

ABSTRACT

From Generation to Generation: A Qualitative Single Case Study of a Pentecostal Church in Central Arkansas' Successful Growth and Retention Programs Involving Young Adults

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In 1945, church participation in America started to decline, despite the efforts of many Christian church leaders, the problem continues to escalate (Jones, 2021; Inglehart, 2020). Research reveals that the most dramatic decrease in church participation occurs in Generation Z young adults (born 1995 to 2012; Jones, 2021; Twenge, 2017). This problem culminates into one of the most significant challenges facing the Christian church today.

Until now, Pentecostal churches fared better than many other Christian denominations (Wilson, 2016). However, the phenomenon of declining church participation does not preclude Pentecostal churches. If Pentecostal churches hope for continued growth, the church leaders must proactively approach the problem of declining church participation.

In this study, I used a qualitative single case study design to examining a Central Arkansas Pentecostal church's successful practices of engaging Generation Z young

adults aged 18–25. The study focused on the innovations the church’s pastoral leadership implemented to engage young adults. Therefore, the study centers on three distinct categories adapted from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour’s (1997) innovation research theory framework: new technology, administrative structures, and new member processes.

This qualitative single case study’s research findings proved the need for church leaders to employ specific innovations to engage Generation Z young adults. The participants asserted that the implementation of new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes assisted the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, in opposing the trend of declining church participation among Generation Z. As digital natives, Generation Z young adults find the standard practices of the church uninspiring (Twenge, 2017; White, 2018). Though Generation Z young adults thrive in digital environments, the findings of this study proved that regardless of how large a church grows, young adults desired personal interaction of church leadership. The results of this case study research offer insights into engaging Generation Z young adults using specific innovations successfully.

Keywords: Generation Z, Pentecostal, innovations, engagement, church. pastors.

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From Generation to Generation: A Qualitative Single-Case Study of a Pentecostal Church
in Central Arkansas' Successful Growth and Retention Programs
Involving Young Adults

by

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DEDICATION

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To future generations of Pentecostals, I am pulling for you!

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Needs Assessment

Introduction

In America, church participation has steadily declined since 1945 (Jones, 2021; Inglehart, 2020). The crisis of declining church participation affects young adults the most. The problem has culminated into a significant challenge within the Protestant Christian community (Jones, 2021). The most dramatic decline in church participation occurs with Generation Z (born 1995 to 2012; Jones, 2021; Twenge, 2017). As Generation Z continues to mature and becomes responsible for making their own decisions concerning church participation, church leaders must seek solutions to successfully engage them. In recent years, some churches experienced a more dramatic decline than others. Though often appointed a less prodigious role in Protestant Christianity, many Pentecostal churches fared better than other Christian denominations in the 21st century (Wilson, 2016). However, the trend of declining church participation does not preclude Pentecostal churches.

Until recent years, fewer Pentecostals populated Christian church circles, which excluded them from many challenges facing mainstream churches (Tennison, 2006; Wilson, 2016). However, Pentecostalism now represents a sizable portion of the Protestant Christian church. Pentecostals number approximately 280 million globally, representing 27% of Protestant Christians (Anderson, 2013). In the United States, Pentecostals number approximately 20 million, representing roughly 13% of Protestant Christians (Anderson, 2013; Walsh, 2018; Wilson, 2016). Therefore, studies focused on

declining church participation include Pentecostals (*The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018). For Pentecostal leaders to ignore the problem of waning Generation Z church participation in mainstream Christian churches harms the future of Pentecostalism. While very little data exists specific to Pentecostal churches experiencing a decline in Generation Z church participation, Pentecostal church leaders should take the potentiality of declining participation seriously.

The following qualitative case study examines the successful practices of the First Pentecostal Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas in engaging young adults (Generation Z, aged 18–25). The study explores three different areas. First, the study focuses on the implementation of technology in church meetings to attract the attention of young adults. Second, the study examines programs in the church that provide opportunities for young adults to serve. Third, the study investigates how the church’s specific administrative structures create a cultural identity for young adults. An analytical exploration of these three key components provides better understanding for Pentecostal church leaders seeking to successfully engage young adults.

Statement of the Problem

Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old represent a large segment of American society. In July 2020, approximately 21 million Americans were between the ages of 18–24 (Statista, 2020). To the dismay of church leaders, a growing number of these young adults do not patronize churches. Burge (2019) writes, “In 2016, about 39% of Gen Z were nones [people with no religious affiliation]. Today, it’s up to 44.4%, with 7% identifying as atheists, 6% as agnostics, and another 31% saying that they are ‘nothing in particular’” (para. 3). Declining church participation among young adults

presents an alarming problem considering the historic role the church has played in the socialization process of America's youth (DiBianca Fasoli, 2018; DiBianca Fasoli & Lozano, 2020; Widjaja, 2017). More importantly, most of Generation Z will grow to have no meaningful relationship with God. Through generational continuation, Pentecostalism can potentially impact the world positively. However, declining church participation among Generation Z threatens the movement's generational momentum and influence. To this point, Pentecostalism's defense against declining church participation lies mainly in its distinctiveness (Wilson, 2016).

Several factors make Pentecostalism distinct from other Protestant Christian church groups. By embracing the working of the Holy Spirit in a contemporary church setting, Pentecostals distinguish themselves from many of their Christian counterparts. For example, Pentecostals believe in speaking in tongues, the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in the lives of modern-day believers, as well as miracles, signs, and wonders (Anderson, A., 2013; Wilson, 2016). The phenomenal growth of Pentecostals in the last 100 years distinguishes them also. According to Anderson (2007), Pentecostalism experienced the most remarkable growth among Christian churches in the 20th century. However, warning signs suggest Pentecostals in America will face the same challenges as other church groups. At a minimum, the declining church participation among Pentecostal churches in Europe should warn American Pentecostal church leaders. For instance, many European Pentecostal churches have already experienced dramatic declines in church participation among the young adult population (Stolz & Favre, 2019). During the 20th century, Pentecostal denominations in Switzerland experienced tremendous growth compared to other Protestants, yet growth plateaued in 2013 and

began declining afterward (Stolz & Favre, 2019). Though American Pentecostals have built up their congregations in recent decades, they remain susceptible to the issues of declining church participation.

The need for Pentecostal churches to engage with young adults has never been more urgent. Usita (2007) foresaw the woeful insufficiencies of American led youth ministries ten years before the crisis, writing “the way the church has been spreading the gospel no longer connects with the emerging generation” (p. 113). According to Shaw and Kamarzarian (2005), engaging young adults helps Pentecostal churches to not only minister to their spiritual needs but to position Pentecostal churches to influence the adolescents growing into young adulthood.

Most Christian pastors today face a greater challenge than their predecessors engaging today’s young adults. A Barna Research (2018) study indicates that Generation Z young adults profess atheism at twice the rate of the generation preceding them. Additionally, some Generation Z young adults continue attending church while dealing with doubts about the reality of God. According to Bergler (2020) many young adults who attend Christian churches do not believe all of the church’s tenets. Many Generation Z churchgoers have doubts about the sinfulness of pre-marital sex and same gender sexual behavior (Bergler, 2020). Consequentially, pastors cannot assume Generation Z young adults embrace the long-held principles of the church, and they must acknowledge the challenge of engaging young adults.

In addition to shifts in attitude towards morals and morays, the influx of digital technology has exacerbated the challenge of engaging Generation Z young adults. A significant portion of Generation Z young adult Christians aged 18–22–years-old raised

as digital natives show a keen understanding of technology and use digital technology to communicate (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014). Consequently, the cohort bears responsibility for escalating the use of digital technology for communication purposes (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014; Dorsey & Villa, 2020). For instance, young adults contributed to the dramatic growth of texting as a communication medium. According to Koulopoulos and Keldsen 2014 study, young adults aged 18–24-years-old (Generation Z) text twice as much as those aged 25–35-years-old (millennials). The increasing text rates of young adults indicate the need for church leaders to embrace texting as a marketing medium of communication. Unfortunately, many churches entrenched in standard practices fail to engage Generation Z young adults through the effective implementation of digital technology (White, 2014, 2018). Traditional approaches have limited success in engaging Generation Z young adults.

Clearly, church leaders cannot hope that Generation Z will eventually embrace the outdated and ineffective methods currently used in the church (*The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018). To continue with the status quo communicates unconcern toward an entire segment of society in need of a meaningful relationship with God. While the definite answer to the problem is unclear, Pentecostal church leaders can seek solutions and thwart a much larger crisis by recognizing the growing issues surrounding engaging Generation Z young adults.

Literature Review

While a problem persists with young adult church participation in America, a review of the available literature reveals minimal scholarship focusing on the subject. Therefore, this case study takes place in the context of limited literature on the subject of

engaging Generation Z effectively in churches. Existing generational studies tend to focus on the differences between one generation and those preceding them (Twenge, 2017; Twenge, 2014). For instance, most generational researchers analyze how Generation Z's views on work, religion, politics, and interpersonal relationships differ from Millennials (born from 1981–1996; Twenge, 2014; Twenge, 2017; Seemiller & Grace 2019). Much of the scholarship available leaves out these group's views about current ministry trends intended to evangelize them. Just a few seminal scholars represent the entirety of the research pertaining to Generation Z's attitudes toward Christianity. Research literature related to specific areas of older Generation Z's views on Christianity remains sparse. Age contributes to the lack of literature focused on Generation Z in a Christian context. Scholars vary on the age range of Generation Z. However, this study uses seminal scholar Jean Twenge's (2017) definition of Generation Z which identifies the group as those born from 1995 to 2012. Because Generation Z only recently emerged into adulthood, a limited amount of data exists on their decision-making as young adults. (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). While more literature exists on millennials as young adults, the literature does not delineate the age group specified in this study. The cohort chosen for this study involves an older portion of the Generation Z population born from 1999 to 2002. The majority of existing literature focuses on the broad characteristics of Generation Z but remains ambiguous concerning specific attributes regarding the age groups chosen for this study.

The following literature review describes studies examining the peculiarities of ministering to young adults of Generation Z. The review focuses on four areas pertinent to young adults aged 18–25 and how to engage them. First, I focus on the predominant

characteristics of Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–years-old and how they differ from who came before them. Second, I summarize the literature on Generation Z’s views of religion. Third, I examine practices the Christian church in America currently uses in ministering to Generation Z to understand which successfully work. Fourth, I summarize the 21st century Christian church in America’s influence on Generation Z young adults and what remaining challenges exist with them. The literature reveals the nuanced nature of engaging Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–years-old in church participation.

How Generation Z Use of Technology Differs from Previous Generations

Unlike their predecessors, Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–years-old do not experience the luxury of naivety or innocence in the same way as other recent generations. Generation Z has come to adulthood using smartphones, exposing them more readily to the world’s violence, economic inequalities, and social injustices (Rue, 2018; Salleh et al., 2017). In 1995, the internet evolved; Timothy McVeigh bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; NASA’s Galileo spacecraft arrived at Jupiter; and the first members of Generation Z were born (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). These major events, and those similar, contributed to these young adults’ worldview.

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the emergence of new technologies influenced Generation Z young adults’ ideology and personalities. The commercialization of the internet came in 1995, just as the first of Generation Z were born (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Therefore, Generation Z has grown up never knowing life without global connectivity. In 2007, the iPhone allowed even more internet accessibility (Thavalengal & Corcoran, 2016). With the advent of the internet and smartphone devices, social media

(new media) flourished among Generation Z. In 2005, just 5% of American adults over 18 years of age used social media. By 2011, social media use among American adults over the age of 18 grew to 50%, and in 2021 usage reached 72% (The Pew Research Center, 2021). The exponential growth of social media influences Generation Z young adult's consumer behaviors, learning experiences, and societal engagement (The Pew Research Center, 2021; Rue, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). With the rising influence of social media, American church leaders face the challenge of how to best use these platforms to engage Generation Z young adults.

The negative impacts of social media on Generation Z. The unhealthy effects of tech dependence impacts Generation Z. PrakashYadav and Rai (2017) argue that social media affects young adult's behavior negatively in multiple ways. For example, social media can disrupt young adults' sleep patterns and distract from their educational pursuits (PrakashYadav & Rai, 2017). According to Wielderhold (2017), "the term 'nomophobia' refers to the fear of being without a mobile device" (p. 661), a phenomenon becoming ever more pervasive. Digital dependency takes its toll on a person's mental health. While people of all ages can experience negative effects when separated from technology, Generation Z young adults have excessive levels of anxiety about being separated from technology (Hasmawati, et al., 2020). Yet, research reveals the constant use of technology affects young adult's mental health (Carboni et al., 2022). Young adults who possess an Instagram or Snapchat account face a greater likelihood of depression or thoughts of suicide (Wielderhold, 2017). Many young social media users feel the need to compare themselves to their peers, a practice that too often leads to depression (Kannan& Kumar, 2022).

However, the most dramatic behavioral influence of social media among young adults aged 18–25-years-old involves in-person relationships (Twenge, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; PrakashYadav & Rai, 2017). Many young adults find online socializing more comfortable than in-person interaction. Generation Z young adults spend less time engaging face-to-face than previous generations, which leads to loneliness (Weise, 2019; as cited in Hathaway & O’Sheilds, 2022). With the rise of social media, young adults became more isolated and less adept at interpersonal skills and more proficient with intrapersonal skills (Kardaras, 2016; Twenge, 2017). According to PrakashYadav and Rai (2017), young adults aged 18–25-years-old distinguish themselves as being more self-reliant than the millennials who preceded them. While the perceived need for human development and maturity remains primarily the same with young adults, this cohort’s adolescent experience and transition to adulthood appears to be more complex when compared to their predecessors (Vodanovich et al., 2015). According to Vodanovich et al. (2015), “Digital natives experience their adolescence in a digital environment and face specific developmental challenges” (p. 1). Social skills represent a significant portion of an individual’s human development. Research suggests the technological advancements that young adults enjoy today in effect serve to alienate them from engaging in needed in-person social interaction (Drago, 2015; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Kick et al, 2015; Vodanovich et al., 2015). This phenomenon creates obstacles for church leaders seeking to engage Generation Z young adults.

Technology: breakthrough or barrier. This technology dependence also creates communication barriers hindering Generation Z young adult participation in learning environments (Deluliis & Saylor, 2021; Isaacs et al., 2020). Studies have demonstrated

many instances where academic institutions have experienced technical communication barriers with Generation Z. Today, educators in the medical field find it challenging to transmit technical skills to Generation Z young adult students who prefer to work independently via online platforms (Isaac et al., 2020; Mendez-Reguera & Cabrera, 2020). To overcome communication barriers many educators from previous generations find themselves struggling to adapt to the image-driven digital learning platforms young adults find most efficient. For instance, according to Mendez-Reguera and Cabrera (2020), many instructors found the use of memes effective in communicating specific ideas. Young adult learners prefer YouTube videos and game-based learning systems to in-class lectures (Nicholas, 2020).

Employers, like educators, must also consider how to engage their Generation Z employees effectively. Because young adults tend to always have a smartphone, employers must contemplate the best method of communicating with them (Janssen & Caradini, 2021). For example, do employees prefer to receive messages via email, social media messaging, or text? According to Janssen and Caradini (2021), young adults find email the least preferable method of technological communication, despite its ubiquitous use in the workplace. While questioning the most suitable method to communicate with their employees, employers face yet another conundrum—the appropriateness of social media communication between employers and employees (Janssen and Carradini, 2021). As digital natives, Generation Z view technology as a necessary medium for communication (Isaacs et al., 2020). Therefore, employers inept with the technology preferred by this newest generation of young adults face greater barriers when communicating with their Generation Z employees.

Generational differences in young adult learning. Given their technology reliance, Generation Z students learn differently than those from previous generations (Hernandez-de-Menendez, et al., 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Because Generation Z students contend with information overload, declining attention span, and challenges with critical thinking, they need a more creative curriculum and instruction (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Hernandez et al., 2020). Seemiller and Grace (2019) report between the years 2007 and 2017 “attention spans decreased from twelve minutes to five minutes” (p. 13). Many external things could be contributing to the decreased attention span among young adults. For instance, most of today’s young adults own smartphones, smartwatches, and have multiple social media feeds simultaneously vying for their attention (Twenge, 2017).

These digital distractions play a role in the decreasing attention span dilemma (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). This decreasing attention span presents secular and religious educators with new challenges. Generation Z’s digital reliance forces educators to incorporate digital devices into their curriculum. Public school teachers and college professors use digital presentations and assign internet videos to better engage their students (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). While educators debate whether to ban tablets and cellphones in classrooms, a study found that 85% of students surveyed chose to watch an online tutorial when they wanted to learn a new skill (Rue, 2018).

