidable workplace conflicts that add to feelings of failure that may lead to burnout or the loss of a leader. The loss of good leaders is not something the church can afford as older leaders age out of ministry. There will come a day when the baton held by current senior leadership will need to be passed and there must be well-prepared hands that can reach out and grasp the baton and run with it.

As addressed in previous chapters, ongoing leadership development for paid ministry leaders has a long history of being absent or severely limited in the church. This means there has been a long history of leaders just "learning as they go." It has been proven by many extraordinary ministry leaders that this situation can be survived and be overcome as many have excelled in environments that have made no investment in their continued growth. This, however, does not mean it is wise or should be continued. Healthy leaders lead to healthy churches and with a biblical mandate to invest in next-generation leaders and a biblical model offered by Jesus and the early church leaders, we all must capture the bigger picture of the interconnected living organism that is the church, as well as the importance of nurturing its growth by investing in the development needs of its leaders.

Extension of Research

Generation Z has become the test subject for the long-term effects of lifelong technology use. Research thus far has shown that it has had a direct and compounding impact on attention, emotions, mental health, interpersonal relationships, communication skills, worldview formation, and these just scratch the surface (Blumberg & Brooks; 2017; Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Turner, 2015; Carr, 2010; Turkle, 2011; Freitas, 2017; Barna, 2018). Coupled with that, research into Gen Z leadership is a still burgeoning area given their rather recent influx into the workforce. Although the oldest members have now been out of college for several years, church leadership

remains one of the few places where Gen Z members are quickly imported into leadership roles. Therefore, this research study provided a critical extension of current research.

Having concluded from the research that Gen Z ministry leaders are unprepared for their ministry leadership roles, have a biblical worldview that has, at least to some degree, been detrimentally impacted by their post-Christian upbringing, and are working in environments that have limited intentional leadership development strategies, this study discovered five key variables that are contributing to their unpreparedness and three manifestations where their unpreparedness and lack of further development was beginning to manifest itself within their leadership.

The first manifestation of their unpreparedness and lack of further development has taken on them was shown to be spiritual stagnation. The transition from being a churchgoer to a church employee has been a difficult one and the loss of normal church attendance as a means of spiritual growth has caught them by surprise and left them spiritually depleted. Second, the lack of preparation in how to manage people and the erosion of interpersonal skills brought on by a technological age has found them to be struggling with the human aspects of their roles. Finally, the variables in their lack of preparation have left them with a marginal ability to see the big picture which is defined in the Christian ministry setting as seeing the church as the interconnected, multigenerational body of Christ. Their lack of preparation and further development has impaired them such that they are missing key aspects of this understanding that has detrimental effects within the larger context of their leadership.

These discoveries fill in a gap of research that has existed until now and provide key insights that allow for Christian ministry sites to begin to address the ramifications and

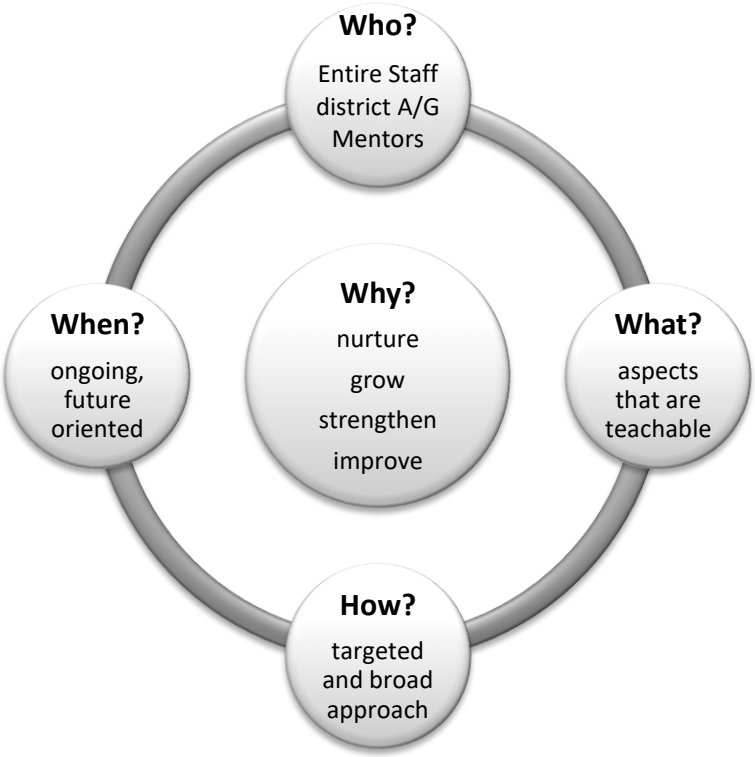
implications of these characteristics to counteract them positively through further intentional leadership development.

Novel Contribution and Applications

The need for ongoing leadership development is not unique to Generation Z – all generations need it, but Gen Z does pose some unique needs. Since the aim of this study was to develop a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development in Gen Z ministry leaders, the theoretical framework developed by Hrivnak, Jr. et al. (2009) served as a solid jumping-off point for a model that targeted the data-driven and specific needs of Gen Z ministry leaders. The framework was built on the fundamental questions of who, what, why, how, and when. The "who" defines the participants involved. The "what" is driven by context, mission, and organizational goals. The "why" is meant to improve what is required to meet the specific mission and goals by nurturing inexperienced and immature leadership while tandemly strengthening seasoned leadership. The "how" includes the mechanics of how this will be done; and finally, the "when" identifies the timeline for accomplishment. The following is a visual representation of concepts put into the Hrivnak Jr. et. (2009) framework:

Figure 6

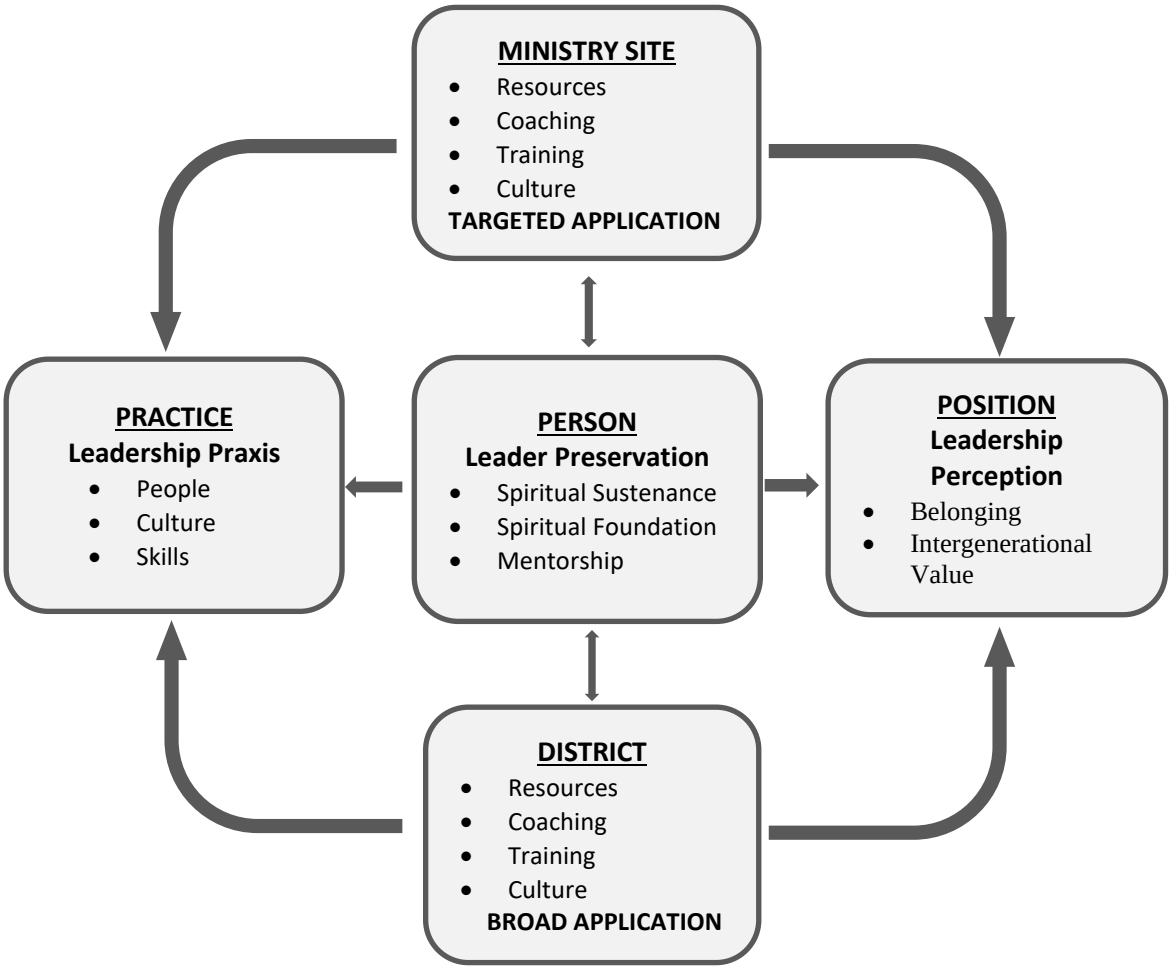
Hrivnak, Jr. et al. (2009) Theoretical Framework of Leadership Development