Generation Z’s learning needs calls for secular and religious teachers to become early adopters of advancing technologies and cognizant of successful communication skills (Bergler, 2020; Rothman 2016). Considering Rue’s (2018) research, teachers of all sectors should remain intentional about learning new technology and communication

skills for instructing young adults, or risk irrelevance. From a religious perspective White (2017) underscores Seemiller and Grace's (2019) opinions concerning the implementation of new technology and communication enhancements in the landscape of learning. However, technology does not only affect Generation Z young adult learning but relationally also (Drago 2015; Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

Generation Z's young adults view romantic relationships differently.

Technology's impact is also felt in the dating arena for Generation Z, who seek romantic relationships later in life than previous generations (White, 2017). Compared to previous generations, Generation Z feels more comfortable with digital relationships versus face-to-face relationships (Twenge, 2017). Therefore, to effectively teach Biblical principles regarding romantic relationships, church leaders must first understand how Generation Z young adults view dating. Twenge (2017) states, "iGen (Generation Z) teens are less likely to date. Only about half as many iGen high school seniors vs. Boomers and GenX'ers at the same age ever go out on dates" (p. 20). Research shows Generation Z views relationships differently than Baby-Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Twenge et al., 2017).

Church leaders who seek to teach a Biblical perspective on the sensitive subject of sex must have an understanding of how technology has also influenced how Generation Z young adults view sex and relationships. Moreover, methods of teaching employed to instruct previous generations regarding moral issues may need revision. Research reveals that Generation Z young adults experience less sexual activity than generations just before them. According to Twenge et al. (2015), young adult students 18–25-years-old reported significantly fewer sexual partners than their parents at the same age. However,

young adults interact with one another in unconventional ways. Though young adults aged 18–25-years-old may not go on as many in-person dates as those older than them, they do consider interaction on social media a normal component in a romantic relationship (Twenge, 2017). Scholarship reveals Generation Z may be less likely to have sex than their predecessors, but Generation Z young adults are vulnerable to many other illicit online activities (Kaviani & Nelson, 2021). Because of Generation Z’s increased smartphone use exposing them to pornography and the exchange of nude images, many Generation Z young adults have a distorted view romantic relationships (Rahman et al., 2022). The behavior is alarming because, according to Van Ouytsel et al. (2015), teens use social media to solicit romantic interest. While the internet offers insights into Generation Z’s views concerning relationships, it can also provide clues about their mental and emotional state (Kannan & Kumar, 2022).

The differences in Generation Z’s young adult behavioral development. Dating is not the only teenage activity Generation Z has begun to delay compared to previous generations as a result of their technology dependence; they have also begun acquiring their driver’s license at an older age (Twenge, 2017). According to Shults and Williams (2017), “the proportion of high school seniors who were licensed to drive declined by 12 percentage points from 85% to 73% and the proportion who did not drive during an average week increased by ten percentage points from 15% to 22% during the 15-year period” (p. 181). While the phenomenon does not exclusively pertain to Generation Z, the emergence of ride companies like Uber and Lyft explains why many Generation Z young adults delay pursuing their driver’s license (Twenge, 2017). Since young adults can access Uber and Lyft from apps on their smartphones, they can arrange transportation

easily (Rayle et al., 2016). These trends in young adult's modes of transportation reflect a slower acceptance of behaviors their predecessor's considered milestones of maturity. These evolving young adult characteristics reveal a different view of maturity that requires church leaders to re-evaluate their approach to young adult ministry.

Generation Z's young adults face different mental health struggles. Generation Z's social media portrayals of smiles and happy lifestyles may mask important truths about their lives. Generation Z struggles with insecurity and mental health issues more than previous generations (Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Boothroyd, 2018; Wielderhold, 2017). Unfortunately, research reveals many young adults do not turn to the Christian church to find help for their mental and emotional needs (White, 2014; White, 2017; *The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018). Because of the unsuccessful attempts of institutions like the church to heal the mental health crisis among young adults, the problem continues to grow worse. According to Kannan and Kumar (2022), the COVID-19 global pandemic only accelerated the growing problem facing Generation Z concerning mental and emotional health. Millennials possess poise and confidence that Generation Z young adults do not enjoy (Twenge, 2017). Today's young adults live in a hyperconnected world. Yet, they experience more loneliness than those who came before them.

Studies reveal the emergence of smartphones, and their connectivity to social media is one of the primary reasons for the increase in loneliness among Generation Z young adults (Hathaway, O'Sheilds, 2022; as cited in Weise 2019). For instance, social media "promotes relentless positivity" (Twenge, 2017, p. 94). Rarely do publishers on social media post pictures of the everyday challenges and disappointments affecting average people. Social media posts depicting luxurious vacations, lavish homes, and

expensive automobiles appear often on social media feeds and have a damaging effect on young adults (Liu et al., 2019; Chae, 2018; Duffet, 2017). Research reveals a connection between the rise in smartphone usage and the increase in teenage mental health issues (Liu et al., 2019; Chae, 2018; Duffet, 2017). Twenge (2017) states, “a stunning 31% more 8th and 10th graders felt lonely in 2015 than in 2011, along with 22% more 12 graders...teens are now lonelier than at any time since the survey began in 1991” (p. 97). The happy posts on social media do not tell the entire story about those who publish them. Young adult’s social media accounts may not only portray inaccurate depictions of their mental state but be a contributor to mental health issues.

Conclusion. Clearly, Generation Z’s young adults differ from those of previous generations as a result of the technology they have grown up with and its pervasiveness in their lives. The literature reveals a minimum of five distinct areas where Generation Z’s young adults differ: first, the appeal of innovative technology leaves many of Generation Z’s young adults with a dependency upon them. Second, Generation Z’s young adults view romantic relationships differently than other generations. Third, Generation Z’s young adults develop differently in areas of behavior than their predecessors. Fourth, Generation Z’s young adults learn differently than other generations. Finally, Generation Z’s young adults face different mental health struggles. By understanding their views on technology, how they develop behaviorally, the ways they learn, their views on romantic relationships, and their mental health struggles, church leaders can successfully engage them.

Generation Z Young Adult's Attitude Toward Christianity

Generation Z's divergent worldviews affect their attitude toward Christianity (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020). Research indicates a dramatic decline in faith in God and church participation among the Generation Z population (Barnett, 2015; Barna Group, 2018; Bock & Del Rosario, 2020). In a recent study of generations and cultures, the Barna Group (2018) recognizes a growing "cultural apathy toward religion" (p. 26). Recent studies offer two reasons for Generation Z's reservations about Christianity. First, Generation Z has a strong aversion to offending people (Barna Group, 2018). The trait of being inclusive at all costs stems from a culture that believes in pluralism and shies from the perception of being judgmental (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Barna Group, 2018). Second, the Barna Group (2018) found that highly accessible technology leaves Generation Z vulnerable to pornography, violent activity on the internet, and even cyberbullying. These repercussions in childhood culminate in adults with apathetic attitudes toward Christian values consistent in generations before them (*The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018).

By and large, Generation Z does not engage with church as enthusiastically as their predecessors, and their lack of church participation reflects their apathy. According to White (2014), a major contributing factor to Generation Z's decline in church participation stems from the church's focus on traditions viewed as irrelevant by Generation Z during their developing years. On the other hand, Bergler (2020) believes contemporary engagement of Generation Z's young adults produces a more favorable view of God and the church. For example, the Generation Z churchgoers who experienced engaging discipleship teaching designed to develop their faith foundationally

continued participating in the church (White, 2017). However, those who did not experience engaging discipleship instruction did not continue participating.

Attitudes toward religion and God shifted with Generation Z (Twenge et al., 2015). White (2014) labels the 31% of Generation Z who identify as non-religious as “nones” (p. 7). As a group, nones have many contrasting characteristics. For instance, nones question the need for the existence of religious institutions (churches), yet they do not question the existence of God (White, 2014). Ironically, many nones believe in God, pray daily, and consider themselves to be spiritual (White, 2014). Twenge et al.’s (2015) study on Generation Z corroborates White’s (2014) findings. The phenomenon reveals the Christian church’s failure to represent God in a relevant way to Generation Z who came to age during this period. Failing church leadership strategies may be the greatest hindrance to declining Generation Z church participation. The reluctance of church leaders to adapt to a changing society leaves many of Generation Z’s young adults feeling alienated (White, 2017). The church stands at a pivotal point. It can continue presenting the status quo or seek to engage an evolving culture that seeks to understand how the church fits into their complex lives. As such, church leaders are challenged to develop committed Christians among Generation Z young adults who, in recent years, found church irrelevant.

Generation Z Young Adult’s Need for Apologetical Explanations

The cultural struggle between tolerance and truth influences Generation Z’s views toward Christianity. Bock and Del Rosario (2020) report a great challenge for many young adults related to their inability to find the proper balance between the shift in cultural norms and the convictions of the Christian church. For Generation Z, cultural

trends redefine once accepted truths (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020). Yet, Twenge (2017) reports, “half of 13–17–year-olds want to pursue a science-related career. Yet only 1% of youth pastors say they have addressed any subject related to science in the last year” (p. 139). According to White (2014), young people ask different questions about the Bible than their predecessors. He describes the change as “apologetics for a new generation” (White, 2017, pp. 152–156). The training of a classical apologist of scripture (those who defend biblical principles that are controversial) equips them to answer basic questions relating to the existence of God. However, young people ask deeper questions in search of God’s significance to them personally (White, 2014). Generation Z desires to connect the scripture to their current culture and context. Research shows if young adults do not receive biblical answers to relevant questions in their culture, they tend to compartmentalize their faith (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020). When a person decides to compartmentalize their faith, they essentially decide to live a double life. For instance, a person with compartmentalized faith will only practice their faith in certain settings. They will not live out their faith in the workplace (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020; White, 2017). They do not feel comfortable expressing their faith to friends in social settings. These people only feel comfortable expressing their faith in religious or private settings. Generation Z’s practice of compartmentalizing their faith hinders their personal growth as Christians. Additionally, compartmentalized faith handicaps young Christians from engaging the culture and living out their faith in the world around them (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020; White, 2017; White, 2014).

The failure of church leaders to use creative teaching methods to contextualize the core concepts of the scripture leaves Generation Z feeling apathetic about the utility of

Christianity in today's world. According to Bergler (2020), Generation Z's young adults need assistance in understanding Christian principles and how to implement them into their daily lives. In short, many Christian leaders mistakenly assume Generation Z firmly grasps the core beliefs of the church. However, research reveals Generation Z young adults require more clear and convincing teaching on biblical principles of morality (White, 2017; Bergler, 2020). Elies (2021) emphasizes the necessity of contextualizing the moral principles of the scripture for today's young people. By teaching on apologetical issues, church leaders help Generation Z young adults with current issues that challenge their faith. According to Edwards (2021), Protestant Christian churches abdicated their role in mainstream society and presently struggle for relevance in today's world. Today, the lack of relevant teaching causes many of the Generation Z population to question the significance of the Protestant Christian church (White, 2014).

Generation Z young adult's desire for equality. Mainstream Christianity's stance on race and cultural issues leads many of the Generation Z population to feel disenfranchised from the Protestant Christian church (White, 2017; Twenge, 2017). Generation Z represents the most racially diverse generation ever to live in America (McMahan, 2020). However, many churches in America continue to be racially segregated (Simms, 2019). While church leadership may not decree racial prejudice, and may even condemn it as wrong, many do not understand how established systematic issues within their church structure make it intolerable for many of Generation Z to attend (Brown, 2019). Hearn (2009) introduced a concept called "color-blind racism" (p. 272). Though the phrase seems oxymoronic, it represents a fallacy among many modern Christian churches. For instance, attempting to present a non-racial approach, church

leaders fail to honor the deep-held cultural traditions of those from other races (Brown, 2019). Brown (2019) asserts Christian leaders who engage in ‘color-blindness’ instead of seeking to understand the differences and struggles of races other than their own only create a deeper chasm between the two. Generation Z desires church leadership practices, church gatherings, evangelism endeavors, and worship music to be inclusive of all cultures (White, 2017).

The majority of young adults take exception with in-group favoritism and the exclusion of people because of their race, gender, or personal preferences. They relish unity, dialogue, and collaboration. Because Generation Z values inclusiveness and despises anything they interpret to be exclusive in nature, many young people with strong scriptural beliefs feel reticent to share those beliefs (McMahan, 2020). Rothfuss (2021) reports that the church’s prohibition of same-sex relationships and marriage, along with its prohibition of abortion leaves many of the Generation Z population feeling unaccepted. Clearly, the extremely inclusive views of Generation Z affect their concept of Christianity.

The hypocrisy Generation Z’s young adults perceive in modern Christianity repels them. Dunaetz et al. (2018) report how hypocrisy among church leadership negatively influences young people. For example, high levels of narcissism among church leadership result in low levels of commitment among the Generation Z population in their congregation (Dunaetz et al., 2018). Generation Z young adults understand narcissism conflicts with the teaching of the Bible. Therefore, when church leaders portray an attitude of narcissism, Generation Z young adult observers wonder what other scriptural principles they contradict (Barna Group, 2018). According to Branum (2016), Christian

leaders “must display a life changed by the power of the gospel if their message of life change is to have any credibility” (p. 8). Matthews and Mazzocco (2017) concluded the hypocrisy non-Christians perceived among Christians in the United States contributed to the cultural divide between the two groups. Matthews and Mazzocco (2017) predict the chasm will widen as the non-Christian population grows in America. According to Isserow and Klien (2017), many of today’s parishioners feel conflicted when seeking counsel concerning moral decisions in their life. If the church leader demonstrates a propensity for being greedy, self-serving, or prideful, those traits will undermine their moral authority. Today’s young adults find hypocrisy repulsive.

How church leaders cope with changing evangelism approaches. The Christian church copes with the challenge of ministering to Generation Z young adults in multiple ways. Some endeavor to engage Generation Z through innovative strategies and restructured church ministries (White, 2017). Sadly, however, many church leaders stay trapped in tradition and paralyzed with uncertainty and so do nothing at all (Barna Group, 2020). Bock and Del Rosario (2020) reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic a ministry team in North Texas implemented an online apologetics workshop. The workshop focused on the anxiety Generation Z young adults experienced during the initial stages of the pandemic (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020). The leaders of the workshop asked questions such as, “how are you feeling right now?” (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020, p. 486). The leaders experienced shock when they received answers like “overwhelmed” or “fragile” (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020, p. 486). These candid questions enabled leaders to engage with Generation Z young adults in new ways. For instance, the questions, and the

answers resulting from them, offered more specificity in how to successfully minister to Generation Z (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020).

However, churches that assume they understand the needs of Generation Z young adults find it difficult to connect with them. Comer (2021) asserts that effective evangelism for Generation Z young adults begins with a proper understanding of their needs. Too many churches continue in practices, though once effective, that now fall short in reaching young adults. By refusing to seek out and adopt innovative strategies to evangelize a new demographic, church leaders contribute to declining church participation among young Generation Z adults (Comer, 2021). White (2017) highlights a conundrum that many pastors face. He writes, “if they attempt to implement some of the things, they feel could make a difference, they run the very real risk of alienating their current base of support –the people paying the bills, serving in the nursery, and leading their teams. So, they feel stuck” (White, 2017, p. 170). Church leaders contribute to declining church participation among Generation Z young adults when they refuse to change ineffective practices.

Evangelism strategies and retention programs change with each generation. Barna Group (2020) reported that many church leaders find it challenging to remain relevant to younger audiences. However, none of the participants involved in the study reported a plan to remedy these challenges. Nevertheless, if church leaders fail to reach the next generation, the church will die. In fear of quick death because of sudden changes, many church leaders choose the slow death of procrastination. By refusing to adapt aggressively to the needs of Generation Z, church leaders consign their churches to a catastrophic outcome (White, 2017). The results of the Barna Group (2020) study

demonstrate a perplexing problem facing the Christian church. Many mainstream Christian leaders do not know how or are unwilling to learn how to successfully evangelize, disciple, and make active church members of the Generation Z young adult population. The literature indicates that engaging Generation Z young adults in the church will take an adaptive and proactive approach.

How church leaders cope with the evolving learning behaviors of young adults.

Engaging Generation Z learners can challenge public school teachers and church teachers alike (Bergler, 2020; White, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). While public education differs from the Biblical education offered in churches, both bear the responsibility of educating young people in their respective curriculums. According to Seemiller and Grace (2019), Generation Z prefers relational motivated learning versus reward motivated learning. For instance, by emphasizing how a Generation Z student's lack of involvement affects their group negatively, a teacher can motivate them to become more active (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Generation Z values kindness, fairness, and inclusiveness (Schroth, 2019). Therefore, successful teachers emphasize how the concepts they teach improve the good of the group (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Mohr & Mohr, 2017).

As digital natives, engaging Generation Z young adults also require the implementation of relevant technologies (Giarla, 2019; Mohr & Mohr, 2017a; McMahan, 2020). In addition to White's (2017) academic approach to the needs of Generation Z young adults, he proactively implements technology into the worship experience using popular forms of social media to engage Generation Z. This approach coincides with Bock and Del Rosario's (2020) research on how social media shapes Generation Z's

worldview and the church's need to be actively involved in the social media space. During the Covid-19 pandemic, White (2022) utilized social media platforms to inform, encourage, and evangelize Generation Z young adults. Once the pandemic restrictions lifted and the church could meet for in-person gatherings, the church White leads anomalously increased its membership (www.mecklenburg.org, 2022). This proactive approach serves as an example of how some churches have successfully evangelized Generation Z young adults.

Changing to Create the Right Environment for Growth

Due to Generation Z's high internet activity, online services and ministries can potentially reach them. However, the online content must be appealing and purposeful, and the presentation must be engaging. Research suggests that before Generation Z young adults will receive biblical teaching, they must feel a sense of belonging to the community endeavoring to teach them (McMahan, 2020). While many churches utilize online services in ministering to Generation Z young adults, a level of trust remains crucial for these technologies to successfully engage them (McIntosh, 2015). In short, Generation Z young adults do not want the church to become impersonal, just relevant. Although the pandemic necessitated online gatherings only, White's (2020) increase in attendance after the restrictions lifted indicates Generation Z young adults still enjoy the personal comradery of in-person such services. Generation Z young adults' willingness to commit to a church community parallels with the love they feel and how easily they make friends (McMahan, 2020). Successful pastors understand that Generation Z young adults long for meaningful relationships and that a meaningful relationship with God begins with a strong connection with the people in the church (McMahan, 2020).

Successful youth pastors understand judgmental atmospheres inhibit a strong relationship with God (McMahan, 2020; White, 2017). Church leaders can create a culture of acceptance through the content of their messages and how they communicate them. Church leaders can implement innovative techniques and technologies to bring relevance to their message. Their communication style can assist them in engaging Generation Z young adults of every culture.

Generation Z represents the most ethnically diverse population in the history of America (McMahan, 2020). According to Pew Research Center (2018), ethnic minorities make up 48% of Generation Z in the United States. The internet's global connectivity gives Generation Z young adults greater access to other cultures and ways of thinking. Therefore, congregations with openness to diversity of ethnic groups and cultural differences find connecting with Generation Z young adults easier. On the other hand, a congregation perceived to be exclusive will not likely attract Generation Z young adults (McMahan, 2020). According to Crary (2021), historically most Black adults attended churches with Black clergy and predominantly Black congregants. However, younger Black adults born since 1980 likely attend multi-racial churches.

Celebrating all ethnic cultures represented in the congregation promotes openness to ethnic diversity, the issue requires more action. Church leaders seeking ethnic and racial diversity must expect challenges. Studies suggest church leaders should prepare for costs both socially and economically (Wright et al. 2015). For example, changing communication styles and worship styles to accommodate ethnic diversity may cause consternation among traditional-minded congregants. Additionally, the cost of hiring

church staff members representative of the ethnic diversity imposes a financial burden (Wright et al., 2015).

Studies show church leaders desiring ethnic diversity within their congregations must approach the issue appropriately. Dougherty (2003) encourages congregants to celebrate the similarities within the congregation, as well as the diversity within the congregation. Successful church leaders refrain from focusing on one above the other. Leaders who effectively pastor ethnic diverse congregations emphasize the oneness of Christ's body (Wright et al., 2015). By developing a culturally conscience communication style, the leader can incorporate an atmosphere of inclusiveness into the church they lead. Along with culturally inclusive communication, church leaders can incorporate methods to enhance clarity and conciseness in their sermons.

Communicating with clarity and conciseness. Elongated sermons lacking real-life application will likely be ineffective with Generation Z. Communicating with Generation Z young adults requires compelling, yet “bite-size content” (White, 2017, p. 122). According to White (2017), due to the short attention spans of Generation Z, successful communicators need to introduce visuals and the descriptive language of a master storyteller. White (2017) argues that Generation Z operates on an eight-second filter. Generation Z young adults possess the ability to sort through massive amounts of data quickly. Therefore, if the information does not capture their attention quickly, they will dismiss it (Sparks & Honey, 2014). Those successfully ministering to Generation Z young adults use technology for visual aids and condense their sermons to the most compelling content (Rader, 2021). Starr (2014), addressing the need for visual aids, suggested preachers “can unleash a tool [visual aids] that will enhance their preaching by

adding more pathos and variety” (p. 53). Successful preachers today know how to make the story of the Bible resonate with the stories people live in currently. These preachers use every tool at their disposal to capture the attention of the audience in hopes of conveying the gospel of Jesus Christ (Smith, 2019). Reaching Generation Z young adults necessitates relevant and succinct preaching (Starr, 2014; Rader, 2021; Smith, 2019). However, making a connection with Generation Z young adults does not end of the length on a sermon. Church leaders should have an inclusive communication style to successfully engage Generation Z.

Synthesis of Literature

Generation Z differs from previous generations. Because of their tech dependencies, Generation Z develops and learns differently (Deluliis & Saylor, 2021; Giarla, 2019; Isaac et al., 2020). Successful teachers understand the need for innovative teaching methods to engage Generation Z (Semiller & Grace, 2019). In addition, as digital natives with accessibility to smartphones, the internet informs Generation Z’s worldview and affects their interactions with others (Liu et al., 2019; Chae, 2018; Duffet, 2017). These complexities create new challenges for Christian churches seeking to engage them.

Church membership continues to decline as America’s largest population rises to adulthood (Jones, 2021). According to White (2022), “while Christianity remains the world’s largest faith and is even on the rise in the global South, it is no longer the dominant cultural force in the West” (p. 3). Jones (2021) reported, Christianity no longer holds the majority in America for the first time. The American Christian church faces its largest crisis to date. The apathy toward changes in strategic innovation and

organizational leadership structures comes with a price. By rejecting research focused on declining church participation of Generation Z young adults, church leaders now find themselves disadvantaged. To overcome apparent setbacks in evangelizing Generation Z young adults, church leaders must learn from the available research and incorporate innovative ideas to better engage them.

A careful summary of scholarly literature characterizes Generation Z young adults as technologically savvy, globally connected, non-religious, and a challenge for long-form communicators to connect with (*The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018). These findings present difficult challenges for the Protestant Christian church in America in their quest to minister to them. This review reveals three things about the Protestant Christian Church's desire to grow with Generation Z young adults. First, church leadership and laity must accept new technologies. (Campbell, 2010; White, 2017; Radar, 2021). Second, leadership teams must be restructured to accommodate diversity (Barna Group, 2020; Twenge, 2017; Wright et al., 2015). Third, successful teaching methods must be employed (Starr, 2014; White, 2017). This literature review informs its readers on the broader ministry methodologies currently used in modern Protestant Christian churches of America. This review allows researchers to study more specifically groups under the auspices of Christianity in America, and how these groups minister to Generation Z young adults.

Theoretical Framework

Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical model for evaluating innovations in economic, sociology, and technology management provides the framework for this qualitative single-case study. By comparing three sets of contrasting

innovations: product vs. process; radical vs. incremental; and technical vs. administrative, Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) demonstrate how a cross-fertilization of innovations helps to strengthen management teams in organizations. For instance, introducing an innovative product may reduce costs and streamline organizational management decisions. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical model allows organizations to compare these new products with changes in management processes. According to Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) research, organizations can use the model to compare the radical and incremental implementation of products or procedures. For instance, once an organization chooses a product or process, its management can use the model to decide the most effective way to implement it. Similarly, Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) compare technical and administrative innovations. Innovations in technology can enhance organizational management. However, Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) model allows organizational leaders to compare the effectiveness of new technologies to administrative structures. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) seminal work continues to inform scholars of all backgrounds seeking to understand the influence of innovation in organizational structures.

Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) innovation research model continues to inspire scholars today. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) influenced Johnk's et al. (2021) study to understand better how individuals and organizations successfully embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI). Johnk et al. (2021) relied on Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) framework to establish that innovation adoptions follows three stages: initiation, adoption, and implementation. Interestingly, Gopalakrishnan and

Damanpour's (1997) work continues to influence the research of scholars seeking to understand how innovations impact organizations. The modern references to Golpalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) work prove their validity and relevance.

One of the benefits of Golpalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework is the flexibility it affords to researchers. Adapting the innovations of technology, administrative structures, and new membership processes from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) model provides an a priori lens to examine the influence of innovation on Generation Z in a Pentecostal church. Similarly, renowned religious scholar David R. Dunaetz (2021) developed a theoretical model for church innovation based explicitly from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework. The framework responds to the challenges imposed on church participation and attendance because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Dunaetz's (2021) expertise in church growth and innovation adds to the theory's validity. Since 2000, Dunaetz has authored or co-authored many scholarly articles about how the modern church can better equip the church to evangelize the world.

Using Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical model for innovation allows me to examine patterns, all while studying newly implemented technologies, processes, and administrative strategies in church work. Though designed for business applications, Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework can be utilized in other industries, including religious institutions. The theoretical framework allows researchers to study multiple innovations simultaneously. By comparing and contrasting, the framework aids in measuring the innovation's effectiveness. Through

synthesizing the scholarship of others, Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) manage to formulate a sound theoretical framework that researchers will likely continue to utilize.

Conclusion: Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This qualitative case study investigated successful methods for engaging Generation Z young adults aged 18–25 at First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The study explored the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock’s use of innovative technology, administrative structures, and new member processes designed to increase Generation Z young adult participation. The conclusions of the study inform Pentecostal church leaders in North America on how to successfully grow the Generation Z young adult membership of their churches.

The study focuses on answering the following central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–years old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members? This study intends to provide insight into the successes of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas’ successes in not only engaging but retaining Generation Z young adults as mobilized members of the church. The following chapter details the research design and methodology of this study.

Definition of Key Terms

Baby Boomers: Those born between 1946 to 1964 (Twenge, 2017; The Pew Research Center, 2019).

Generation X: Those born between 1965 to 1980 (Twenge, 2017; The Pew Research Center, 2019).

Generation Z: Those born between 1995 and 2015 (Twenge, 2017). Scholars slightly

differ on the age range of Generation Z. However, this study relies upon the seminal work of Twenge (2017) to properly define the age range.

Millennials: Those born between 1981 and 1996 (The Pew Research Center, 2019).

Young Adults: Those currently aged 18–25-years-old.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

The literature review's findings of decreasing church participation among Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old demonstrates the need for an in-depth study for church leaders to better understand the problem of how to engage young adults. This study will inform Pentecostal church leaders of the successes First Pentecostal Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas have realized in ministering to young adults. Though Pentecostalism experienced seasons of extraordinary growth during the 20th century, the literature suggests a diminution of influence across all Protestant Christian churches in the United States (Wilson, 2018; Twenge, 2017; White, 2014). Additionally, the literature reveals that the problem with Generation Z young adults declining church participation continues to escalate (Barna Group, 2020; White, 2020; *The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018.) Therefore, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock's successes with young adults becomes relevant to all conscientious Pentecostal church leaders pursuing continuity in the churches they lead.

This qualitative single case study examines three innovations that the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, uses to equip better Pentecostal church leaders seeking to engage Generation Z young adults. First, the study examines the church's use of technology to engage Generation Z young adults successfully. Second, the study explores the church's administrative structures focused on Generation Z young adults. Third, the study analyzes the church's new membership processes to

assimilate Generation Z young adults as members. I designed this the study as a resource for Pentecostal church leaders seeking to engage Generation Z young adults through innovation. Pentecostal leadership specific to young adults remains under-researched. This study informs Pentecostal church leaders about what technologies, administrative strategies, and new member processes have successfully engaged young adults and how to implement them. It aids church leaders in how to employ technology to recruit young adults. Finally, the interviews conducted with young adult members of First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas help to give Pentecostal church leaders insight into the mindset of this unique cohort.

To provide comprehensive information regarding First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock's success with young adults, the study will endeavor to answer the following central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members?

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

I am closely associated with this qualitative case study. My disclaimer with this study involves my position in the study as a researcher. Because I am a Pentecostal pastor, I undoubtedly possess fundamental biases concerning Pentecostalism. When I was four years old, my parents started attending a Pentecostal church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. My parents becoming Pentecostal profoundly influenced me. Our family immersed themselves in the local church. We faithfully attended regular church services and every special event at our local church. Additionally, I attended summer youth camps each year. The summer youth camps I attended differ from the conferences youth and young

adults attend today. The influences of my church and family shaped me into the person I am today. As a young boy, I developed a desire to become a Pentecostal preacher. At five, I told my father, “I want to be a preacher.” Of course, I did not begin preaching until many years later, but the desire was always present. These early experiences influenced my objectivity as a researcher.

From the very beginning of my time as a minister, my focus was predominantly on young people. Initially, I related to young people because I was young also. Through the years my desire to reach young people for the cause of Christ grew stronger. I volunteered for every ministry that opportunity afforded me the chance to influence young people towards a relationship with God. However, I have grown to recognize that with each emerging generation the struggle increases for the Pentecostal movement to successfully engage young people (Usita, 2007). I realize that for Pentecostalism to continue to maintain its relevance, the movement must be able to successfully connect a timeless gospel with an extremely diverse generation. Unfortunately, young adults can be the most challenging group to evangelize and disciple (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020). Upon realizing this phenomenon, I began to sharpen my skills as a minister to young adults. The qualitative case study of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock Arkansas comes from a personal desire to become more effective in ministering to young adults. By focusing on the next generation of young adults, I believe Pentecostals can pass on core beliefs and realize a stronger future.

I currently pastor over one hundred Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old. I have been a Pentecostal pastor for 19 years at a consistent and notable church in the Texarkana, Texas area. However, the challenge of preaching to, evangelizing, and

disciplining young adults increases with each year. I feel a weight of responsibility to the young adults in our church and our city. My passion for evangelizing Generation Z young people never wanes. In short, I recognize that the Pentecostal movement's success hinges on its ability to engage young adults.

Because I am a Pentecostal pastor, I recognize certain biases will cloud my objectivity as a researcher of the Pentecostal movement. Therefore, I will research the Pentecostal movement with an inside researcher perspective. According to Corbin et al. (2009), insider research refers to researchers researching groups they are members of themselves. Because I am a member of the Pentecostal movement, I have an insider's perspective concerning research on the Pentecostal groups. However, insider research can produce reliable and trustworthy data when the researcher follows proven research designs and the correct methodologies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2012). Being an inside researcher has advantages. Because I am a Pentecostal pastor, I am allowed acceptance and access to research areas that would otherwise be unavailable to me. Gaining the trust and acceptance of particular Pentecostal church leaders has been essential to my research (Corbin et al., 2009). I enjoy a long-term friendship with the leadership of First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The pastors of the church encouraged me to follow through with this qualitative case study. They understand research reveals both positive and negative characteristics within an organization. My challenge involves remaining neutral when reporting on those with whom I have a close relationship. While the challenge of suppressing biases and remaining objective is one of the many realities of conducting insider research, the thick descriptive details of this study are due to an insider's perspective.

My positionality for this study is a constructivist worldview. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe constructivist researchers as those seeking meaning to life's complexities through the lens of their own experiences. Constructivist researchers use interviews, observations, and literary works to record the concepts that emerge into a narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This positionality aligns itself well with this qualitative case study research. Through the constructivist perspective, the data collected in this case study gives meaning to why the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully evangelizes Generation Z's young adults while much of the Pentecostal movement does not.

Theoretical Framework Application

Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) model provides the theoretical framework for this qualitative single-case study. The framework features six elements. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) couples the elements with a counterpart into three different categories for comparison purposes. The three categories include: product versus process innovations, radical versus incremental innovations, and technical versus administrative innovations. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework provides a distinctive lens for a qualitative single-case study focused on innovative leadership for engaging Generation Z young adults.