Using this framework, the researcher constructed a model that addressed the specific development needs of Gen Z. As the who, what, how, when, why, questions were addressed a more robust model emerged that unify the answers to these questions with the specific growth needs that were brought to the surface through the research. The following model represents the fruit of the research and was a further extension of the research as well as a novel contribution that added to the body of Gen Z research:

Figure 7

Theoretical Model for Ongoing Leadership Development in Gen Z



Model Explained

Understanding the model is integral for generalizing the model for broader audiences in specific environments. To that end, a detailed discussion of each component of the model is given.

Person. At the heart of the model lies the "why behind the what," which for the Gen Z population is a central motivating component necessary for spurring them into action. The spiritual investment into the person is the engine that drives all other things. Thus, this component represents an investment into the leader as a person. Without a strong biblical

foundation and a thriving relationship with Christ, the ability to be successful in other areas of spiritual leadership will be unable to be sustained over any length of time. The goal is to preserve and protect the spiritual heart of the person and, therefore, preserve the leader by avoiding burnout and abandonment of leadership altogether. This requires an intentional investment to be made that involves a community of stakeholders: the person themselves, an older, spiritually mature mentor, the leadership staff at the ministry site, and the higher denominational body that oversees the ministry site which in the context of this research study was the respective state district of the Assembly of God. For application in different denominational settings, this context would be replaced with the relevant supervisory level that oversees the ministry site and its respective leaders.

This aspect of the model addresses the spiritual stagnation that was discovered in Gen Z leaders as they struggle to make the transition into vocational ministry. Additionally, it is needed to continue to develop a strong biblical foundation and worldview that was concluded was necessary to counteract post-Christian effects and face the challenges of wisely navigating current cultural issues while preserving the integrity of the truth of the Word of God.

It can be seen by the arrows that at the heart of the model is a reciprocal relationship. As the spiritual investment is made into the person, the outcome is a spiritually healthy leader who can continue to grow in leadership skills and invest in the health of the entire community.

Practice. This component of the model represents leadership praxis – and is an investment into the person as a leader. The goal is to develop a broad spectrum of leadership skills, role-related skills, and tools to equip the leader for navigating through life issues and cultural challenges that are common to leadership.

The investment into this area involves the Gen Z leader who must actively engage in the development process for it to be successful. This population communicated a strong desire to "be part of the process" and "take ownership" and this is an opportunity for these things to take place. The senior leadership at the ministry site also becomes a dominant force in this area through the application of resources, coaching, and training that targets a specific leadership audience. These applications come through intentional training and the subtle, but critical, culture of growth and relationship. The district arm of the Assembly of God has the potential of making a huge impact on leadership growth. Having access to a greater pool of resources and a higher view of what is happening in ministry sites across the state, the district has the vantage point to see what common issues are and address them through the broad application. This allows for the efficient streamlining of leadership development that can take a significant load of development off the individual ministry sites themselves.

Position. The third component of the development model deals with the person's position inside the ministry site, and thus, the body of Christ. As Gen Z leaders struggle with seeing the interconnectivity of the church as a body, and thereby, how their ministry fits within that on a grander scale, it is essential that their eyes be opened to the value of all generations. This research reflected that Gen Z leaders have a deep love for people across the generations, but this love does not always translate into value. This research also revealed that the Gen Z leaders are passionate about their areas of ministry, but that passion often comes with tunnel vision, and they can fail to see how their ministry impacts, belongs and spills over into the entire body. Intergenerational experiences that connect the Gen Z leader as a person into the body of Christ and connects the Gen Zer as a leader whose ministry fits into a grander context within the body of Christ, are integral aspects of growing their vision of the bigger picture of ministry.

Model Applications

It is believed that this model has applications that can go beyond the scope of this study and be utilized in broader contexts than just Gen Z ministry leadership and the Assembly of God denomination, however, for the purposes of this research, the model applications were limited to this research scope. Applications are discussed in this section according to the three categories represented in the model: Person, Practice, and Position.

Person. Making a spiritual investment into the person as a spiritual leader will always yield a return. The applications of this are many and involve the Gen Z leader, a mentor, the leadership staff of the ministry site, and the district community.

The Gen Z leader must be willing to be intentional about his own spiritual growth and take the initiative for this process through daily devotions, worship, and heart evaluation. Beyond this daily activity, an intentional commitment to finding ways to bolster a biblical worldview through rigorous Bible study courses, biblical worldview development opportunities, and the limiting of influences that may erode the current biblical worldview are all practical applications. The Gen Z leader must actively look for ways to replace the loss of church attendance as a means of spiritual growth before entering vocational ministry. This can be done through the prevalence of online churches common in our post-Covid world. Additionally, the Gen Z leader, who has a deep desire for mentorship must be willing to actively seek mentorship themselves or communicate to the senior leadership staff a need for help in finding one.

Senior ministry leaders can provide opportunities within the workplace for spiritual growth. The once-a-month staff chapel that was implemented by Site B was an effective demonstration of a viable opportunity. This strategy could be realistically applied each week in staff meetings as the amount of time devoted to it was a mere 15-20 minutes but packed a

considerable punch in its impact. Furthermore, studying portions of Scripture together as a staff that systematically works through books of the Bible is an effective way of building strong foundations of truth that are needed for the rigors of working with people issues. These Bible study methods are better utilized as interactive, collaborative discussions rather than a devotional presented by a member of staff that only requires passive engagement from other participants. This requires the Gen Z leader to be an active part of the development process.

The representative state district can contribute to the spiritual growth of the leader by providing biblical study resources and coordinated opportunities such as spiritual growth or biblical worldview development conferences that are modeled after the Equip and Connect conferences that already take place.

Practice. This aspect of the model is applied through targeted leadership development training that includes specific topics and issues that were found to be gaps in the Gen Z leader's overall preparation for ministry as well as pushing forward the overall leadership growth. This responsibility does not just fall on the ministry site, but as in all aspects of this model, it is a community effort.

Gen Z leaders can actively look for and attend conferences, workshops, or other training opportunities that may enhance skills needed for their role or overall leadership skills. They can also seek out or recruit senior ministry leaders or district personnel in helping them find a mentor who is farther along in the leadership process experientially to come alongside them in a personal way to help nurture their leadership growth.

Senior ministry leaders can continue to expand the strategies that were already seen to be implemented within the research study. Leadership book studies, podcasts, and training sessions are necessary components. If possible, the formation of a staff position that is dedicated to the

growth and development of the staff, as was recently implemented at Site C, would go a long way in providing consistent ongoing leadership development opportunities and aid in cultivating a culture that places a high priority on the health and development of its leaders.

District staff can further help in this endeavor by continuing to offer and expand its array of leadership conferences. A dedicated staff position for leadership growth and development across the district would be a highly beneficial way of streamlining training that is pertinent to all ministry sites, such as training targeted at navigating cultural issues, conflict management, and communication skills.

Position. This component of the model was designed to address the limited grasping of the interconnectivity of the church. It is within this category that intergenerational opportunities are incorporated for both the leader as an individual and the leader as the head of an area of ministry within the ministry site.

Gen Z ministry leaders can take an active role in this development by continuing to be mentored by a member of an older generation while actively mentoring a member of a younger generation. This is an idea that was widely embraced among the Gen Z leaders but not often implemented. Additionally, as an individual, the Gen Z leader should intentionally seek to develop friendships and attend events that include a wide generational spectrum. As a leader, creating opportunities within the assigned area of ministry to impact, include, or participate with other ministries and other generational groups would serve as a way of expanding the focus and vision.

Senior ministry leaders can also apply this portion of the model by showing caution in over-segregating generations in the church. The more opportunities where generations must work together, connect, and cross-train, the better. Furthermore, leadership training on generational

characteristics would be beneficial in familiarizing the Gen Z leaders with characteristics that represent the strengths of each generation that should be valued and preserved.

The district can bolster this endeavor by incorporating generational integration components into the Connect conference. This conference has a focus on connecting ministry leaders to others within their respective roles, but the conference also could serve as an existing event that could be utilized to cast vision for the interconnectivity of the church body, provide targeted opportunities for intergenerational mentoring and coaching, and nurture a culture of growth and development that reflects the unique value of all generations.

Countless applications could take shape for the implementation of this theoretical model, and it is believed to have the flexibility to be relevant to a wide range of environments and needs. The model's goal is to provide a well-developed structure that can nurture, grow, strengthen, and improve leadership in the church in a sustained and intentional manner that does not leave the burden on any one entity, but shares the burden as God intended his people to do. As the benefits impact the entire body of Christ, the investment should be made by the entire body of Christ.

Recommendations for Stakeholders

The unavoidable reality is Gen Z ministry leaders are now leading whether ready or not. In the background to the problem an additional question was posited that addressed the unique technological post-Christian upbring of Gen Z: Has this different generation brought with it an urgency to take a different approach to ongoing leadership development? Based on the findings and conclusions of this study the answer to that question must be a resounding, yes!

Because the body of Christ functions as a living organism, those who impact the growth and development of Gen Z, and those who are impacted by it, are inextricably intertwined. The entire church and all its members become stakeholders in Gen Z ministry leaders' development

and therefore, knowingly or unknowingly take part in the nurturing and growing process of the leader.

This being said, the most prominent stakeholders that have a direct impact on the development of these young leaders are the senior ministry leaders who oversee them. In the busyness of accomplishing the goals of the church, senior ministry leaders – whether on a church level or district level must resist the idea that just because a Gen Z ministry leader has successfully graduated from Bible college or completed denominational credentialing, he or she is a fully formed leader (Phil. 1:6). While each leader's spiritual and professional growth process is unique, sanctification, by definition, is a long, slow, progressive process (Grudem, 1994), it is in the early years of leadership when ministry foundations are established (Ledbetter et al., 2016). Growth in competency as a leader, character formation, and effective ministry increasingly develops with time, experience, and continual intentional development that comes with the aid of older wiser leaders.

While practical applications have been recommended there are a few additional recommendations for stakeholders that are addressed further here. Leadership growth and development are critical across any organization or institution, but the importance of it within the church is even more dramatic as this is an institution that has eternal impact. Therefore, it is not only necessary for the church to take leadership development seriously, but it is also biblically mandated that it be implemented with great intentionality. Not being left to figure it out entirely on our own, God's Word provides a relevant and powerful illustration of Jesus' investment into leadership development that serves as some additional recommendations for stakeholders.

Be Intentional

Ultimately following Jesus' example, intentional investment in their development with both formal and informal training so they will be able to carry on ministry doing "even greater things" (*NIV*, 2011, John 14:12) after the baton has been passed is wise. Instruct them on specific skills (Matthew 6:6-18; Luke 11:1-4), invest in their spiritual growth, and point them to Jesus' countercultural kingdom values that reorient their worldview (Matthew 5-7). Coach them through intentional opportunities to apply their learning in real-world situations (Matthew 10; Mark 6:7-11; Luke 9:1-6).

Be Informed

It is wise to become informed on what makes Gen Z tick - become students of generational characteristics - not because they are all predisposed to manifesting the same strengths and weaknesses, but knowing the context within which they live and were raised helps understand them. Jesus knew the church would be multicultural and multigenerational, and he demonstrates clearly how older leaders tasked with their development must be informed and spend time learning about the diverse people they are developing and leading (Lingenfelter, 2008).

Be Adaptable

Senior leadership tasked with the ongoing development of Gen Z leaders may have a particular and comfortable leadership style. A Christian leader, however, must put the needs of younger generation leaders at the forefront. This demands adaptive leaders who are committed to utilizing other leadership styles that may be personally stretching but aid in "providing them with the space or opportunity they need to learn new ways of dealing with the inevitable changes in

assumptions, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that they are likely to encounter in addressing real-world problems" (Northouse, 2016, p. 258).

Be Alert

As emerging Generation Z leaders graduate from college and enter the real world of Christian ministry, senior leaders must not be blindsided by the realities of this digitally native, post-Christian generation. On the other hand, they should not be apathetic either. As one senior leader reflected, we are all affected by the post-Christian culture and must be constantly aware and on guard for the erosion of a biblical worldview.

Senior leaders must avoid the assumption that appearing relevant and engaging Gen Z in ongoing leadership development means merely adding technology to a staff meeting or becoming proficient in social media. Since technology has become a powerful force that has changed every aspect of life, senior leaders must understand the effects it has had on Gen Z and then use it wisely, guided by a biblical worldview (Cartwright et al., 2017). While technology may be a component of leadership development, the tools that ultimately bring about spiritual and leadership growth are God's Word, his people, and his Spirit (Maddix & Estep, 2010; Pettit, 2008; Chester & Timmis, 2008). Taking the wise recommendation of Campbell and Garner (2016), senior leaders' use of technology in leadership development "should not only be economically productive, ecologically sound, socially just, and personally fulfilling; it should also include a call to act justly, be authentic and wholesome in our relationships, and walk in line with God in our technological world" (p. 123). It is imperative to remain "alert and sober-minded" (*NIV,* 2011, I Peter 5:8-9) as the work that is conducted in the church has eternal implications.

Be Discerning

Senior leaders must be discerning, not assuming that all research is good research. Discernment and wisdom must, therefore, be applied to what is heard and believed as many research reports are targeted to serve a specific purpose resulting in conflicted or slanted research (White, 2017). What one researcher sees as a danger, another sees as an opportunity (Barna, 2018; Twenge, 2010; Boyd, 2014) Proper discernment opens eyes to see that one of the most critical characteristics that must be understood about this generation is not just the research that is conflicted, Generation Z is conflicted.

When one steps back and begins to thoughtfully put the research together it can be concluded that the barrage of information that digital devices bombard them with every day, all day, has left Gen Z a conflicted generation. They can multitask across multiple devices (Sparks & Honey, 2015), but do not have adequate attention spans to focus on one (Twenge, 2010; Turner, 2015). Their spatial awareness is highly developed (Sparks & Honey, 2015), but they lack situational awareness (White, 2017; Turkle, 2011). Their social circles are global (Sparks & Honey, 2015; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Barna, 2018), but they long for face-to-face communication (White, 2017; Barna, 2018). From people, they desire honesty above all other characteristics (Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Sparks & Honey, 2015), but they cultivate multiple online personalities (Freitas, 2017; Barna, 2018), and only one-third of the population views lying as wrong (Barna, 2018). Technology has created an environment that leaves them as James describes “like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (*NIV*, 2011, James 1:6), and this must inform the content of ongoing leadership development.

Invest the Necessary Time

Leadership development can utilize all different mediums: books, online resources, online connections, and practical experiences, but central to all those things must be a relationship that is cultivated by a senior leader who models the message. Relationship is essential and requires that a leader have genuine concern for others - and relationships take time.