The central research question of this qualitative case study explored how the leadership of First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully engages Generation Z young adults using innovations. Using a priori elements of Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework in my research question allowed me study how innovations in technology, administrative structures, and new

membership processes contribute to the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas' success. Just as Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) utilized three categories for the purposes of comparing the six elements of their study, I use the three categories of technology, administrative structures, and new membership processes to study the influence of these innovations upon young adults in a Pentecostal church setting. For instance, this qualitative single-case study examined how church leadership implemented these three specific innovations related to the framework to engage Generation Z young adults successfully. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) model provides an a priori framework to guide research in three areas I have adapted to study church innovation. First, I study how the church leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, uses new technologies to engage Generation Z young adults. Second, I study the church leadership's administrative strategies to engage Generation Z young adults. Third, I study new membership processes to engage Generation Z young adults. At the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, a young person who attends the church transitions to a new member independent of their parents at age 18. Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework offers a skeletal structure to follow without restricting me from exploring areas specific to the research site. Therefore, this theoretical framework best assists in discovering how the leadership of First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully engages Generation Z young adults.

Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework informed my approach to collecting data in the following three ways: first, I interviewed two participants from the church's pastoral leadership to ask open-ended questions about the

implementation of innovative technologies, administrative strategies, and new membership processes that contribute to successfully engaging young adults. Second, I interviewed four Generation Z young adult participants, asking questions regarding the innovative technologies, strategies, and processes that contributed to their church participation at First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. In recent years, these four participants transitioned to become active church members independent of their parents. Third, I observed young adult services and young adult-focused classes conducted by the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, to explore young adult levels of church participation. I allowed the three a priori categories chosen Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) framework to guide the observations. During the observations, I recorded the visible engagement level of Generation Z young adults during the use of innovative technology. I noted Generation Z young adults' responses to the administrative aspects of the events. I recorded how Generation Z young adults implemented the training they received as new members.

Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework informed my approach to analyzing the collected data in the following two ways: first, I used Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) method of comparison. For instance, this study compares the success of innovations the leadership feels most successfully engages young adults with the innovations each young adult participant feels most successfully engaged them in church participation. Second, using Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) three category model, I triangulated the two categories of participants interviewed and the observations. This approach informs the research on emerging themes and

successful innovations the leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas implemented.

Research Design and Rationale

Because the phenomenon of declining young adults' participation in Protestant Christian church continues to increase, a qualitative descriptive single case study researching a Pentecostal church leading a successful young adults ministry provides a rich and descriptive example for other Pentecostal leaders to follow. The goal was to identify how new technologies, administrative strategies, and new membership processes promote participation and growth among young adults. While qualitative descriptive case studies tend to be less theory-driven than other qualitative approaches, researchers most commonly use qualitative descriptive case studies to provide information on a poorly understood phenomenon (Kim et al., 2016). In qualitative descriptive case studies researchers often examine the phenomenon in its natural state (Kim et al., 2016). Through the data triangulation of interviewing leaders of First Pentecostal Church North Little Rock, young adult membership in the church, and observing interactions between the church leadership and young adult membership, this qualitative descriptive case study will reveal how innovative leadership can connect young adults to a Pentecostal church. Table 2.1 illustrates the progression of this qualitative descriptive case study.

According to Yin (2012), a qualitative case study provides the researcher with an opportunity to study a problem or phenomenon in-depth. The phenomenon concerning declining church participation in America necessitates an in-depth study seeking solutions to remedy the problem. Moreover, this study focused specifically on how Pentecostal leaders can remedy the problem in a specific Pentecostal church setting.

Additionally, qualitative case studies can involve organizations, small groups, or individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2012). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative research design “begins with assumptions” (p. 8). This descriptive case study assumed that the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, could offer insights into successful young adult ministry. The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas currently ministers to a large population of Generation Z young adult participants. The church’s success qualifies it to be the best site to answer the following research question: How does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–years-old by modeling innovative leadership?

Table 2.1

A Step-by-Step Progression of the Qualitative Single Case Study

Process	Recording method	Distillation of Main Themes Relative to Research Questions
Pastoral Leadership Interviews	Digital Device/Handwritten	Read Transcription of Interview and Record Main Themes
Generation Z Participant Interviews	Digital Device/Handwritten	Read Transcription of Interview and Record Main Themes
Observations	Field Notes	Read Transcription of Interview and Record Main Themes

Because the design best answers the central research question, I chose a qualitative research design. According to Yin (2018), “the more that your question(s) seek to explain some contemporary circumstance, the more that case study research will be relevant” (p. 33). The research question in the study asked “how” a Pentecostal church can successfully engage Generation Z young adults. Through interviewing Generation Z

young adult participants in the church, participant observations, and interviews with the pastoral leadership, I sought insights into successful innovations the church uses to engage young adults. An intrinsic qualitative case study reveals the unusual and exciting phenomenon of a specific case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). Scholarship on current young adult ministries in a Pentecostal church setting remains minimal, and it largely only offers layman's perspective of one church's successes or failures. For instance, an observer can compare the successes of one Pentecostal church with the average church within the Pentecostal movement. Generally, the predominant method of measuring young adult ministry success involves attendance (Barna Group, 2020; White, 2017). The First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas, boasts of a weekly attendance of Generation Z young adults in the hundreds. This unusual phenomenon piqued my interest to understand how innovative leadership practices contribute to the church's ongoing success with young adults. Therefore, a qualitative case study design will best reveal the rich, thick, and descriptive details of the innovative practices the pastoral leadership of The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, uses to engage Generation Z young adults (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995).

According to Yin (2018), a single case study can be revelatory. Because the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully engages hundreds of Generation Z's young adults aged 18–25-years-old each week (N. J. Holmes, personal communication, April 18, 2022), a single case study adequately answers the proposed central research question. If the case was inaccessible to researcher's inquiry in the past, the accessibility granted to researchers who have a special relationship with the gatekeepers of the single case may reveal prevalent characteristics about the phenomenon

previously undiscovered (Yin, 2018). In this qualitative case study focusing on Generation Z's young adults of First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, I enjoy a twenty-year relationship with the gatekeepers of the church that proved to be valuable.

Site Selection and Participant Sampling

The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas was the site for this study. I chose the site for two reasons: first, the church's success in engaging young adults and second, my longstanding relationship with the gatekeeper (lead pastor) of the congregation. I conducted a qualitative descriptive single-site case study using interviews with the church's pastoral staff, along with Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old selected from a list of those who responded to a survey email. In addition to interviews, I conducted observations of Generation Z young adults in functions specifically designed for the cohort. The lead pastor of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, granted permission to use this site for a qualitative single-site case study involving Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old (see Appendix A). All interviews and observations occurred at the main campus of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Site

First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas is a large Pentecostal congregation. Established in the late 1930s, the church continues to grow (First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas, 2012). The Holmes family has led the church from its beginning. Rev. A. O. Holmes was the founding pastor. In the mid-1970s, Rev. Joel Holmes assumed the pastorate of the church. He pastored the church for over 45 years. At the time of the study, Rev. Nathan Holmes was the lead pastor, and Rev. Joel

Holmes was the bishop (general overseer of churches) of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock. Since the early 2000's this church has successfully engaged and grown with young people and young adults. The church's Generation Z young adults aged 18–25 population qualified as one of the largest among Pentecostals in the United States (First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas, 2012). Additionally, the church hosts an annual youth conference attracting thousands of young people, including Generation Z young adults, from across North America.

An estimated 300 Generation Z young adults are active members of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas church (N. J. Holmes, personal communication, April 18, 2022). The large population of young adults in the church makes it a perfect site for the qualitative case study. Table 2.2 shows the many advantages for choosing the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, as the site for a study focused on Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old (see Table 2).

The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock enjoys a central location in the United States. Therefore, the church attracts young adults from across the nation to special events and conferences (First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, 2012). The heterogeneous young adult population at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, makes the site particularly attractive for a balanced qualitative case study (First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, 2012, Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 2.2

Site Advantages

Factor	Site Advantage
Longevity of Leadership	A. O. Holmes 1945–1975 Joel Holmes 1975–2020 Nathan Holmes 2020–
Location	Central United States
Relationship to Pentecostal Movement	Central to Oneness Pentecostals in the U.S.
Accessibility	Large population of Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old. Located near the researcher’s residence Researcher’s relationship with the gatekeepers

The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock belongs to a specific category of Pentecostal churches that teaches the oneness Pentecostal doctrine. Oneness Pentecostals have a strict monotheistic view of the godhead and deny the concept of trinitarianism (Davis, 2016; Wilson, 2016). According to Haynes (2022), 24 million people adhere to oneness Pentecostalism worldwide. The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, averages a weekly attendance of over 2,500 members (N. J. Holmes, personal communication, April 18, 2022). Currently, the United Pentecostal Church International, the largest oneness Pentecostal organization of churches, reports 42,522 churches worldwide averaging 130 in membership. Therefore, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, holds the distinction of being one of the larger oneness Pentecostal churches. In addition, the church has a large constituency

of Generation Z young adult attendees aged 18–25-years-old (N. J. Holmes, personal communication, April 18, 2022).

Participants

The boundaries of this qualitative descriptive single-site case study include age, religion, and church membership. The study focuses on Generation Z’s young adults aged 18–25-years-old. The participants chosen for the study profess Pentecostalism as their religion. Additionally, the participants attend the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. Presently, the church offers no quantifiable statistics to describe the precise ethnic diversity of the approximately 300 Generation Z young adults who attend weekly. However, as a researcher, my relationship with the church provides insight into the demographics of the population. Through relational knowledge with the church, I observed the ethnic diversity and education of the population of interest. While quantifiable demographics of the population of interest do not exist, I provide the general demographics of those participating in the study. The large and diverse population of interest makes studying Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old at First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock advantageous.

Since this single-case study uses two units of analysis to answer the central research question, two strategies are employed to gain participants: purposeful sampling and random sampling. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), “purposeful sampling means that researchers intentionally select (or recruit) participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or key concept being explored in the study” (p. 176). To guide the sampling process for pastoral leadership participants, I implemented Creswell and Poth’s (2018) purposeful sampling model. According to Creswell and Poth

(2018), purposeful sampling presents “an array of possibilities” (p. 100). For instance, using purposeful sampling in a case study, a researcher may involve an individual or several individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After Pastor Nathan Holmes permitted me to use the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, as the primary site for this qualitative single case study, I asked him for an interview as a pastoral leadership participant. In addition, to permitting me to interview himself, Pastor Holmes permitted me to ask Corey Townley for an interview. Corey leads the Generation Z young adult group at the church. Interviewing the pastoral leadership gave insight into their perspectives on innovative strategies implemented to engage Generation Z young adults. Table 2.3 displays the demographics of the two pastoral leadership participants.

Table 2.3

Pastoral Leadership Participant Demographics

Participant names	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Level of Education
Nathan Holmes	Male	42	White	Master’s Degree
Corey Townley	Male	41	White	Bachelor’s Degree

I used random sampling to identify participants who were Generation Z young adult participants aged 18–25-years-old and who attended the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The pastor appointed a staff member to email all the Generation Z members of the congregation. The email explained the purpose of the research study and invited them to participate (see Appendix C). The correspondence instructed those interested in participating in the study to express their interest via email to the staff member. She then forwarded the list of willing participants to me. I called

upon participants for interviews from the list. Some of the prospects on the list responded immediately, and we scheduled a time for the interview. On the other hand, I could not reach others on the list.

Once I secured four Generation Z young adult participants, I focused on interviewing them. I felt confident I could return to the list of remaining names if one of the scheduled interviewees canceled their appointment. In addition, because random sampling approximates the entire population studied, interviewing randomly selected participants provides credibility to the sample (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Table 2.4 displays the demographics of the Generation Z participants.

Table 2.4

Generation Z Young Adult Demographics

Participant names	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Level of Education
Kimberly	Female	25	White	Bachelor
Emily	Female	19	White	High School
Angela	Female	24	Black	Bachelor
Steve	Male	26	Hispanic	Associate

Data Collection

For my qualitative case study, I have three data sources: the pastoral leadership participant interviews, the Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old participant interviews, and the observations of interactions between the pastoral leadership participants and the Generation Z young adult participants at a conference for young adults. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “a hallmark of a good qualitative case

study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case” (p. 98). The three data sources assisted in answering the central research question of this qualitative single case study in the following three ways. First, the pastoral leadership participant interviews provide perspective about how the leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, envision innovations engaging Generation Z young adults. Second, the Generation Z young adult participant interviews provide insights into how the new innovations engaged them. Third, the participant observations offered an overall perspective on how implementing innovations at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engaged Generation Z young adults. These three data sources provided sufficient data to describe how innovations engage Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Data Collection Procedures

The interview data collection phase of this single-site case study followed five steps with each of the two interview participant categories. First, I acquired signed consent forms from the interviewees (see Appendix D). Second, I arranged with the pastoral leadership of the church to use a room for each of the initial interviews and follow-up interviews. Third, I set up an appointment with each of the interviewees for the initial interviews. Fourth, I conducted 30–45-minute interviews using prepared open-ended questions recorded on a digital device (see Appendices E & F). Fifth, by typing the interviews into a Word document file, I transcribed the interviews and sent them to the interviewees for approval before beginning my data analysis. According to Yin (2018), interviews add strength to the qualitative case study. In the interview phase of collecting data, I followed the examples for the interviews that Creswell and Poth (2018) provided. I

safely stored these notes in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office. Additionally, I used an Apple iPhone application to record the interviews limiting the need for excessive follow-up interviews. I keep the stored recordings from the interviews on passcode secured digital device.

Observation provides a critical component to aid in answering the central research question of a qualitative case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A research observer can choose to conduct data collection multiple ways. For this single-site case study, I chose the participant as observer model (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in the participant as observer model, “the researcher is fully engaged with the people he or she is observing” (p. 167). However, the researcher allows participants to engage in observable activities without hindering them.

The observation phase of this single-site case study followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) eight-step model for observations. First, I arranged permission from the church leadership concerning dates and times of observations (observations occurred at the church’s main campus). Second, I identified the Generation Z participants to observe in worship services and events with the help of a list the church pastoral leadership provided. Third, I followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) participant as an observer model. Fourth, when I observed the four Generation Z young adult participants and two pastoral leadership participants, I used specific protocols based on three categories from the theoretical framework used in this study to guide my field notes (see Appendix F). For the pastoral leadership participant observations, I recorded how implementing new technologies, administrative structures, and new membership processes engaged Generation Z young adults of the church. On the other hand, when conducting the

Generation Z young adult participant observations, I recorded how innovations in new technology, administrative structures, and new membership processes appeared to engage them. Fifth, I spoke with the participants before the observation to ensure rapport. Sixth, I used thick, rich descriptions to record my observations into field notes. Seventh, I slowly withdrew from all observational engagements. Eighth, while the observation data remained fresh on my mind, I ensured the field notes contained decipherable data for later analysis. Creswell and Poth (2018) state, “writing down everything is impossible” (p. 167). Therefore, I used the central research question to categorize the importance of my observational notetaking. I created the categories using Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour’s (1997) theoretical framework to create three categories for observation: technology, administrative strategies, and new membership processes. I stored all observation notes in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office.

The best times for interviews and observations for data collection relative to Generation Z young adults occur in the fall months. The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, hosts a large event involving Generation Z young adults every October, an International Youth Conference for young adults aged 18–25-years-old to attend discipleship classes, serve out-of-town guests, and work with teachers who make presentations at the meeting. This timeframe offered the best opportunity for conducting the data collection of this single site qualitative case study. Therefore, I observed discipleship classes, the administrative structures of the pastoral leadership presenting at the conference, and the organizational of processes designed for new membership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas throughout

the conference. I recorded these observations in field notes. Table 5 illustrates the full timeline for data collection (see Table 2.5).

Table 2.5

Data Collection Timeline

Expected Date	Activity
September 2022	Received a non-human subjects research determination
Week of October 6-10, 2022	Scheduled and performed interviews with pastoral leadership. Perform observations using field notes at the Mid America Conference
Week of October 13-31, 2022	Scheduled and performed interviews with young adult participants.
Week of November 1- November 8, 2022	Analyzed data collected from interviews (emerging trends, connected ideas, etc.) and observations.
Week of November 9-15, 2022	Scheduled follow-up interviews and gave transcribed copy of emerging themes used from the interview and observations to participants.
Weeks of November 16-31, 2022	Label and code emerging themes from the interviews and observations.
Weeks of February 12-26, 2023	Additional pastoral leadership interview with Corey Townley.

Data Collection Protocols

I collected data for this qualitative single-case study using three basic protocols: first, at my request, Pastor Nathan Holmes sent an email to survey the Generation Z members of the congregation inviting them to participate in the research study (see Appendix C). The email explained the purpose of the research study and instructed those interested in participating in the study to respond via email. After sufficient time passed for the possible participants to respond to the email survey, I received the contact information of those who expressed interest in participating in the study. I began calling the possible Generation Z young adult participants to schedule an interview during the timeframe allotted for this single-case study. I scheduled four interviews from the list of contacts I received. In addition to the Generation Z young adult interviews, I conducted two pastoral participant interviews.