Research Limitations

As the journey through this research comes to its final destination, it is wise to address some of its limitations that are an inevitable part of any qualitative research study (Creswell, 2015). For example, studies that gather data from interviews with people rely on their honesty and transparency. Another limitation may come from the researcher herself through inexperience in the selected research methodology as well as her own biases. Throughout the research process, it was necessary to constantly be consuming knowledge on grounded theory design as well as perform a consistent evaluation of her thoughts and opinions to prevent bias from seeping into the analysis of the data and inadvertently influencing the findings of the study.

While this researcher has made painstaking efforts to prevent all these scenarios, the tentative findings of the study can only be definitively confirmed through similar research. Furthermore, even in the best of cases, there are certain limitations that affect the generalizability of the findings that simply cannot be overcome in qualitative research which makes this study no exception to the inevitability of research limitations. In this study, the population sample, geographic sample, and denominational sample all serve as potentially limiting factors in the application of the findings, conclusions, and implications to a broad population of people.

The population sample for this study consisted of seventeen participants. Seven senior ministry leaders and ten Gen Z leaders. Although the comments that were made and the data that

was collected were undeniably similar among all participants, it would be optimistic to assume that there would not be outliers or conflicting data if the sample size was increased to include a larger number. Additionally, all the Gen Z participants came from the same ethnicity and similar strong Christian upbringings. None of the participants had the experience of not growing up in a relatively healthy, Christian home, therefore, there was limited diversity in upbringing among the participants as a whole. Finally, among the participants who had attended the Bible college, only three were represented: two within the Assembly of God denomination and one outside of the denomination. This potentially limits the understanding of how other vocational ministry programs may vary in the level of preparation they provide which would, at least to some degree, potentially affect some aspects of the variables leading to a lack of readiness that were found as a result of the study.

Another limitation that must be addressed is the geographical region where the study was conducted. All research sites were located in the Midwest region of the United States. Furthermore, the communities the sites were a part of were relatively similar in size - near larger cities, but not in metropolitan areas. Research conducted in smaller rural areas may yield some variance in results as could research collected from metropolitan cities. Regions of the country, as well, may impact findings to some extent.

Finally, the study's confinement to one evangelical denominational sample may have some unforeseen limiting aspects on the study. Data was collected from four sites that were part of the Assembly of God denomination. The inclusion of other evangelical denominations may paint a more robust picture of what was found in this study as it would inevitably add nuances that were not uncovered here.

Although likely not an exhaustive list, as there are certainly other limitations that may have been overlooked and lurking beneath the surface, these limitations represent the most likely sampling of the research studies' constraints, thereby preventing widespread application of the findings.

Further Research

The theoretical model constructed as the result of this study is merely an initial step in addressing the ongoing leadership needs of Gen Z ministry leaders. As presented in this study, many variables must be considered when looking at leadership preparedness and biblical worldview development. Over time, replication studies done in different geographical regions of the county, among other evangelical denominations, or with a null hypothesis would be beneficial in proving or disproving this study's findings. Additionally, a similar study using a quantitative design would hold the potential of verifying if these findings remain applicable only to a small population, or if it hints at a pattern present in a larger population.

While this study has offered several key areas of needed leadership development, other quantitative studies that sample a larger population of Gen Z ministry leaders would be a valuable way to unearth other key areas of weakness, leadership struggles, or other common themes across a broader spectrum. Another area of study that would prove valuable within this topic, or closely related ones, would be to take a look at vocational ministry preparation programs to identify weak or missing concepts related to ministry leadership. Evaluating how well these programs have adapted to the new challenges that have arisen due to a technological post-Christian culture may be helpful in better equipping leaders for the mission of the church.

Another recommendation for further study would be to dive deeper into the biblical worldview development and erosion of this cohort through actual biblical worldview testing that

may reveal common areas where the erosion is prominent, therefore, enabling a targeted approach for ongoing biblical worldview growth and development.

Summary

The long journey to get to this point began in Chapter One which set the course route by mapping out the research problem. In Chapter Two an excursion into the relevant literature on Gen Z was taken which surveyed the major landmarks and tourist attractions that have been erected as research attempts to define and characterize Generation Z as a whole. Chapter Three continued down the road with an explanation of the grounded theory research methodology which served as the GPS that guided the study. Chapter Four visited the findings which now serve as a verbal photo album of the lived experiences of the seventeen locals who graciously allowed this researcher to interact in the daily workings of their environments and report on what was found there. Arriving at the final destination, Chapter Five highlighted the research conclusions and left fellow travelers with a novel souvenir by offering the Theoretical Model of Ongoing Leadership Development in Gen Z that emerged from the grounded theory research.

Now at the end of the journey, before souvenirs are shelved and documents are relegated to virtual storage closets, a moment of final reflection on the value of the trip is warranted. Any journey into the unknown should leave the traveler changed and the world better for having made the journey. This traveler has certainly been transformed by the trek. Only time will tell whether the world, even in small ways is the better for it, however, if anyone reading has captured the urgency of investing time and energy into this passionate group of next-generation leaders, and then intentionally goes and does it, the mission will be accomplished and to God be the glory.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 17, 2021

Jillieta Norwood
Gary Bredfeldt

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-293 A Model for Ongoing Leadership Development in Evangelical Generation Z Ministry Leaders

Dear Jillieta Norwood, Gary Bredfeldt,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d): Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for

verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Participant Screening Questions

Potential Senior Ministry Leader Screening Questions:

Are you currently a paid senior ministry leader employed by (insert ministry location as relevant)?

Are you directly involved with the hiring process of other paid ministry leaders in the church?

Do you currently have a Generation Z ministry leader (born between 1995-2010) as a member of your employed leadership staff?

Have you hired and worked with a Generation Z leader for a minimum of 6 months?

Are you directly involved, to some extent, in the ongoing development of the Generation Z leader(s)?

Are you a member of a generation other than Generation Z?

Potential Generation Z Ministry Leader Screening Questions:

Were you born between 1995-2010, and are you at least 18 years of age?

Are you currently a paid employee at the ministry site?

Have you been employed by the church or parachurch organization for a minimum of six months?

Appendix C

Permission Request

[Insert Date]

[Recipient]
[Title]
[Company]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient],

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to develop a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development in Evangelical Generation Z ministry leaders

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants for this study will include Senior Ministry Leaders and Generation Z Ministry Leaders. Generation Z Ministry Leaders are those born between the years 1995-2010.

Senior Ministry Leaders will be asked to participate in the following study procedures:

1. Observations of staff meeting or other meeting that involves interaction with the Generation Z participant. Duration of meeting.
2. Unstructured Recorded Interview. 30-45 minutes.
3. Semi-structured Recorded Interview. 30-45 Minutes.
4. Elicited Document. Provide a brief written job description and schedule of a normal workday. 15 minutes.

Generation Z participants will be asked to participate in the following study procedures.

1. Observations of staff meeting or other meeting that involves interaction with the senior leader participant. Duration of meeting.
2. Semi-structured Recorded Interview. 30-45 minutes.
3. Elicited Document. Written description of job description and schedule. 15 minutes.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval or respond by email to [insert email].

Sincerely,

Jillieta D. Norwood
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

[Date]

[Recipient]
[Title]
[Company]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to develop a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development in Evangelical Generation Z ministry leaders, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be over 18, employed by an Evangelical church for a minimum of six months, and be either:

- a member of Generation Z (birth years 1995-2010) who has been employed for a minimum of 6 months within a church or parachurch organization
- an older, paid, senior ministry leader who is involved in the hiring process and ongoing development of other paid ministry leaders within a church or parachurch organization. Furthermore, the population of interest includes those senior ministry leaders who have hired and currently oversee at least one Generation Z ministry leader who has been employed for a minimum of 6 months with that ministry.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

- Generation Z Ministry Leader:
    - Allow the researcher to observe a staff meeting or other meeting that involves interaction with the senior leader participant for the duration of the meeting.
    - Take part in a semi-structured, recorded interview for 30-45 minutes.
    - Provide a brief written job description for your role and provide your schedule for a normal workday. The time commitment for this activity is approximately 15 minutes.
- Senior Ministry Leader:
    - Take part in an unstructured, recorded interview for 30-45 minutes.
    - Participate in a semi-structured, recorded interview for 30-45 minutes.
    - Allow the researcher to observe a staff meeting or other meeting that involves interaction with the Generation Z participant for the duration of the meeting.