Second, the interviews questions used to collect data from the Generation Z young adult participants differed slightly from the interview questions used to collect data from the pastoral leadership. However, all participant interviews contain questions consistent with the three main categories derived from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework: new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes. Table 2.6 and Table 2.7 illustrate how the participant interview questions align with the theoretical framework.

Table 2.6

Generation Z Participant Interview Questions Based on Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework	Interview Question
New Technology	<p>What types of technology have you noticed implemented during the worship service?</p> <p>How do these technological innovations engage you?</p> <p>How do they help with your personal worship experience?</p> <p>What types of technology have you noticed the preachers and teachers of the church implementing during their presentations?</p> <p>How do these technological innovations help you better understand the message the preacher or teacher is endeavoring to communicate?</p>
Administrative Structures	<p>What are some of the administrative practices and policies of the church that influence you?</p> <p>How have these administrative practices successfully engaged you?</p> <p>How does the leadership (pastor or youth pastor) of the church use these administrative practices to engage you personally?</p>
New Member Processes	<p>What discipleship program are you involved with in the church?</p> <p>How does the program engage you as a member of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?</p> <p>How did the program equip you to becoming an active member of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?</p>

Table 2.7

*Pastoral Leadership Participant Interview Questions
Based on Theoretical Framework Interview Questions Based on Theoretical Framework*

Theoretical Framework	Interview Question
New Technology	<p>What types of new technology tools do you use to specifically engage young adults</p> <p>Why do you feel those tools are successful?</p> <p>How have you adapted technology into your preaching and teaching to engage young adults</p> <p>What challenges have these implementations presented to you as a leader?</p> <p>How have you navigated those challenges?</p> <p>Why do you feel technology is important to the church worship experience?</p>
Administrative Structures	<p>What administrative strategies do you and the church leaders implement that you consider uniquely designed to engage Generation Z Young Adults?</p> <p>How have these administrative strategies increased your success engaging Generation.</p>
New Member Processes	<p>What discipleship programs have you implemented since you have become the Pastor that you feel are specifically engaging young adults?</p> <p>How does these programs equip young adults to become active and productive members of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?</p> <p>How do you envision these programs adapting to future needs of young adult ministry?</p>

Third, I observed two groups simultaneously in the same settings. For example, I simultaneously observed the pastoral leadership and Generation Z young adult participants in worship services and events. I wanted to observe the two groups' interactions and how the pastoral leadership's implementation of the innovations focused on in this study engaged the Generation Z young adult participants. Table 2.8 highlights the differences between observable data collected from this study's two groups of participants.

Table 2.8

Differences in Observable Data

Aspect of Theoretical Framework	Pastoral Leadership Participant Observable Data	Generation Z Participant Observable Data
Technology	How did Pastoral Leadership implement technology?	How did technology engage Generation Z young adults?
Administrative Strategies	How did the Pastoral Leadership implement administrative strategies?	How did the administrative strategies engage Generation Z young adults?
New Member Processes	How did the Pastoral Leadership implement new member processes?	How did the new member processes engage Generation Z young adults?

The data collection protocols explain how this study's collection tools successfully answered the central research question. While the questions and observations yielded more data than illustrated in Table 2.6 and Table 2.7, these tables highlight how the data collection tools successfully collected and siloed the data according to the participant being interviewed or observed. This study's protocols helped organize the data for triangulation in data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis Procedures

The case study employed Creswell and Poth's (2018) five-step spiral model for conducting qualitative data analysis. This approach helped narrow the focus to include the essential aspects of the research findings. According to Yin (2018), a researcher can approach the data analysis process "by playing with the data and searching for promising patterns, insights, or concepts—the goal being to define your priorities for what to analyze and why" (p. 212). Creswell and Poth's (2018) five-step spiral model allowed me to distill all the data collected in the interviews and the observations to find the most relevant data for answering the central research question. Using Creswell and Poth's (2018) spiral model as a guide, I implemented the five-steps of the model.

In the first step, I organized all the data collected from the interviews and the observations. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), using a consistent system of organization decreases confusion and makes relevant data easier to locate. I used a spreadsheet for organizing and managing field notes from interviews and observations conducted. After organizing the data, I stored the data in a secure password-protected computer file under the pseudonyms used for the participants of the study. This process limited disorganization and provided easy access to the data from each participant.

In the second step, I investigated the data searching for common ideas relative to the central research question. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend reading the notes from the interviews and observations multiple times before categorizing the notes into different parts, so I immersed myself in the details of every interview and observation note to ensure a thick and descriptive narrative emerges in the final reporting. Since the study focuses on innovative leadership, I looked for innovation leadership practices the pastoral leadership had implemented in the following three areas. First, I investigated

how the leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, used of technology during worship services to stimulate Generation Z young adult involvement in the church. Second, I examined how the leadership communicated to Generation Z young adults in church worship service settings. Third, I explored how discipleship programs activated Generation Z young adult membership at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. I categorized these three main themes and prepared them for coding.

In the third step, once I extrapolated the common ideas, I coded the ideas using the method displayed in Table 2.9. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend narrowing the list of codes and expanding the list if necessary. Therefore, I utilized three a priori coding names that coincide with the central research question: new technology, administrative structures, and new member processes. The interviews and the observations sought to determine which of these three innovation leadership practices most engaged the study participants. After reflecting on my detailed field notes, I selected the category or categories each participant felt most engaging. I selected multiple categories if more than one leadership innovation engaged the participant (see Table 2.9).

In the fourth step, I re-analyzed and assessed the categorized themes for proper interpretation. The re-analyzing and assessment included examining relationships between the three leadership innovations focused on in this study. For instance, did the pairing of two innovations more successfully engage Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas than just one innovation alone? I could better articulate the final report by assessing which categories or combinations of categories most successfully engaged the participants.

Table 2.9

Categorizing Ideas and Themes

Participants	New Technologies	Administrative Structures	New Member Processes
Kimberly	8	8	5
Emily	9	4	4
Angela	8	5	9
Steve	15	11	10
Nathan Holmes	22	17	7
Corey Townley	14	14	3

In the fifth step, I created a table to compare categories to find which category or categories most successfully engaged the study participants. This method allowed for cross-referencing and created a clear picture of the data patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By creating a table for comparison purposes, I also looked for areas of missing or ambiguous data. This final phase of the analysis helped refine the data before the reporting process began.

Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral hones this qualitative single-case study's data in preparation for reporting the most significant findings. Following this five-step process, I systematically organized and thoroughly analyzed the data to present a reputable study. This analysis method focused on the data to answer the central research question. Table 2.10 provides a visual example of the steps I used to organize and hone the data for the final report.

Table 2.10

The Data Analysis Spiral Activities, Strategies, and Outcomes

Data Analysis Spiral Activities	Analytic Strategy	Analytic Outcomes
Managing and organizing data	Preparing and placing into categories	Develop a spreadsheet listing the categorized data
Investigating, reading, and memoing emerging ideas	Taking notes from themes, reflecting on meaning of the ideas, and summarizing the themes	Condensing written notes from emerging ideas into codes
Defining codes and creating themes	Working on articulation, applying the codes, and reducing the codes into themes	Finalizing the codes and assigning them to sections of the final recording
Developing and analyzing interpretations	Comparing categories and combinations of categories	Connecting codes to the theoretical framework
Representing the data	Articulate a point of view	Recording the findings

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

For my research design, I chose a single case qualitative method that required a system to check the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study. To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity, I implemented three methods that Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend. First, I used the researcher’s lens. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher’s lens strategy clarifies the researcher’s biases. I explained my position as a Pentecostal, as well as my many years of relationship with the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. Second, I implemented the reviewer’s lens strategy for validating the veracity of the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) enabling external audits with other researchers in similar fields of study increases the validity of the study. The external reviewer examined the reporting to assess

whether the interpretations and conclusions coincide with the data. Through peer review, I endeavored to strengthen the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study (Yin, 2018). Periodically, I allowed a colleague to review the contents of this single case study to ensure congruence and accuracy. With each iteration of these reviews, I made edits to hone my recording of the research, attempting to produce an academic document helpful to Pentecostal leaders of the future. Third, I solicited two of the participants feedback from the transcripts of their interviews. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), member checking strengthens the credibility of the findings and interpretations of a qualitative case study. Experts recommend these three methods of validation for quality qualitative case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

To limit bias, I gave special attention to crafting the research question and data collection procedures. However, the field notes taken from the observation are the most vulnerable to biases. As a lifelong Pentecostal, I acknowledge my observations contain a degree of bias. To add strength to the study, I kept a journal throughout the data collection process and indicated possible biases when they occurred. Admittedly, I am most vulnerable to unconscious bias. Because I have spent most of my life as a Pentecostal, this influences my worldview. To limit unconscious bias, I relied upon the recommendations of an external reviewer. In addition, when reporting the findings and conclusions of the study, I continued to keep my researcher's positionality at the forefront of the reporting.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I used four measures to ensure that I conducted this qualitative single case study ethically. First, I conducted the research with respect for all the

participants involved. Second, I exercised caution due to my positionality and worldview. Third, at the direction of my advisor, I submitted this case study to the Internal Review Board at Baylor University for review. Fourth, I received written consent from the lead pastor and the Generation Z young adult participants of the First Pentecostal Church of North Rock, Arkansas. Using these steps, I attempted to ensure the validity of this qualitative case study.

I diligently endeavored throughout this case study to conduct research that respected the individuals involved. I conducted the interviews in the coffee shop of the church to ensure a relaxed and peaceful environment for the interviews. I started the interviews with introductions and congenial conversation. I explained to the interviewees the goal of the research. Also, I described how their answers to the semi-structured question would help to answer the central research question. As we transitioned to the interview questions, I told the interviewees that they may stop at any point they felt uncomfortable during the interview. By being mindful of these courtesies, the interviewees provided significant data pertinent to the central research question.

I am a Pentecostal pastor with strong opinions about religion and how Pentecostal churches should or should not incorporate the things researched in this study. However, while I conducted this research study, I conscientiously considered the participant's world views. I understood that my age, influences, and environment create an unconscious bias. Therefore, I resolved to remain open to the ideas and perspectives of the interviewees.

Accountability remained a priority at every phase of this single-case study. I submitted my study's research design, methodology, and theoretical framework to my

faculty advisor. She reviewed this qualitative single case study for any possible ethical issues. In addition, I have utilized the writing center consultants Baylor University provides for doctoral students. These consultants analyzed my proposed research for any ethical problems also. Finally, I submitted my proposed research study to the Office of Research Compliance for review and received a non-human subject's research determination.

To ensure a harmonious relationship throughout the entire research endeavor, I sent an email to the pastor responsible for authorizing the research at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The email detailed the perimeters of the single-case qualitative research I plan to conduct at the church. The email explained the reason for the study, the nature of the study, and the ethical guidelines I will follow while conducting the study (see Appendix A). Pastor Nathan J. Holmes expeditiously replied fully authorizing the research study (see Appendix B).

Limitations and Delimitations

The single case design does have some limitations. Because a single case study “selects one bounded case” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 98), it only offers a myopic view of the phenomenon. For instance, in a case involving young adult ministry, a single case study may not offer a clear picture of other settings and the cultural influences in those settings. A multiple case study would better describe the successful engagement of Generation Z young adults (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). However, the Pentecostal movement does not offer another case comparable to the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas' success with Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old.

Another significant limitation of this qualitative case study involves the participants. All of the participants in this study have attended the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, for a substantial amount of time. Therefore, the participants cannot offer the perspective of a new member or guest to the church. New members or recent guest participants might better reveal if the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully engages Generation Z young adults who do not have a Pentecostal background.

This qualitative single-case study had two delimitations. First, the study focuses on just one church setting. Generation Z young adults represent a large population in America (White, 2017). Therefore, regional culture and demographics of the research site make the study susceptible to scrutiny. For instance, this research does not proportionally represent race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity in the United States young adult population. Second, the qualitative study involves a single-site case. Though the qualitative single-case study design narrows the research to a specific area of interest, it imposes restraints on other Pentecostal perspectives about Generation Z young adult ministry. However, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, represents a large and successful young adult ministry, which is the main reason for choosing the church for the research site (N. J. Holmes, personal communication, April 18, 2022).

Conclusion

This study examined how a Pentecostal church successfully engages Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old by modeling innovative leadership. By using a qualitative single-site case study design, I explored the leadership innovations of the First

Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. This single-site case study assists Pentecostal church leaders in understanding how to implement innovative strategies to successfully evangelize and retain Generation Z young adults. The previous chapter's literature review revealed a need for Protestant Christian church leaders to be proactive in reaching Generation Z young adults. I designed this study to add to the existing research and lay the groundwork for future studies focusing on engaging Generation Z in churches. The following chapter informs readers on the results and implications of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Results and Implications

Introduction

This study used a descriptive single case study approach to understand how a Pentecostal church can successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old through its use of new technologies, administrative strategies, and processes to involve new members. The sample of this study included two embedded units of analysis. First, I interviewed four individuals within the Generation Z population between the ages 18–25-years-old. All participants maintained an active membership in the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. Second, I interviewed two pastoral leadership participants. The interviews from participants of the two embedded units of analysis provided relevant information to understand what successfully engages Generation Z young adults in a Pentecostal church setting. The participants provided feedback about the innovations most compelling and engaging to them about the church. Additionally, I observed events hosted at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas including church services and fellowship gatherings designed to engage the Generation Z population. The information collected during this study contributed to answering the following central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members?

As indicated in Chapters One and Two, I confined the study to three categories of church innovations. This research revealed that churches can harness innovations in

technology, administrative strategies, and new membership programs to successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–years-old. The results of the research study aligned with the a priori theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two based on Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour’s (1997) model. The three categories adapted from the theoretical framework helped to focus the single-case study and provided an opportunity to triangulate the data collected. From those framework elements, additional themes emerged relevant to the central research question.

In Chapter Three, I present the findings of my research study in seven steps. First, I provide background on the case study site. Second, I provide background on the six participants of the case study. Third, I answer the central research question by analyzing the data collected from semi-structured interviews and observations. Fourth, I present a holistic-case theoretical analysis and discuss the emerging themes. Fifth, I demonstrate how the participants identify with the findings and trends from the literature review. Sixth, I share the implications and recommendations from the study. Finally, I present a summary and conclusion.

Case Description

The following section offers a description of each of the participants of this qualitative single-case study. In this study, I interviewed and observed two categories of participants: first, I interviewed and observed four Generation Z young adult participants. Second, I interviewed two pastoral leadership participants. The following section describes the demographics of the participants interviewed in this study.

Participants

I interviewed six participants to collect data for this study, four of whom are Generation Z congregants and two from the pastoral leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The racial and ethnic demographic of the Generation Z young adult participants included two White individuals, one Black individual, and one Hispanic individual. The gender demographic of this study's Generation Z young adult participants included three females and one male. All Generation Z young adult participants hold membership with the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. I changed the names of the four Generation Z young adult participants to keep their identities anonymous. The pseudonyms chosen for this study are Kimberly, Emily, Angela, and Steve.

As the second category of participants, I interviewed and observed two members of the pastoral leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The racial and demographic of the pastoral leadership participants included two White males. The following section lists a brief description of each of the Generation Z young adult and pastoral leadership participants.

Generation Z young adult participants. Kimberly is a 25-year-old White female holding a Bachelor of Arts degree in education. She began attending the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock at age 11. For the past 14 years, Kimberly has attended the church and observed the phenomenal growth it enjoyed among Generation Z young adults. In addition, she both met and married her husband at the church. In the past, Kimberly was involved in various leadership roles of the church. She acknowledged that all members are encouraged to remain involved in the leadership of the church. However,

Kimberly is a parent of small children, therefore, chooses to focus on her family for now. She plans to return to her church leadership role in the future. Because Kimberly is a parent, her interview offers a unique perspective among the participants.

Emily is a 19-year-old White female and a sophomore in college. She has attended the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock since birth, and her earliest memories involve the church. Emily received her K–12 education at Calvary Academy, a parochial school the church sponsors. When the Ambassadors program began at the church, she enrolled. Emily also remains faithfully involved in the church as a single Generation Z young adult. She sings in the young adult choir and volunteers in many service areas at the church. Emily’s interview provided insight into how the church engages Generation Z young adults.

Angela is a 24-year-old Black female with a Bachelor of Arts in musical theater. Angela is unmarried and works as an educator. She participates in the music department and leads worship as a frontline singer at church worship services. Though her parents do not attend church, Angela’s grandmother brought her to the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, as a child. Therefore, she offers a different perspective than the other interviewees, who all have parents actively involved in the church.