- Provide a brief written job description for your role and provide your schedule for a normal workday. The time commitment for this activity is approximately 15 minutes.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at [insert] for more information.

A consent document will be emailed to you one week before the scheduled staff meeting observation if you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the initial staff meeting observation.

Thank you for your consideration of participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Jillieta Norwood
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix E

Observation Rubric

Title of Study:
_____
Date/Time/Day of the week:
_____
Number of Participants: _____
Setting:
_____

Relates to:	Individuals Behavior	Group Behaviors	Nonverbal Cues	Conversation Topics and Threads
Participants				
Setting and use of space/objects				
Types of ongoing activities				
Demographic details				
Researcher reflections				

Appendix F

Interview Protocol – Gen Z Ministry Leaders

Date: _____

Time & Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Semi-structured Interview – Senior Ministry Leaders	
Pre-Interview Information & Procedures: 1. Introductions – Researcher introduces self, reviews process for session, interview will last 30-45 minutes, questions will be mostly open-ended 2. Research reviews study's purpose and uses of the findings including how the findings will be reported and shared 3. Consent forms, approvals: Informed consent forms distributed to participants, signatures secured, assurance of privacy and confidentiality, note that the interview will be recorded 4. Treatment of data: Research indicates how data will be managed, secured, and disposed of after a specific time period 5. Researcher will address any questions or concerns presented by the interviewee	
Q1: Tell me the story of how you came to be in your ministry position.	
Q2. Content Question – Tell me what your preparation for your role looked like. Probe: Do you think it sufficiently prepared you for your role you are currently in? Probe: Is there a timeframe in your job description for further higher education or professional development?	
Q3: Content Question – Describe for me what your typical day looks like. Probe – What do you find to be most challenging? Probe – What do you find to be most rewarding or satisfying?	
Q4: Do you engage in any type of mentorship for your own spiritual and leadership development?	

Probe: What does this look like? What would you like it to look like?	
Q5 – As you have been working in your role now, what do you wish you had known before you entered the ministry? Probe: What has surprised you about your leadership position?	
Q6: How do you think the post-Christian culture has hindered your development as a leader or how has it better prepared you?	
Q7: Do you feel you have safety in your work environment to speak of your needs or weak areas or do you feel the pressure to allows be "on?" Probe: Do you feel the expectations that are placed on you are reasonable for your leadership role?	
Q8: What would you describe as weak or deficient areas in your preparation or training that you would like to get further development in? Probe: Are you currently engaged in any type of mentoring relationship? If yes, what does this look like?	
Q9: In your perspective, what would help you be more successful in your leadership role?	
Concluding: Researcher Script: To obtain your final thoughts, is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?	
Thank you and Follow-Up reminder: Researcher Script: Thank you for your time and your insight. I will follow-up with you in a few days to complete a member-checking exercise to verify my notes of our session and ask you a few questions for clarification if necessary.	

Appendix G

Interview Protocol – Senior Ministry Leaders

Date: _____
Time & Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

Unstructured Interview – Senior Ministry Leaders	
Pre-Interview Information & Procedures: 1. Introductions – Researcher introduces self, reviews process for session, interview will last 30-45 minutes, questions will be open-ended 2. Research reviews study's purpose and uses of the findings including how the findings will be reported and shared 3. Consent forms, approvals: Informed consent forms distributed to participants, signatures secured, assurance of privacy and confidentiality, note that the interview will be recorded 4. Treatment of data: Research indicates how data will be managed, secured, and disposed of after a specific time period 5. Researcher will address any questions or concerns presented by the interviewee	
Q1. Content Question - Tell me what your normal day as a ministry leader looks like. Probe: Does this match what you thought it would look like when you began in this position? Probe: What has surprised you? Probe: Is there an example or story associated with this?	
Q2: Content Question -Tell me about your preparation for your ministry position. Probe - Do you feel your preparation for ministry was sufficient? Why or why not?	
Q3: Tell me about what you would do differently in preparing for or working in your leadership role. Probe – What do you wish you had known coming into ministry?	
Q4 – Tell me about what you see in Gen Z leaders. Probe: Is there anything you see that is different than you expected in relation to other generational leaders?	
Q5 – Tell me about your perceptions of the Gen Z leader's readiness for ministry leadership.	
Q6 – Content Question - Tell me about how your think your preparation may be similar	

or different to how Gen Z ministry leaders are prepared today. Probe – Do you see any changes in how new leaders are prepared?	
Q7 – Content Question - Do you think their level of preparation has adapted to the changes in our culture? Probe: Do you think our post-Christian culture warrants additional or different preparation than previous generations have received?	
Q8: Do you think the post-Christian culture and digital technology has had any impact on their worldview? Probe: Would you describe Gen Z as having any noteworthy changes in worldview development compared to your own experience or other generational leaders?	
Concluding: Researcher Script: To obtain your final thoughts, is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?	
Thank you and Follow-Up reminder: Researcher Script: Thank you for your time and your insight. I will follow-up with you in a few days to complete a member-checking exercise to verify my notes of our session and ask you a few questions for clarification if necessary.	

Appendix H

Interview Protocol – Senior Ministry Leaders

Date: _____
Time & Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

Semi-structured Interview – Senior Ministry Leaders	
Pre-Interview Information & Procedures: 1. Introductions – Researcher introduces self, reviews process for session, interview will last 30-45 minutes, questions will be open-ended 2. Research reviews study's purpose and uses of the findings including how the findings will be reported and shared 3. Consent forms, approvals: Informed consent forms distributed to participants, signatures secured, assurance of privacy and confidentiality, note that the interview will be recorded 4. Treatment of data: Research indicates how data will be managed, secured, and disposed of after a specific time period 5. Researcher will address any questions or concerns presented by the interviewee	
Q1: How would you describe lifelong learning? What are your thoughts on its necessity?	
Q2. Content Question – Do you currently engage in any type of ongoing leadership development? Probe: Is this development self-directed or part of your job description?	
Q3: Content Question – Is there currently any ongoing worldview development or leadership development for the Gen Z leaders? Probe – If so, what does this look like? If not, do you feel it is warranted? Why or Why not? Probe: If warranted – what do you feel it needs to include?	
Q4: Do you engage in any type of mentorship for your own spiritual and leadership development?	

Probe: What does this look like? What would you like it to look like? Probe: What are the challenges you encounter with this?	
Q5 – What challenges do you see with implementing a structured ongoing leadership model? Probe: What benefits do you see?	
Q6: From your perspective, how critical is ongoing leadership and worldview development for your own growth? Probe: How do you think it would help or hinder you in your role? Probe: How do you think it could most effectively be utilized to help Gen Z leaders?	
Concluding: Researcher Script: To obtain your final thoughts, is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?	
Thank you and Follow-Up reminder: Researcher Script: Thank you for your time and your insight. I will follow-up with you in a few days to complete a member-checking exercise to verify my notes of our session and ask you a few questions for clarification if necessary.	

Appendix I

Interview Protocol – Senior Ministry Leaders

Date: _____
Time & Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

Semi-structured Interview – District Staff	
Pre-Interview Information & Procedures: 1. Introductions – Researcher introduces self, reviews process for session, interview will last 45-60 minutes, questions will be open-ended 2. Research reviews study's purpose and uses of the findings including how the findings will be reported and shared 3. Consent forms, approvals: Informed consent forms distributed to participants, signatures secured, assurance of privacy and confidentiality, note that the interview will be recorded 4. Treatment of data: Research indicates how data will be managed, secured, and disposed of after a specific time period 5. Researcher will address any questions or concerns presented by the interviewee	
Background Context: Church leadership as a career field is one of the only career fields where professional development hours, ongoing training, mentorship, etc. are not required as part of the job description. Coupled with that is the addition of new Gen Z leaders who have been raised as the first generation who has never known life without technology and has been raised in a post-Christian world. My research is targeted at developing a model of ongoing leadership and leader development that will retain them in a demanding field and continue to develop them in a quest to come alongside them and invest in their success.	
Q1: Tell me a little about the "healthy pastors" component of your four-pronged focus for the district. What do you define as a healthy pastor? Probe: What is the district's role in maintaining healthy pastor's	
Q2. Content Question – Is there any type of professional development that is required for pastor's that comes from a district level? Probe: What are the other leadership or leader development initiatives that come from the district level? Do you feel there needs to be more?	
Q3: Tell me about what you see in Gen Z leaders. (Leaders age 26 and below Probe: Is there anything you see that is different than you expected in relation to other generational leaders? Strengths/weaknesses?	

Q4: Content Question – Have there been any changes in how Gen Z ministry leaders are prepared in comparison to previous generations? Probe – Do you think their level of preparation has adapted to the changes in our culture? Probe: Do you think our post-Christian culture warrants additional or different or ongoing preparation? Probe: What are the challenges you encounter with this?	
Q5: Do you think the post-Christian culture and digital technology has had any impact on the worldview of our Gen Z leaders? Probe: Any noteworthy changes?	
Q6: Content Question – Is there currently any ongoing worldview development or leadership development for the Gen Z leaders? Probe – If so, what does this look like? If not, do you feel it is warranted? Why or Why not? Probe: If warranted – what do you feel it needs to include? Probe: What are the challenges you encounter with this?	
Q5 – What challenges do you see with implementing a structured ongoing leadership model? Probe: What benefits do you see?	
Q6: From your perspective, how critical is ongoing leadership and worldview development? Probe: How do you think it could most effectively be utilized to help Gen Z leaders?	
Q7: How long have you been in ministry? What from your experience would have been helpful for you as a pastor to have received	

in terms of aiding in your spiritual growth professional growth? Probe: Would this have been most helpful coming from a district level, church level, national level or all the above?	
Concluding: Researcher Script: To obtain your final thoughts, is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?	
Thank you and Follow-Up reminder: Researcher Script: Thank you for your time and your insight. I will follow-up with you in a few days to complete a member-checking exercise to verify my notes of our session and ask you a few questions for clarification if necessary.	

Appendix J

Document Record

Document/Artifact	Location/ source and author/creator	Original purpose of item	Data created	Consistent with findings	Divergent from findings
Document 1:	Site A Senior Ministry Leader	Staff Meeting Agenda Insight into culture of the church site	12-13-21	Yes	No
Document 2:	Site B Outside guest for staff chapel	Staff Chapel Spiritual growth focus	1-4-22		Somewhat – only Site that included spiritual growth component in staff meeting
Document 3:	Site C Executive Team (Senior Ministry Leaders)	Staff Roles and Responsibilities Purpose was to communicate and assign all tasks to build in accountability	1-4-22 On site this document is consistently evaluated and updated	N/A	N/A

Appendix K

Consent – Generation Z Ministry Leaders

Title of the Project: A Model for Ongoing Leadership Development in Evangelical Generation Z Ministry Leaders

Principal Investigator: Jillieta D. Norwood, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be over 18 years of age, employed as a ministry leader at an Evangelical church for at least 6 months, and be a member of Gen Z (having been born between 1995-2010). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the leadership preparedness and worldview formation of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders to inform the development of a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development for senior leaders who are onboarding these new leaders into Christian ministry leadership roles.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Allow the researcher to observe a staff meeting or other meeting that involves interaction with the senior leader participant. Duration of meeting.
2. A semi-structured, recorded interview. 30-45 minutes.
3. Provide a brief written job description for your role and your schedule for a normal workday. The time commitment for this activity is approximately 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development that will emerge as a result of this research study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Paper documents will be kept in a password protected safe accessible only to the research. After three years, all electronic and paper records will be deleted or destroyed.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jillieta Norwood. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at XXX or [insert email]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt, at [insert email].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix L

Consent – Senior Ministry Leaders

Title of the Project: A Model for Ongoing Leadership Development in Evangelical Generation Z Ministry Leaders

Principal Investigator: Jillieta D. Norwood, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be over 18 years of age and employed as a ministry leader at an Evangelical church who is involved in the hiring process and ongoing development of other paid ministry leaders within the church or the parachurch organization. Furthermore, the population of interest includes those senior ministry leaders who have hired at least one ministry leader falling within the defined years of the Generation Z cohort (1995-2010) who has been employed by the church or parachurch organization for a minimum of six months. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the leadership preparedness and worldview formation of Generation Z Christian ministry leaders to inform the development of a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development for senior leaders who are onboarding these new leaders into Christian ministry leadership roles.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Unstructured recorded interview. 30-45 minutes.
2. A semi-structured recorded interview. 30-45 minutes.
3. Allow the researcher to observe a staff meeting or other meeting that involves interaction with the Generation Z participant. Duration of meeting.
4. Provide a brief written job description for your role and your schedule for a normal workday. The time commitment for this activity is approximately 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a theoretical model for ongoing leadership development that will emerge as a result of this research study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Paper documents will be kept in a password protected safe accessible only to the research. After three years, all electronic and paper records will be deleted or destroyed.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jillieta Norwood. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at XXX or [insert email]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt, at [insert email].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix M

Conditional Relationship Guide

Conditional Relationship Guide						
Category	What	When	Where	Why	How	Consequence
Unprepared for ministry	Only accomplished the second phase of preparation Don't know what they don't know	During context of ministry	In the work place In role of ministry	Because so much learning of the job is on the job Because experience prepares	Lack of time and experience	Lack of preparation impacts ability to see the big picture of ministry
Learn ministry by doing ministry	Learning that is not in the context of formal Bible College preparation programs	Happens once hired and in the workplace	In the context of working as a paid staff member of the church	The discovery that there is learning that can only take place in the context of where one is actually do the job and not in the classroom	Part of further preparation and development Happens outside of formal learning	Bible College preparation is only a part of preparation Further development happens within the work context
Lack of interpersonal skills	Lack of preparation in dealing with people	During ministry	In the context of their job roles	Lack of preparation	Undeveloped communication skills	People issues Choices Perception
Motivated Differently	Don't want to do things they are not passionate about	During the mundane of daily work	In big projects where there are menial tasks	Because they need the why behind the what	By seeing things undone – tasks left for others to do	Choices Perceptions
Don't see the big picture	Senior leaders describe it as a failure to see the interconnectivity of the church body as a whole	It is an ongoing issue that is present among Gen Z staff	Happens within their specific roles	Failure to see how what they do impacts other roles Failure to see how the smaller mundane things entwines with other jobs, tasks, roles, people	How it shows up: Don't include others outside specific area who might be impacted Lack of Communication	Important tasks are left undone Important communication doesn't take place Frustration with a process Other generations overlooked or undervalued
Age vs. generation	Hard to know when it is an age thing or a generational thing	During much of what is seen	In strengths In weaknesses	Because they are still "young and stupid"	By witnessing weaknesses By experiencing frustration	perceptions