Steve is a 26-year-old Hispanic male. He is a Calvary Academy graduate with an Associate of Arts degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Steve began attending the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock when he was nine. Over the past 17 years, Steve’s volunteered in many areas of the church. At an early age, he became interested in videography. Steve developed his skills and became the leader of the video production team at the church. As the leader of the video production

department of the church, he offered an insider's perspective to interview questions concerning innovative technology. In the late 2010s, Pastor Nathan Holmes hired Steve as his personal assistant. As a personal assistant to Pastor Holmes, he offered a unique description of the administrative strategies practiced at the church. While not a part of the pastoral team or influential in the daily decisions of leading the church, Steve's story underscored how the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas successfully engages young adults. Steve so enjoyed working as a volunteer at the church that when a paid position availed itself at the church, he seized the opportunity. In addition, Steve married his wife two years ago. She works full-time for the church as a teacher at Calvary Academy. Steve and his wife show how successfully the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, incorporates Generation Z young adults into membership roles in the church.

Pastoral leadership participants. Corey Townley is a 41-year-old White male who leads the Connect Group (Generation Z young adult ministry of the church). He grew up Pentecostal and playing the drums in the church his father pastored. After his high school graduation, Corey attended Jackson College of Ministries in Jackson, Mississippi. Soon after graduating from Jackson College of Ministries, he moved to North Little Rock and attended the First Pentecostal Church where he has now attended for the past 14 years. He met and married his wife in the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock. Although Corey has always remained active in the church, his roles have varied. He played drums for many years. In addition, Corey and his wife assisted youth leaders of the church and worked at young events. In September 2022, Corey and his wife became leaders of the church's young adult group. The group consists of

unmarried young adults 18–25-years-old. He is passionate about leading the group and developing them to become productive church members. Corey’s interview offers the perspective of a Pentecostal leader working directly with Generation Z young adults.

Pastor Nathan Holmes is a 42-year-old White male. He currently pastors the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. Holmes grew up in the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, started by his grandfather and later helmed by his father. He graduated from Calvary Academy in 1999 and earned his Bachelor of Arts at Harding University in 2004. Later, Pastor Holmes continued his educational pursuits at Regent University, earning a master’s degree in biblical studies. In 2003, he became the assistant pastor of the church. He served in this position for 14 years. In 2018, the church elected Holmes to pastor the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. In the past five years, Pastor Holmes continued to build on the legacy and vision of his father, Bishop Joel Holmes. He introduced several new programs related to Generation Z young adults. Under his leadership, the church launched the Ambassador program and the Mid-America Conference (a youth event) and developed the Connect Group (a ministry designed to reach Generation Z young adults). As a minister, Pastor Holmes uses technology to engage his congregation. His visionary leadership and technical knowledge offer insights into how churches can utilize innovative technology, organizational strategies, and new membership processes to engage Generation Z young adults.

Observations

Observations occurred in person on the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas campus. The observations occurred in three different settings during the

Mid-America Conference, October 13–15, 2022. As a youth and young adult conference, Mid-America hosted approximately 3,000 people on October 13–15, 2022 (Nathan J. Holmes, personal communication, March 26, 2023). The conference features various ministries the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, offers to youth and young adults. For instance, each year at the conference, the church hosts breakout sessions to showcase ministries routinely used at the church to engage youth and young adults. The worship services are not dissimilar from the weekly worship services of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. However, unlike the weekly worship services, the Mid-America Conference provides sessions and small events targeting Generation Z young adults specifically. Though other churches attend the conference, the purpose of the Mid-America Conference is to minister to the youth and young adults of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, while illustrating the church's success at engaging the participation of youth and young adults. Many young adults 18–25-years old attend the event.

I observed two nights of worship services at the conference, as well as an after-hours event designed to provide fellowship for Generation Z young adults. I used the participant observer model to conduct the observations and methodically followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) observation protocol. During the worship services, I observed the pastoral leadership's implementation of media/video screen technology. I noted the screens displayed graphics along with the words to the songs. The pastoral leadership used pre-recorded video announcements to share information pertinent to the conference schedule. In addition, the preachers and teachers speaking at the conference used title screens with colorful graphics relating to their sermon or lesson. The speakers offered

dynamic sermons and lessons that captured the attention of the young adults present. Generation Z young adults participated in the worship service by singing along with the praise team on the platform. The highly exuberant preaching elicited verbal responses of agreement from the young adult audience. At the conclusion of the worship services, young adults thronged the front of the building and lingered in prayer for a significant period of time.

At the events designed for Generation Z young adults, I observed camaraderie between some of the attendees. The pastoral leadership hosted the event in the coffee shop area of the church. The event allowed attendees to fellowship with one another without an agenda. The come-and-go event allowed attendees to stay as long as they desired and to leave when they wanted to. The venue always maintained approximately 200 hundred attendees during the event. The young adult attendees appeared to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere.

The interviews provided the context for how the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas successfully engages Generation Z young adults. The participant-observer observations allowed me to record the setting, and atmosphere reflectively and how all three of the categories from the theoretical framework influenced the participants at once. The data collected from the interviews and observations allowed me to continue to the next phase of the qualitative case study.

Generation Z Participants' Profile

In this section, I analyze the first of two embedded units. The participant interviews and observations in this section answer the central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25–

years-old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members? Answering this question assists Pentecostal church leaders on how to use innovations to engage Generation Z young adults. By examining the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, I found that innovation plays a significant role in Generation Z young adult church participation. Using the data collected from interviews with Generation Z young adult participants aged 18–25-years-old and the observations from events designed for Generation Z young adults, I discuss how innovations in new technology, administrative structures, and new membership processes influenced the group’s participation at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

New Technology

The participant interviews and observations revealed that new technology significantly influenced the participant’s church engagement. After analyzing the participants’ interviews, three significant themes emerged regarding new technology. First, I used the code “media/video screens (MVS)” for identifying the image magnification screens (IMAG) recently installed in the sanctuary of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. Through data analysis, I found that the code emerged 18 times. The IMAG’s dimensions span 24 feet across the sanctuary’s platform and stands approximately 10 feet tall. Additionally, two more large IMAG screens are installed high above the platform on both sides of the building. The screens allow everyone in the 3,000-seat sanctuary to see the worship team and speakers. Because of the IMAG screen, Steve noted that people at the back of the sanctuary could better see the speaker’s facial expressions. By seeing the speaker’s facial expressions, the audience

could better interpret their message. Soon after installing the IMAG screen, Steve observed that most of the congregation seated halfway back or more engaged better with the IMAG screen than the physical people on the platform. Emily said, “if you are seated far away, the screens help us not to lose connection with the service.” When asked how the IMAG screen affected her, Angela said, “it stimulates the senses.” In the participant interview with Steve, he felt the IMAG screen contributed to the church’s growth. He said, “the balcony began to fill up on Sunday services soon after installing the IMAG screens.” All interviewed participants agreed that the IMAG screens made the worship services more engaging and inclusive.

The second significant theme relative to new technology that emerged from the participant interviews involved online streaming. Until the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas, did not stream worship services online. Because of the mandated stay-at-home orders from the governor of Arkansas in the early stages of the pandemic, the church started online worship services. The online streaming continued after in-person services resumed. Currently, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas ministers to 9,680 subscribers who follow the church’s YouTube channel (First Pentecostal Church North Little Rock, February 18, 2023). All participants complimented the church’s online streaming. When asked how online streaming influenced her specifically, Kimberly mentioned how online streaming helps her stay “connected to the church” when she cannot attend due to a schedule conflict or sickness in her family. Emily stated, “with the services streamed online, if I am unable to attend church, it still feels like I am at church because I can

watch and engage with the services.” Clearly, the participants found online streaming engaged them.

Social media was the third significant theme relative to new technology that emerged from participant observations. The interviews revealed that all the participants used social media. For example, in the participant interview with Kimberly, she mentioned that she used social media to evangelize friends connected to her. She said, “I put [church services] on social media. I feel like it gives people a glimpse of our church.” Referencing social media, Steve spoke about how the IMAG screens and lighting of the church sanctuary enhanced the social media presence. He said, “you know how [young adults] are always scrolling on social media? The screens and lighting help attract their attention [in pictures posted on Instagram or Facebook].” Through interviews, it became evident that the participants viewed social media as an evangelism tool for young adults.

As I analyzed the data collected from the participants, I found it challenging to measure the influence of social media. Because of the diverse use of social media, many references to media/video screens include social media. For instance, the church utilizes social media platforms for online streaming. Therefore, the influence of social media at the church extends beyond announcement posts or event advertisements. When explaining the influence of social media on her, Kimberly stated, “social media allows me to see what I missed when I am unable to attend.” Therefore, social media provides a medium for young adults to track the worship services and events of the church as they occur. Observations showed that many of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, Generation Z young adults engage one another via social media platforms. For example, I observed that most events the church hosts have areas designed

for taking pictures with friends to post on social media. In addition, the event planners encourage attendees to post a hashtag (a descriptive tagline used on social media outlets) to promote the event on social media. While the diverse use of social media makes its impact difficult to measure, the Generation Z young adult participants of this study had positive perceptions.

Though Generation Z participants did not mention the sound system in the interviews, I observed that the sound system played a significant role in participant engagement. Because of the enormity of the sanctuary, I observed the sound system was sophisticated and required a sizable group of technicians to operate it. I noted in my observation field notes that the sound system in the sanctuary sounded superb. I noted a discrepancy when comparing my observations concerning the sound system at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, with the statements from the participant interviews. From my observations I falsely supposed the participants would refer to the state-of-art sound system at the church. However, the participants did not refer to the sound system as an engaging technology. Therefore, I concluded that the sound system and the technicians perform so well that the Generation Z young adult participants take it for granted. This finding underscores the study's emphasis on 'new technologies.' While many technologies implicitly influence Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, this study focuses on the technologies referred to explicitly in interviews. The next section focuses on organizational innovations the church uses to engage Generation Z young adults.

Administrative Structures

Innovations in administrative structures denote leadership processes and strategies. The pastoral leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, uses various innovative leadership processes and strategies to engage Generation Z young adults. While analyzing the data collected from interviews and observations, I found themes that relate to administrative structures engaged them more than all other innovations.

Two significant sub-themes emerged from the participant interview questions relating to administrative structures: staff efficiency and personal interaction. Though some of the two themes closely correspond, each uniquely engages Generation Z young adults at the church. The leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, uses these two administrative strategies to cultivate a mindset of growth in their church.

The theme of staff efficiency emerged 12 times in participant interviews. Staff efficiency requires extraordinary organizational leadership at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. For example, Steve noted that the church's biannual Easter production "I AM" equips 980 volunteers. The responsibilities of these volunteers range from parking attendants to the drama's lead actors. The drama performs ten times each season, attracting approximately 20,000 attendees in total (Pastor Nathan Holmes, personal communication, April 18, 2022). In addition to special events, weekly worship services require efficient organizational skills to accommodate the church's congregants and guests. Steve stated, "the church has over 300 week-to-week volunteer staff members." When I observed the volunteers at worship services, I noted that security personnel, parking lot attendants, ushers, greeters, media and video producers, platform

coordinators, singers, and musicians worked efficiently to create an engaging experience for those attending the church. In addition, I observed that Generation Z young adults comprised a large portion of the volunteers.

The administrative structure is vital to the success of the church's music department. The sub-theme of staff efficiency emerged as a critical component in organizing and leading the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas' large adult choir. The 150-member choir sings each Sunday and at most special events the church hosts (Pastor Nathan Holmes, personal communication, March 23, 2023). To prepare for weekly performances, the choir meets for practice once a week. In preparation for special events, the choir practices more frequently in the weeks leading to the event (Pastor Nathan Holmes, personal communication, March 23, 2023). In her interview, Angela described the choir department's leadership structure: "there are three main leaders of the choir." She mentioned how each member of the leadership team fulfilled a specific role. For example, the music director chose the songs, oversaw the musicians, arranged the schedule of the songs for the platform coordinator, and instructed the choir leader on how to perform the songs. The platform coordinator gives a detailed worship service schedule to the platform participants. Angela explained, that a vital responsibility of the platform coordinator is to keep the service flowing seamlessly. During choir performances, the choir director coaches the choir members to collaborate with the musicians to ensure a harmonious performance. The three choir leaders worked together in the worship services I observed to produce an engaging performance.

In participant interviews and observations related to administrative structures, Pastor Holmes' personal interaction with young adults surfaced as the most popular

theme. During interviews, the Generation Z young adult participants mentioned Pastor Holmes' personal interaction 16 times. Participants expressed appreciation for the pastor's openness, concern, and accessibility. Emily stated, "you know that he cares about you as an individual" and "he will take time out of his day to talk if I need him." The Generation Z participant interviews revealed that the size of the church congregation was why the pastor's interaction with people impressed the participants so much. Angela stated that Pastor Holmes "stresses face-to-face communication." All participants referred to the pastor as an active listener who genuinely cares for them. I observed in worship services that Pastor Holmes remained in the sanctuary long after its dismissal to speak with congregates. He spoke with everyone who approached him, calling the members by name.

According to the data collected from interviews and observations, the pastor's interaction with participants surpassed all other innovation categories. While personal interaction may not seem innovative, in a large church setting, personal interaction becomes more challenging for church leaders. Therefore, church leaders must implement innovative practices to retain personal relationships with members. I observed how Pastor Holmes implemented routine practices encouraging personal interaction with church members. For example, after each worship service or event, he walked off the platform and purposely awaited anyone from the congregation who may want to approach. Once the congregant approached, Pastor Holmes patiently listened and responded to their questions. Finally, I observed that he regularly recognized those who served in various capacities in the church during the announcement segment of the worship services. The

pastor's interaction with Generation Z young adults promoted the next innovation focused on in this study.

New Member Processes

As I analyzed the data collected from the interview questions for the new member processes segment, the theme I sub-coded, "positioning of new members," emerged 16 times. Though I listed other sub-codes under the subject of the new member processes section for analysis, no other sub-code emerged as significant. The phrase "new member" describes young adults who participate in church roles independent of their parents. The Generation Z young adult participants of this study attended the church before entering adulthood. However, by their own volition, each participant became church members as an adult. In addition, as the participants matured into active members, their involvement in the church's ministries increased. The size of the church did not preclude participants from active involvement. Angela emphasized that everyone feels they can become involved at the church. Interviews and observations reveal that involvement begins with people at the church as early as possible. The new membership processes of the church work preemptively. By preemptively, I mean the church's new membership processes go beyond evangelizing outsiders to become active in the church.

In addition to evangelizing people outside the church, the focus extends to children and young people who attend the church regularly. For example, each participant interviewed became actively involved as a child or young person in the church. They sang in children's choirs, played instruments in school chapel services, and worked to set up and break-down props for youth events. From an early age, the church leadership encourages attendees to make church a part of their everyday life. Steve stated, "It's like

everything revolved around the church.” As a result, the participants grew to become full members and leaders of ministries in the church. Generation Z young adults comprise a large segment of the church’s demographic today. Interviews and observations show that engaging children and young people successfully serve the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, in developing membership that will last the last the test of time.

Summary of Embedded Unit of Analysis: Generation Z

The data collected from interviews and observations revealed that innovations in new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes definitely influenced Generation Z young adults’ participation at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The data shows that three innovative technologies recently installed at the church connect well with Generation Z young adults. First, the new IMAG screens on each side of the platform enhance the visibility of the speakers and worship team to the audience. In addition, the platform IMAGs enables speakers to use graphics to accentuate the main points of their sermons or lessons. This new technology in the church increases Generation Z young adult participation in the worship services. Second, the church began streaming its services online during the pandemic. The participants all agree that the church’s online streaming capability increases their engagement with the church. Because of their erratic work schedules, Generation Z young adults appreciate the opportunity that the online streaming worship services provide for them to stay connected with the church. Third, the use of social media engages Generation Z young adults. The church uses social media platforms to promote group meetings and major events. Since

the majority of Generation Z young adults use social media, it provides a universal platform for church leaders to engage young adults (Twenge, 2017).

The data shows that two innovative administrative structures successfully engaged Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock. First, participants indicated that staff efficiency influenced their participation. The “I AM” Easter drama and Mid-America Youth Conference provided the church’s young adults opportunities to volunteer. I observed that organizing the staff for the more significant events at the church demanded efficiency. Second, personal interaction was the most successful young adult engagement practice related to administrative structures in the church. Each participant mentioned how the pastor’s openness and willingness to spend time with them influenced their involvement in the church.

Interviews and observations related to new member processes showed that new member positioning starts early at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. Immediately after becoming eligible, the young adults worked as volunteers in the choir, with the sound system, and on the crew that set up and breaks down event props. I observed that young adults involved themselves in all aspects of the church. The ability of the church leadership to notice a young adult’s talents and implement them into the church’s overall ministry effectively engaged them.

Finally, my research findings corresponded seamlessly with the theoretical framework chosen for this study. In the Generation Z young adult participant interviews, I asked questions specific to the innovation categories of new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes adapted from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour’s (1997) framework. I coded the sub-themes from the three main categories

and focused my observations in those areas. For example, the Generation Z young adult participant interview questions related to new technology revealed that the recently installed IMAG screen significantly engaged them. Therefore, during my observations of worship services, I focused on the young adult participant's engagement with the IMAGs. The Generation Z young adult participant interview questions related to administrative structure revealed the significance of personal interaction with pastoral leadership. In response to the recurring theme of personal interaction, my observations concentrated on the pastor's interactions with church members. The sub-themes emerging from the Generation Z participant interviews informed my observation research. The three main innovation categories assisted me in developing an in-depth analysis of how the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engages Generation Z young adults.

Pastoral Leadership Participant Profile

In this section, I will analyze the second of two embedded units. The pastoral leadership interviews and observations in this section answer the central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members? Answering this question assists Pentecostal church leaders in using innovations to engage Generation Z young adults. Using the data collected from my second embedded unit, pastoral leaders, I discuss how innovations in new technologies, administrative structures, and new membership processes engaged Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

New Technology

The data collected showed that the pastoral leadership attributed media/video screens (MVS) and social media as the two most engaging technologies the church implemented. Pastor Holmes stated, “the IMAG’s been a game changer.” I observed that he used the IMAG to present graphics applicable to his sermon. He mentioned that the constant bombardment of media upon today’s young adults presented new challenges for pastors. He said, “with all the media available today, Generation Z young adults have developed a filter.” Holmes believes illustrative sermon graphics help a preacher get through the filter that sometimes inhibits engaging communication. He stated, “sermon title graphics are a huge part of capturing young adult’s attention.” I observed Pastor Holmes and other speakers use youthful, unique, and appealing graphics on the IMAG to illustrate their sermons. Holmes told me that does not rely upon a media team to create sermon graphics; he creates them himself. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communications and has a passion for graphic design. When asked why he felt it necessary to design his sermon graphics, he stated, “I can design a graphic that best depicts the message I want to convey; others may not understand the central theme of the message.” In addition, Holmes expressed how creating the graphics for his sermons or lessons helps to “hone in” on the message’s main point and helps him prepare for the sermon or lesson’s delivery. Beyond sermon graphics, Holmes acknowledged that the IMAGs facilitate engagement with a larger percentage of the audience in the sanctuary. The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, worships in a large space. Therefore, the IMAGs enhance the visibility of the speakers and singers on the platform. Pastor Holmes feels the IMAGs bolster the speaker’s confidence and makes him feel he effectively communicates with everyone in the audience, not only those seated near the

platform. According to Pastor Holmes, the media/video screens represent one of the greatest technology tools for engaging Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Along with the media/video screens used in the church's sanctuary, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas, uses social media to engage young adults. The church's leaders did not immediately embrace social media as a method of engaging young adults. However, in recent years the use of social media technology has become more prevalent. Corey Townley, who leads the young adult group ministry at the church, cited social media as currently the most prominent method for advertising group events. He said, "the majority of our young adults use Instagram to learn about upcoming events." However, Pastor Holmes warned against social media platforms becoming a specific group's "digital billboard." Instead, he said, "social media needs to be a place where people find encouraging content and engagement with others within the group." For example, he explained how the church started a ministry called "My Real Reel" which uses the "reel" feature on Instagram to showcase the testimonies of various church members.

In addition, Pastor Holmes admitted that the church needed to improve its social media engagement with the young adult group. In addition, he stated, "since social media is a popular method of communication with Generation Z young adults, we need to improve our engagement on these platforms with them." When interviewed, Pastor Holmes and Corey agreed that leaders must consider the influence of social media. Holmes said, "Generation Z young adults live squarely in the digital age. To reach them, you must use methods like social media." The interviews and observations of this study

show that church leaders find media/video screens and social media the most engaging technologies used at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, for influencing Generation Z young adults. Along with these innovative technologies, the interviews and observations of this study indicated the church used other innovations to engage Generation Z young adults.

Administrative Structures

The data collected from interviews and observations indicated that the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas' pastoral leadership relied most upon two administrative strategies to engage Generation Z young adults. First, Pastor Holmes and Corey addressed the church's meticulous planning of church services and events related to young adults. Planning of church services and events includes lighting and graphic correlation, setting up and breaking down of props, and editing the text of songs and announcements shown on media screens. According to Pastor Nathan Holmes, "the greatest challenge is making sure your content is right; I am not speaking of just grammatical errors, but making sure you are presenting your message in the right way." Since the church's worship service are streamed online and shared on social media, Pastor Holmes indicated he and his team precisely plan a schedule for each service and event at the church.

The service schedule includes time allotments for: announcements, song lists, and the sermon or lesson. I observed Generation Z young adults engaged in a church service that flowed seamlessly without dead spots or long spaces of silence between transitions. The church service schedule includes the song list and the order for singing them. Pastor Holmes emphasized the need for purposely including songs that cover different genres.

He said, “I told the music team ‘do not use just one genre of music,’ but songs relevant to all different types of people.” The music of the church does not cater simply to older generations with a traditional mindset toward church music. I observed both traditional and contemporary music at church worship services. Because the graphics and lighting corresponded to the message of the songs, even traditional styled music engaged the young adults in worship. For example, the images behind the lyrics of the songs corresponded with the words on the screens and the lighting color coordinated with the images also. These observations underscore the church leadership’s meticulous planning of church services and events. The planning of church services and events represents one of the two most prominent administrative structures the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, uses to engage Generation Z young adults.

Second, interviews and observations revealed that the church’s pastoral leadership emphasizes personal interaction with Generation Z young adults. For example, Corey plans an event focusing on young adults twice a month that reflects the interests of the group. In addition to the bi-monthly events, Corey remains attentive to individual needs within the young adult group. For example, he stated, “if I notice one of the group is absent from church or an event, I will text or call them.” According to Corey, personal interaction often means having lunch or coffee with a group member. He indicated that these personal interactions positively influence the members and lead to better participation.

While the church relies on technology to meet the needs of Generation Z young adults, the church’s leadership is aware of its limitations. Pastor Holmes stated, “Digital interaction will never replace personal interaction.” He stressed the importance of “in-

person interaction” with young adults. I observed that when Pastor Holmes interacted in person with young adults at church services and events, they remained attentive to the conversation and appeared appreciative of the personal time he spent with them. In addition, I observed the church’s pastoral leadership personal interactions influenced Generation Z young adults to set aside their phones while they enjoyed the dialogue with their leaders. Clearly, the church’s pastoral leadership team emphasizes personal interaction over all other innovative administrative structures.

New Membership Processes

While interviewed, Pastor Holmes underscored the importance of positioning new members. He stated, “The church starts to involve members at a young age.” Because parents influence children and young people’s choice of church, the First Pentecostal Church seeks to engage them so that as they grow older, they will become active church members. In addition, he said that Generation Z young adults in the church have a role in developing new members. For instance, the music directors intentionally incorporate young adults in teaching children and the church youth how to play musical instruments. As children and young people learn how to play their musical instruments, the church school invites them to play at chapel services and other school events. Once the musician develops, the young person becomes eligible to play in the church’s worship services. Pastor Holmes stressed the importance of involving people as soon as possible. According to Pastor Holmes, in addition to the music, young adults make up most of the sound and media teams for regularly scheduled church services at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. I observed that Generation Z young adults make up most of the worship teams during church services. Data collected from interviews and

observations focused on new membership processes revealed the church's pastoral leadership emphasizes new membership positioning.

Summary of the Pastoral Profile

Data collected from interviews and observations with the pastoral leadership participants revealed that the three innovation categories adapted from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) theoretical framework involving new technologies, administrative structures, and new membership processes influenced engagement with Generation Z young adults. According to Pastor Holmes, the IMAG screens and the increased use of social media enhanced engagement with the church's young adults. He feels the IMAG screen enables young adults to engage more in worship services. In addition, he stated that the IMAGs enhance the use of sermon graphics. These findings coincided with the new technology category adapted from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) framework. During the first stages of data analysis, I coded sub-themes that emerged from interview questions on the types of technology the church used. For example, many codes pertaining to the media/video screens (MVS) emerged in data collected from pastoral leadership participant interviews.

Pastor Holmes and Corey Townley agreed that social media constitutes the most proficient communication medium with the church's young adults. The literature review for this study revealed that social media is an effective medium for communicating with Generation Z young adults. In pastoral leadership participants, interview questions focused on the technology category adapted from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) theoretical framework, social media emerged 15 times. The church uses social media to advertise events and text group members. Pastor Holmes warned against allowing social

media to become a “digital billboard” that only announces events. He stressed that social media platforms allow another opportunity for church leaders to interact with group members. Pastor Holmes admits that “pictures, images, and videos more effectively connect with young adults” than simple text. Therefore, engaging young adults on social media requires creativity and forethought. Beyond technology, the church’s pastoral leadership believes that innovations in administrative structures constitute a successful engagement with Generation Z young adults.

The church pastoral leadership’s most engaging uses of administrative structures involved personal interaction and planning of church services. Both Pastor Holmes and Corey emphasized the necessity of personal interaction with Generation Z young adults. The pastoral leadership participant interview questions focused on administrative structures adapted from Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) theoretical framework revealed references to personal interaction surfaced 11 times. While young adults rely heavily on digital communication, the church’s pastoral leadership discovered that nothing replaces the influence of personal interaction. For example, young adults enjoy one-on-one time with their leaders at lunch or coffee. In addition to personal interaction, Pastor Holmes feels the proper planning of church services helps engage Generation Z young adults successfully. According to Pastor Holmes, planning a church service includes coordinating sermon graphics and lighting. In addition, Pastor Holmes feels that the media should assist in conveying the sermon and never compete with the sermon’s central message. Along with administrative structures, the church’s pastoral leadership uses one prevailing method: the new member process.

According to Pastor Holmes, new member positioning helps the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully engage Generation Z young adults. As soon as possible, the church's pastoral leadership involves young adults in various church ministries. In coding the data collected from the pastoral leadership participant interview questions focused on administrative structures, new member positioning emerged 9 times. Generation Z young adults lead significant ministries of the church. Both Pastor Holmes and Corey agree that applying innovations in technology, administrative structures, and new member processing enables the church to engage Generation Z young adults successfully.

Within-Case Analysis

This section answers the central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members? Using the data collected, I discuss how innovations in new technologies, administrative structures, and new membership processes engaged Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

The central research question corresponded directly with Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour (1997) theoretical framework. The data collected from the interviews and observations focused on three categories of innovations from the theoretical framework: new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes. Using these three categories, I conducted interviews and observations from two embedded units (pastors and church members) that unveiled sub-theme(s) from each type. The central research question corresponded directly with this study's theoretical framework. The data

collected from the interviews and observations from both groups focused on three categories of innovations from the theoretical framework: new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes. Using these three categories, I conducted interviews and observations that unveiled sub-theme(s) from each type. Using these three categories, I conducted interviews and observations that unveiled sub-theme(s) from each type. The central research question corresponded directly with this study's theoretical framework.

Analysis of Sub-Themes Related to New Technologies

I analyzed interviews and observations related to new technologies which revealed three predominate sub-themes: media/video screens, online streaming, and social media. When interviewed, the Generation Z young adult participants indicated that these three sub-themes related to new technologies used by the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engaged them most. For example, high-quality, giant video screens magnified the speakers and shared relevant images that enhanced the worship experience. By streaming worship services online, participants stay connected to the church when absences prevent them from attending in person. In addition, the church's social media platforms keep members apprised of upcoming events. Table 3.1 visually represents the new technologies the church implemented and the number of times each young adult participant mentioned the sub-themes or subject matter closely associated with the sub-themes when interviewed (see Table 3.1).

When analyzing the sub-themes associated with technology, I found the IMAGs recently installed in the church sanctuary engaged Generation Z young adults the most. Although, historically, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas,

Table 3.1

Innovations in New Technology Sub-Themes Totals (Gen Z Participants)

Generation Z Young Adults Participants	Media/Video Screens	Online Streaming	Social Media	Totals
Kimberly	4	3	1	8
Emily	3	4	2	9
Angela	6	2	0	9
Steve	8	6	1	15

succeeded in engaging young adults; the installation of the IMAGs offers clues as to why the church continues to succeed. For example, installing state-of-the-art IMAGs reveals how the pastoral leadership understands the need to stay on the cutting edge to influence young adults. The responses from the Generation Z participants indicated an even distribution of engagement with each one. However, the IMAGs engaged participants in different ways. For example, Angela indicated that the graphics affected her less than the ability to read the lyrics of the songs displayed on the IMAGs. Regarding the IMAGs, she stated, “the screens help me in worship leading ...to be able to see the words,” but she acknowledged, “it can be a crutch as well.” Overall, the recent IMAG upgrades pleased Angela. Likewise, Emily said displaying the scriptures on the IMAGs helped her connect the Bible with the speaker’s subject. These comments showed how the IMAGs affected participants in distinctive ways. The other participants expressed how the sermon graphics displayed on the platform IMAG engaged them. For example, Kimberly

demonstrated how the sermon graphics often have a lasting effect on her. She named specific sermons and spoke of a time she framed a picture of the sermon graphic so she would never forget the speaker's message. Underscoring Kimberly's sentiments, Steve spoke about how the sermon graphics "burn an image into the minds" of the audience. The Generation Z participant responses revealed that other aspects of technology implemented at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engaged them as well.

In March 2020, the church faced a crisis never encountered before. The Covid-19 global pandemic resulted in a government-mandated shutdown of in-person worship services. The church did not stream its worship services online before the shutdown. Though the technology was not new to many mainstream churches, online streaming offered a new opportunity for the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

The technology new to the church caught on quickly. Today, the church's YouTube channel boasts over 9,000 subscribers (First Pentecostal Church North Little Rock, February 18, 2023). In addition, the participants' responses indicated they felt that the online streaming of worship services helped them stay connected. For example, Kimberly stated she feels the online streaming of worship services helped her to not wholly miss a service, "if one of my children becomes sick and we do not make it to a service, I do not feel like I missed out." Participants agreed that online streaming allows people to glimpse what goes on within the church before they visit. I noted the church's YouTube channel stats revealed that online engagement with worship services spikes

when the church hosts major events. Yet, the church’s online presence extends beyond the streaming of worship services.

Presently, the church is active on social media. Initially, the church’s pastoral leadership remained reticent to activate Facebook social media accounts. In later years, with the rise of Instagram, the church’s pastoral leadership opened Instagram accounts and eventually Facebook as well. The participants of this study did not comment specifically about social media compared to the other technologies new to the church. However, the interviewees made inferences about social media; therefore, I deduced that the interviewees assumed I realized their frequent use of it. In analyzing the data collected, it became clear that the church’s leadership vigorously uses social media innovations to engage Generation Z young adults. Table 3.2 shows that the church’s pastoral leadership overtly emphasizes social media more than the Generation Z young adult participants. I observed that this data discrepancy proves a difference in the perceptions of the church’s pastoral leadership and the young adults. At the same time, social media may seem like a new technology to the church’s pastoral leadership, but Generation Z young adult participants perceive it as a way of life (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Findings of Sub-Themes Totals (Pastoral Leadership)

Pastoral Leadership Participants	Media/Video Streaming	Online Streaming	Social Media	Totals
Pastor Nathan Holmes	12	3	7	22
Corey Townley	4	2	8	14

I compared the Generation Z young adult responses to the church's pastoral leadership responses when analyzing the interview data. I concluded that the church leadership is more preoccupied with technology in church work than the Generation Z young adults in the church.

Analysis of Sub-Themes Related to Administrative Structures

The analyzed data collected from Generation Z participant interviews revealed two sub-themes related to administrative structures: staff efficiency and personal interaction. The planning of worship services and events best illustrates staff efficiency at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. For example, the carefully planned worship services provided a seamless flow to the worship experience. In addition, the worship services at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, limit the dead time during song transitions and eliminate distractions. Young adults find well-planned worship services appealing. Generation Z young adults prefer carefully coordinated, impactful, yet time-conscious worship services. In addition, the young adult participants recognized how brief conversations with pastoral leaders after worship service impacted them. The personal interaction made the participants feel included in the church. Despite Generation Z's preference for digital relationships, strategic interaction with pastoral leadership remains successful in engaging them. Table 3.3 visually represents the number of times the sub-themes of staff efficiency and personal interaction surfaced during participant interviews.