Post-Christian worldview	Seeing biblical worldview erosion	Throughout life	In staff relations	Raised in a post-Christian world	Biblical worldview erosion	Perception of the big picture Values Competing influences
Polarization	One extreme or another	Throughout life	Seen in overall Gen Z characteristics Competing Characteristics in workplace	Increasing hostility to Christianity Social media	Owners vs. Hirelings Competing characteristics	Competing influences Fear of labels
Strengths are Weaknesses	Constant display of both	During work related activities	Want ownership but don't what to take ownership	Conflicted/confused Always trying to please/prove self	Need to appear tolerant	Competing influences
Work hard to not work hard	Not laziness, but from a habit of things being done for them	During work related activities	Don't want to do something but will expend a lot of energy getting out of what they don't want to do	Always had things done for them Competing need to have ownership but not take ownership	Keep up appearances Need to be motivated differently	Competing influences Not seeing the big picture
Need to know the why behind the what	Passion for what they love, but avoidance of things that are seen as not fun	During ministry related activities Throughout life	In big projects they are passionate about but have many tasks that aren't fun In sharing the load	Always told to do the thing they are passionate about	Don't understand why they have to do something they aren't passionate about Lack skills and desire to accomplish systematic tasks	Processes Getting to the big picture
Lack ownership but need ownership	Battle between passion and avoidance	During ministry	In staff environments Want to be valued and part of the process but don't want to do mundane tasks	Told to do what they are passionate about Want to be trusted and valued as a member of the team	Want quick success -	Processes – lack grit Competing characteristics
Unhealthy focus on Gen Z	Made the center of the world	Throughout life	Seen in the church as things are focused on attracting the young	Because of the need to keep young in church Turn the tide of post-Christian culture	Misguided attempts to reach the next generation Constant change	Older generations are undervalued

Technology/Social media	Pervasiveness of technology Constant access	Throughout life	In all areas – always bombarded with new information Constantly interrupted	Accepted part of culture in and out of the church Need to respond immediately	By it's acceptance Cultural norm	Competing influences Biblical worldview erosion Grit
Staff devotions	Effort to develop spiritually	During staff meetings	In job setting	Christian environment Refocus	Intentional	Spiritual growth
Book/podcast recommendations	Develop leadership skills	During staff meeting	On own time typically Books in staff meeting Self-directed	See the need to keep learning	Somewhat intentional SML see area that needs to be developed	Leadership development Accomplishing the mission Goal oriented
Church culture	What the staff and church communicates through nonverbal means	During all aspects of church ministry	In every setting – First impact is on the staff	It communicates the vision and goal of the church	Hidden curriculum	Unintentional development
Mentorship	SML encourage finding others to help you develop	During work context	Staff relations	Because SML don't want the sole responsibility of development	Self-directed Encouraged	Community
District Conferences	Training developed at the district level for all churches	A few times a year	Usually overnight in central state location	Level the playing field Equip and connect	Intentional development	Preparation Community
Self-directed	Further preparation or learning that is accomplished by an individual	On own time	Outside of work setting	See a personal need to develop	Podcasts Books Mentorship Youtube videos	Preparation Choices Values
Lack intentionality	No established goal	throughout	In work/staff setting	Busy with the mission of the church Church goal driven	Development happens by accident	Stagnation Preparation Values
Desire for mentors	Gen Z desire for collaboration	Throughout life	In work setting and in personal life	Want leadership development and leader development	Generally mentor younger but want someone older as well	Stagnation Community Competing influences
Developing people	Lack of preparation in area	Throughout life	New recognition in work context	Now working with people Can't do everything on their own	Overwhelmed Lack of communication Struggle for balance	Community Underdeveloped

Navigating cultural issues	Post-Christian world LGBTQ Identity Crisis Hostility	Throughout life	In role context Working with younger Gen Z in the church	Never prepared Lived it but don't know how to help others live through it	Students coming out Biblical worldview erosion	Biblical worldview erosion Post-Christian Underdeveloped
Skill/role training	Leadership development	On the job	During the workday	Want to further their skills Recognize school prepared them for only a little of what they do	Don't have necessary skills for job	Underprepared Unintentional development
Coach vs. micromanaged	Collaboration vs control	In staff setting	In church mission	Love collaboration Want to be free to do what they want Hate being controlled or told what to do	Have to be motivated differently	Intentional development Values Community
Want to be part of the process	Collaboration	In all aspects of job	During church planning/ mission /vision setting	Believe themselves to be dreamers Want to be trusted Feel they have a valuable way of doing things	Try to prove themselves Push ideas	Big picture Lack of experience Values
Age not used against them	Want to be a valued member of the team	Throughout life	During all aspects of the job Staff interactions	Believe they have value and good ideas	Try to convince people they have experience Try to appear wiser than they are	Big picture
Spiritual growth investment	Unexpected spiritual growth stagnation	When they come into ministry	Discover that church role changes in their life	Doing church not going to church	Spiritual stagnation	Biblical worldview erosion Underdeveloped Big picture
More hands on experience	Lack of preparation	When Gen Z comes into ministry	Seen in their work role Staff relations People interactions	School too academic Lack practical experience Professors stagnant in practical experience	Unprepared for many aspects of the job	Underdeveloped
Coaching/ collaborative	Gen Z needs to be coached in a collaborative style	On the job	In ministry role	They have a particular learning style Very collaborative	See their inability to systematically work through a process	Community Intentional development Gen Z characteristic

				Motivated differently		
Taking ownership of fine details	Struggle with systematic processes Unmotivated to do mundane things	Throughout job role	Specifically in larger projects	Never been taught how to work through a process Don't see the big picture	Want instant success without the work Dreamers but lack the ability to know what is needed to accomplish the dream	Big picture Underdeveloped Gen Z characteristic
Mentorship	Need community	All areas of life	On the job Outside of the job	Need community Aids in spiritual growth Aids in seeing the bigger picture of interconnectivity of the church	Spiritual stagnation Don't value older generations Need development in interpersonal skills/relationships	Big picture Intentional development Values
Equipped for cultural issues	Post-Christian culture LGBTQ culture Tolerance/ intolerance	All areas of life	Working with younger Gen Z in the church	Things changing constantly How to make an impact	Encountering cultural issues they don't know how to navigate Underprepared Difference in living it and guiding someone through it	Post-Christian Biblical worldview erosion Intentional development
Expansion of apologetics	Gone beyond the need to defend faith Other hostile groups know the Bible	In ministry role	Should happen on a district level	Can't defend faith to irrational people who don't want their minds changed How to love people while staying true to God's Word	Dealing with people/groups in the church and in evangelism settings	Biblical worldview erosion Post-Christian Intentional development
Firm foundation of truth	Developing a solid biblical worldview Knowing the truth and accuracy of God's word	In all areas of life	Spiritual development that happens in work environment and outside of it	Doing church not going to church Raised in post-Christian world Hostile groups have distorted Biblical knowledge	In youth groups LGBTQ community in the church	Intentional development Biblical worldview erosion Post-Christian

Appendix N

Axial Coding Codebook

Code	Full Name	Overview	Example/Quote
Underdeveloped			
1-1	Bible College too academic	Bible Colleges focus too much on academic learning and not enough on practical, real-world experience. Missing the people aspect of training.	[Allison, 21:58] "Bible college is a bubble. . . . need to do a better job of preparing students for life outside of college. . . . students going into ministry need to learn how to get into the dirt."
1-2	Limited hands-on experiences	Need more practical experience during formal education	[Matt, 37:57] Learning needs to be hands on [Scott, 6:25] Hands on approach is best
1-3	Learn ministry by doing ministry	The job is best and most fully learned on the job	[Evan, 22:30] appear more prepared from a Master's Commission [Henry, 5:20] Not prepared at school – prepared at internship [Matt, 11:32] "learned ministry by doing ministry" [Rick, 16:48] "I think the only way that I ever would have been prepared for some of the things that I wasn't is just – the only way you get prepared is just doing ministry."
1-4	Professors disconnected from practical experience	Many professors have been out of practical ministry for too long	[Matt, 37:04] Learning is theoretical from professors who have not been practicing
1-5	Missing critical components in education	Not learning essential practical skills needed in the church and not learning how to deal with people	[Mike, 5:38] Unprepared for dealing with the people's problems [Henry, 6:34] Unprepared for dealing with parents [Matt, 45:17] "Don't know how to tackle big issues" [Dara, 34:58] Inadequate training – Bible school education only takes you so far. [Rick, 19:42] "Oh 100% anything that has to do with social media or photo editing. I didn't have any preparation for that, and that is a huge part of ministry." [Brandon] educational bar has been lowered – they lack soft skills
Biblical Worldview Erosion			
2-1	Social Media influence	Emphasis on seeing has become a move toward desiring the emotional/experiential	[Matt, 47:14] Feel first, God second. If it feels right it must be right. [Matt, 46:07] Lead very experientially [Mike, 11:13] Social media has dramatically affected people's ability to connect.

			[Matt, 59:48] Want to have a "moment" [Brandon, 39:18] ". . . we're so influence by what we see. You know. . . . like that sense of the visual sense overpowers and it's almost like we don't even use anything else. Everything else becomes numb."
2-2	Bombarded with information	Constant bombardment of information; competing influences	[Rick, 47:49] Too many competing things that erode biblical worldview
2-3	Post-Christian Society	Competing political views, Removal of Christianity from fabric of society	[Henry, 33:42] Made it more difficult for students to engage in their own personal relationship with God because it is no longer woven into society [Hailey, 22:16] "Definitely see an erosion in biblical worldview" [Henry, 14:36] Sports and activity have become the new religion and Christianity has become just being "good"
2-4	Hostility to Christianity	Gen Z not just apathetic to Christianity but have become hostile to it. It is no longer popular	[Dara, 42:28] New hostility to Christianity [Mike, 30:02] There is a hostility to Christianity, it is not popular anymore. [Sean, 33:22] Gen Z hostile to Christianity because of feeling like it is forced upon them by older generation – lots of finger pointing
2-5	Tolerance	Tolerance has taken on a different look and different definition from previous generations	[Dara, 44:25] Church is adapting to culture in a tolerant way [Thomas, 12:26] Tolerance has become a way to avoid controversy
2-6	Lack of firm biblical foundation	Generation no longer has basic biblical knowledge	[Evan, 26:38] "So much of what they hear isn't biblical and they don't know it." [Matt 41:52] No solid foundation [Mike, 32:14] No foundation to stand upon when it comes time to defend your faith. [Mike, 33:11] "So, it's like someone's take, a pastor's take, on the passage of the Bible is now given to me, and then I can get my take on his take."
Church Culture Impacts			
3-1	Continuing education is undervalued in the church	Older generations have bred a culture that does not emphasize this as a necessity	[Matt, 10:35] Lack of lifelong learning culture in the church; Gen Zers are better at it and want it.

3-2	Lack of intentionality	Development that does happen is usually unintentional or secondary outcome	[Brandon, 1:02:31] "one of the things we don't do well, is leadership development."
3-3	Focus on getting the job done	Primary focus is to get the job done from week to week; always improving in the product that is delivered	[Evan, 9:58] Lack of ability to see beyond the immediate
3-4	Change resistant	Old ways of doing things supersede new ideas	[Lance, 24:22] "I think another thing I wasn't expecting either is. . . .how against people were to change. [Trey, 16:07] "when you're a young new pastor, the hardest people to win over are the older, like stuck in their way, just want service to be how it is, and how it's always been, and, and, you got to prove it to them, that you're, you know what you're talking about, you got to prove it to them that you're gonna stick around.
3-4	Loss of Critical Influences	Spiritual stagnation from loss of church influence and loss of mentorship from internships and other areas of life	[Matt, 7:16] Mentor is needed to replace the pastoral role in life – helpful to be outside the chuch [Allison, 50:20] Feel like discipleship is missing – should be being discipled while discipling. [Brittany, 40:49] "My pastor is my boss" [Allison, 7:34] "Hardest part of ministry is not becoming spiritually stagnant" [Henry, 22:33] "Hard to develop spiritually because church is my job."
3-5	Self-directed development	Ongoing development is self-directed in those who are motivated to do so	[Rick, 25:29] "Trying to be intentional about it because the district hasn't done a good job. . ."
Age/Emerging Adulthood			
4-1	Don't know what you don't know	Hard to be prepared for what you don't fully understand	[Natalie, 5:39] "I hear people say like, in high school, they should teach kids how to pay loans, or do you know, like, all these practical things. And it's like, until you face that you have no care. . . or concept. . . so you just don't apply it."
4-2	Self-focused	Time of life where typically single, out of the house and they only have themselves to focus on	[Dara,30:09] Focus on self has gone beyond addiction and moved into obsession [Dara] No one to worry about but myself
4-3	Still figuring themselves out	Still determining what they want to do when they grow up; worldview; belief systems	[Brittany, 24:41] still learning so much about myself [Dara] Still figuring things out

4-4	Building credibility and trust	Trying to prove they know what they are doing and have good ideas that should be valued	[Henry, 4:31] Not taken seriously because of age [Trey, 44:02] ". . . definitely when it comes to feeling the need to prove myself and feeling the need to, to establish my credibility, need to show everyone that I can do it, that I can do it really well."
Generational Characteristics			
5-1	Unhealthy focus on Gen Z	Churches target younger people at the expense of older generations; raised in an environment where things have always been done for them	[Natalie; 54:57] everything has been handed to them [Dara, 49:47] Entitlement - "Expect everything to be given to them" [Dara, 52:47] Breakdown of authority – they think they own everything [Matt, 18:03] Believe their way is the right way; their has been an unhealthy focus on them [Mike, 26:25] Not dependable because there were no consequences for not being dependable [Allison, 18:32] Everything has always been done for us.
5-2	Strengths are their weaknesses	Both often operate in the same setting but manifested in different roles. Example: selfish/selfless	[Thomas, 11:11] "I would say probably one of our greatest strengths can also be one of our greatest weaknesses"
5-3	Pendulum swings	Generation overcorrects from previous generations; social media influence has had a polarizing affect	[Evan, 1:01:28] pendulum swing that rebels against how they were raised [Rick, 49:13]" No ownership or foundation so as soon as they encounter something they don't like they abandon the faith and shift to the opposite extreme."
5-4	Work hard to not work hard	Not lazy, just expend a lot of energy to avoid doing the thing they don't want to do	[Natalie, 54:27] "They see what they want and think they can just get there without having to do the work to get there." [Dara, 55:15] example of pawning off responsibility because someone else is accessible [Chris, 18:31] They work hard to not work hard." [Chris, 1:09:27] They need tasks specifically spelled out otherwise they make the excuse they didn't know they were supposed to do that.
5-5	Conflicting/competing characteristics	The thing they want is often the thing they avoid. Example: ownership, relationship	[Hailey, 23:59] There are so many completing influences and an emphasis on deconstructing their faith [Mike] not dependable but want to be trusted [Scott] Sensitive but brittle [Allen] tolerant but intolerant

			[Chris] selfish but selfless [Natalie, 11:55] Passionate for a cause – but can't commit [Natalie, 19:04] don't want to offend but offended by everything
5-6	Motivated differently	Very passionate for the cause but they require a different approach in motivating	[Natalie, 56:37] Constantly distracted [Hailey, 8:29] "Definitely you have to motive them differently" [Hailey, 11:14] They need the why behind the what [Scott, 19:00] Ownership is the key to motivating passion" [Hailey, 27:04] Unless talking about something they are passionate about they are hard to keep on task.

Appendix O

Memo	
Date: January 27	Research: District Level (Site D)
In Reference to: District Staff Interview	

Large majority of the interview validated what was said in previous interviews. He described generalizations of Gen Z, other interviews offered specific examples that attest to what he is saying – Go through transcripts and pair these.

Gen Z characteristics:

- Don't see the big picture
- Passionate for a cause
- Don't know how to do long term planning or put systems in place
- Purpose driven, not people driven – they want to make an impact and do not value the people who inhibit or are not a part of that purpose.
- Want others to do things for them
- So compassionate for people – love them better because they can overlook the things that jaded previous generations, but then are very impatient and do not value people who do not fit or conform to their purposes. (again the competing characteristics)

Overall ideas were validated that some aspects of the leadership development model should be implemented at the district level – the aspects that involve resources that might not be available to smaller churches.

Interesting note:

He found that although it may be that it has been older generations that have cultivated a culture where continuing education is not necessary – he sees this attitude very prevalent in mid-size to smaller churches.

Gen Zer's are not going into vocational ministry because they come from the Dave Ramsey movement that is within churches – parents now think it is crazy to spend $130,000 on a college education for a $30,000 a year job in ministry.