Table 3.3

Administrative Structure Sub-theme Findings For Generation Z Young Adults

Generation Z Young Adults Participants	Staff Efficiency	Personal Interaction	Totals
Kimberly	2	6	8
Emily	1	3	4
Angela	3	2	5
Steve	6	5	11

When I analyzed the data associated with administrative structures at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, I found that personal interaction engaged Generation Z participants the most. In addition, I discovered that the church’s pastoral leadership strongly emphasized personal connections with young adults attending. For example, Angela stated, “they stress face-to-face communication and let you know that they want you to become an active member.” To underscore the sentiments of the interviewee, I observed that the church’s pastoral leadership appeared accessible to participants at worship services and events. I did not observe impatience or austerity from the church’s pastoral leadership at any point. Addressing the church’s pastoral leadership’s openness, Kimberly stated, “you do not have to feel that they are unapproachable.” In addition, she said, “I am not worried about calling them up and saying, ‘I have an emergency; can I talk to you?’” The pastoral leadership’s availability during a crisis demonstrated empathy from the pastoral leadership. Analysis of the

interview responses showed the importance of personal interaction with the church’s pastoral leadership to the Generation Z young adults of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

The participant interviews showed responses to staff efficiency at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, which emerged as a sub-theme of administrative structures. Staff efficiency involved high standards of conduct for church leaders, an emphasis on integrity, proper organizational planning, and productivity without compromising quality. For example, Steve stated, “the church leadership stresses transparency, and everyone trusts that things are done correctly.” In addition, he said, “the church leadership gives the people the proper tools to do the job they ask them to do.” Finally, I observed that church leadership trains and equips volunteers extensively. The church made training sessions available to volunteers with each event I attended. In analyzing the interview response data, I found the church’s pastoral leadership emphasis on the need for personal interaction similar to the study’s Generation Z young adult participants. However, staff efficiency did not emerge as a significant sub-theme with the pastoral leadership participants. On the other hand, the planning of church services did emerge as a significant sub-theme for both. Table 3.4 illustrates the church pastoral leadership findings for sub-themes relating to administrative structures (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4

The Administrative Structures Sub-Theme Findings for Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral Leadership Participants	Personal Interaction	Planning of Church Services/Events	Totals
Nathan Holmes	12	5	17
Corey Townley	8	6	14

Many administrative structures applicable to pastoral leadership overlap, and I strove to delineate between those similar administrative structures. For instance, the planning of church services and events and staff efficiency appear superficially similar. However, the church's pastoral leadership emphasized the planning of church services and events that set the process apart. On the other hand, the church pastoral leadership and Generation Z participants agree on the significance of personal interaction with church leadership. Pastor Holmes stated, "I use all available methods of communication. However, nothing replaces in-person interaction with people." He admitted people often misunderstand text and emails. Frequently, text and email do not correctly convey the mood and tone of the person communicating. I observed that the church's pastoral leadership team prioritizes personal interaction with Generation Z young adults at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Analysis of Sub-Themes Related to Processes for Involving New Members

The analyzed data collected from Generation Z participant interviews reveal how the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, integrate children and young people as they grow into adulthood to become active church members. Once young people enter adulthood, they can choose their church affiliation and how much they will participate, independent from their parents. Both Generation Z participants and the church pastoral leadership agree that nothing describes the culture of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, like positioning new members. The church's pastoral leadership emphasizes positioning new members at the earliest stages of an individual's attendance at the church. For example, Steve stated, "youth participation is emphasized at the church and parents are asked to get their children involved with choirs

and youth events.” In addition, he explained that “everything revolving around the church” fulfilled the mission of the church being the center of people’s lives. I observed Generation Z young adults involved in every visible ministry of the church. Pastor Homes confirmed that young adults represent most of the music department, media team, sound technicians, and drama team.

Preparing people to become members begins in childhood and contributes to the church’s ability to engage them as they mature into adulthood. For instance, Angela stated, “I believe when you belong to a youth group with events each Friday night, and you are constantly around people the same age with the same values, it assists you in assimilating into the church.” The majority of the Generation Z participants recall the church in their earliest memories. Steve reminisced about growing up around the church working along side his parents. He said, “I worked at the church every single day and feel like it’s almost been that way my whole life.” As he continued to explain his life of involvement in the church, I observed that he derived joy from it. In Steve’s responses, I did not sense any feelings of regret, or even an attitude of obligation. Rather, he exuded an attitude of thankfulness for the opportunity to work at something he dearly loved. Through analyzing data collected from interviews and observations, I found that positioning new members contributes largely to the success of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engaging Generation Z young adults.

Other Emerging Themes

The Generation Z young adult participant interviews revealed three themes unrelated to the central research question and theoretical framework chosen for this study. First, music emerged as an important theme to the young adult participants. Angela

stated that she leads worship as “a frontline singer for the praise team” in weekly scheduled worship services at the church. At multiple point in the interview, Angela spoke of her love for music and how it connects her to the church. Angela majored in music and drama in college and appreciates the church’s commitment to excellence in the music department. Emily sings in the choir. She stated, “Growing up singing in the kid’s choir prepared me to join the adult choir.” She emphasized how her participation in the music department kept her connected to the church and facilitated her desire to minister to others. Music eradicates social barriers and brings young adults from different backgrounds into a dynamic worship experience at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Second, the Generation Z young adult participants during interviews emphasized the pastoral leadership’s consistency and humility. Participants emphasized the down-to-earth leadership style of Pastor Holmes. Steve attributed the pastoral leadership’s success with Generation Z young adults to the leaders’ consistency and humility. He said, “They are super consistent and do not expect others to do something they are unwilling to do.” Pastor Holmes does not portray a superior attitude or feel he is above the church members. Kimberly said, “pastor is always approachable, he always responds to text, and he always takes time for me when I need him.” According to Generation Z young adult participants, Pastor Holmes takes time to listen to them. Angela stated, “pastor knows who we are and recalls things important to us in conversation.” Pastor Holmes’ humble attention to the members of his congregation contributes to the church’s success with Generation Z young adults.

Third, the pastoral leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, focuses on developing young people and young adults to become leaders in the church. The church's leadership envisions new attendees and children becoming active members leading in one of the church's ministries. The process begins at the earliest stages possible. As a child grows up in the church, the church leadership seeks to develop children's natural talents and interests. For instance, if a child shows interest in a musical instrument, the child is encouraged to learn how to play the instrument. The church's new attendees are encouraged to get involved immediately. Initially, the new attendee may serve on cooking or clean-up crews. However, as the new attendees' relationship with the church evolves and church leaders discover their talents, the new attendee is encouraged to use their talents in the church.

Discussion

The findings from Generation Z young adult participant interviews, pastoral leadership interviews, and observations indicated that the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successfully engaged Generation Z young adults by implementing innovative technology, administrative structures, and new member processes. Triangulating the data collection from the observations, Generation Z young adult participant interviews, and pastoral leadership participant interviews created a way to analyze the data effectively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Positive outcomes, such as the impact of visual aids through technology, the importance of personal interaction from pastoral leadership, and the efficient planning of worship services, were just a few key takeaways from Generation Z participants. In addition, each Generation Z participant

found that technological innovations, administrative structures, and new member processes contributed to their continued participation in the church.

The peculiarities of Generation Z young adults is an idea that existing literature. Generation Z young adults do not experience the same innocence as previous generations. Modern technology more readily exposes them to the world's violence, inequalities, and injustices (Rue, 2018; Salleh et al., 2017). The emergence of technology influences Generation Z young adults' worldview. In addition, the exponential growth of social media influences Generation Z young adults' behaviors, learning experiences, and societal engagement (The Pew Research Center, 2021; Rue, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). In short, due to new technologies, Generation Z young adults experience the world differently than generations before.

The collection and assessment of data substantiate the literature supporting that new technologies influence Generation Z young adults in a Pentecostal church setting. Generation Z young adult participants reported how the innovations of high-tech, high-resolution video screens influenced their worship experience. Pastoral leadership participants reported how the use of high-resolution video screens expanded the influence of their communication in teaching and preaching settings (White, 2017). Previous generations view many new technologies as luxury items and unnecessary (Bock & Del Rosario, 2020; Twenge, 2017; White, 2017). However, the pastoral leadership participants of this qualitative single-case study found innovative technologies, such as high-resolution video screens, necessary to engage Generation Z in a church setting successfully. The findings of this study underscore the differences in how churches successfully engaged previous generations versus what successfully engaged Generation

Z (Bergler, 2020; White, 2017). One of the most astounding findings of this study concerns technology. The literature characterizes Generation Z young adults as socially dependent upon technology. According to Twenge (2017), Generation Z young adults prefer digital relationships to in-person ones. However, all the Generation Z participants of this study emphasized the importance of personal interaction with the church's pastoral leadership.

This study could not substantiate Generation Z's growing apathy and negative attitude toward Christianity as found in the existing literature. Although scholarship underscores the increasing shift toward an apathetic attitude regarding Christianity (Barna Group, 2018; Bock & Del Rosario, 2020; White, 2017), the participants of this study reported an uncommon enthusiasm and loyal attitude regarding the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. In addition, scholarly literature shows a dramatic decline in church participation among Generation Z (Burge, 2019; Twenge, 2017; White, 2018;). However, Generation Z participants of this study reported active involvement in church ministries.

The literature showed Generation Z's need for apologetic explanations (Bergler, 2020; Bock & Del Rosario, 2020; Twenge, 2017; White, 2017). Because apologetics is not germane to the theoretical framework, the findings of this single-case study cannot accurately substantiate Generation Z's need for apologetical teaching. However, this single-case study's findings indicated the importance of maintaining relevance in teaching and preaching. Generation Z young adult and pastoral leadership participants emphasized the significance of technology in church settings. The participants indicated that high-resolution video screens helped clarify the communicator's message in a church

setting. The pastoral leadership participants reported using graphics to clarify specific points of a sermon or lesson. These findings coincide with Generation Z's need for an explanation and deeper understanding of ancient biblical text presented in a church setting.

The collection and assessment of data substantiate the literature supporting the need for change to create the right environment for growth. For example, scholarship reveals that Generation Z's activity on the internet exceeds the previous generations by a wide margin (McMahan, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2018; Twenge, 2017). The participants of this study indicated the importance of the internet to the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. The participants shared how the church's online streaming and social media platforms benefited them. These findings reveal the need for churches to adopt social media and online streaming services to maximize Generation Z young adult engagement. In addition, the pastoral leadership and Generation Z young adult participants reported the enhancing effects of the IMAGs on the worship services. These findings underscore the importance of embracing new technologies instead of stubbornly holding on to old ones. These technologies help create an environment conducive to growth with Generation Z young adults.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings from this study help Pentecostal leaders cultivate churches that successfully engage Generation Z young adults. Pentecostal churches can improve engagement with this cohort in three ways: by implementing specific new technologies in worship services, by applying proven administrative structures, and by implementing proper new member processes. In addition, this study provides church leaders with

insights into the vision of a large church within the Pentecostal movement. Though many Pentecostal church leaders attend events at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, this study's findings give a behind the scenes look into how the church operates.

Based on the research of this study, Pentecostal church leaders must make considerable adjustments to their methodology to successfully engage Generation Z young adults. To clarify, the study does not imply that compromising Biblical principles is necessary to engage Generation Z. However, successful Generation Z engagement requires a modern application of a timeless message. Pentecostal leaders reticent to embrace new methodologies will find it increasingly challenging to engage Generation Z young adults. These new methods includes how the church uses technology. Admittedly, technology presents challenges in at least two areas: first, for some churches it presents an economic challenge. A church incurs a sizeable expense updating sanctuary technology. Second, new technology can create consternation with traditionalists of the church. This study's findings suggest that successful engagement with Generation Z young adults requires church leaders to confront the traditionalist mindset. I recommend Pentecostal church leaders implement technology cost-effective for the size of the church they currently pastor. Along with the expense and misunderstandings associated with new technologies, it requires a willingness to learn. The willingness to learn is essential to achieve success with new technology. However, the findings of this study suggest that Generation Z young adults will assist with the challenge of learning it.

Beyond new technology, the successful engagement of Generation Z young adults requires adjustments to the administrative structures of the church. This study indicated

that administrative strategies require that the leader possess more than organizational acumen but that people skills are an essential element of administration. The findings of this study revealed that personal interaction produced the most significant engagement with Generation Z. This specific finding surprised me. With all the research supporting the digitization of Generation Z, I suspected personal relationships mattered little to them. However, according to Generation Z young adult participants of the study, and the church's pastoral leadership, personal interaction contributed most to the successful engagement of young adults. The size of the church makes personal interaction as it relates to the church's pastoral leadership at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, a fascinating aspect of the finding. Typically, church leaders excuse the lack of personal interaction due to the largeness of the congregation. However, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, enjoys a weekly attendance of thousands of members but remains very personal as a church. I recommend further research on the techniques of personal interaction in a large church setting.

In addition to new technology and administrative structures, I found positioning new members an essential component for successfully engaging Generation Z young adults in a Pentecostal church. This study's findings emphasize the need for positioning new members at the earliest stages possible. The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, starts with children and young people cultivating interest and discovering future talent for the ministries of the church. The new membership processes of the church serve an example to other Pentecostal churches seeking to successfully engage young adult membership.

My recommendations for Pentecostal church leaders wanting to successfully engage Generation Z young adults is to review three areas of their church: first, upgrade the technology in the church's worship services and evangelistic endeavors. By upgrading technology in the church sanctuary, church leaders improve young adult engagement possibilities and enhance their worship experience. Second, church leaders must apply innovative administrative structures. The successful worship services start with proper planning, a conducive atmosphere, and personal interaction. Intentionality in these areas will increase engagement with young adults. Third, the church's pastoral leadership must focus on involving new members in ministry at the earliest stages possible. The results of this study show that waiting to involve members in ministry led to missed opportunities.

I recommend a multi-case study of this phenomenon. While the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, successful engagement and retention of Generation Z young adults provides an example for other Pentecostal churches to follow, the study is limited in its cultural and ethnic scope. Therefore, research is needed in different regions of the United States to provide a clear picture of the challenges facing Pentecostal leaders in the future. A multiple case study will provide insights from different leaders serving in unique regions.

There remains a need for broader research on what specific preaching and teaching styles engage Generation Z young adults. Scholarship indicated that Generation Z desired teaching that offered apologetic explanations. Exploring Generation Z's need for apologetic preaching and teaching did not fit within the lens of this study's theoretical

framework. However, Generation Z's need for apologetic preaching and teaching is a pertinent research opportunity for future scholarship.

I recommend a study focused on successfully reaching Generation Z young adults without a Pentecostal background. Since the participants of this single case study attended the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, for most of their childhood, I recommend a study exploring how to engage unchurched Generation Z young adults. The study could offer insights on effectively evangelizing, disciplining, and developing into active church members, non-Pentecostal Generation Z young adults.

Conclusion

The Pentecostal church must address the challenges surrounding declining Generation Z young adult church participation. Continuing with the status quo will cause Generation Z young adults to question the importance and validity of the church in their lives. As digital natives, Generation Z requires technological engagement. Church leaders must approach technology in the church open-mindedly if they expect to grow with and retain Generation Z young adults. Accepting that technology does not constitute compromise remains the biggest obstacle for traditional-minded church leaders to overcome. The message should stay the same but must be constructed to appeal to a younger audience. Technology aids in communicating timeless truths to younger generations.

Along with technology, church leaders must apply administrative structures applicable to Generation Z young adults. They find well-planned church services and organized events appealing. Church leaders cannot afford sloppy or ill-planned church services to attract Generation Z attendance. Generation Z appreciates staff efficiency.

They embrace church leaders with accountability and integrity. Most of all, Generation Z desires personal interaction. Though it appears contradictory to a generation raised on digital electronics, research proves that Generation Z prefers in-person relationships in a church setting.

Finally, church leaders must reconsider processes surrounding new membership involvement. Churches that successfully engage Generation Z young adults involve them at the earliest eligibility point. A church cannot expect to grow operating as a country club. The research findings of this study suggest that growth in a Pentecostal church requires inclusiveness instead of in-group mindsets. Church leaders must actively recruit children and young people to work in church ministries. By implementing the principles surrounding innovative technologies, administrative structures, and processes for involving new members, Pentecostal churches can successfully engage Generation Z young adults.

CHAPTER FOUR

Executive Summary and Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

In America, declining church participation among young adults culminates into a significant challenge within the protestant Christian community. The greatest decline in church participation occurs among Generation Z young adults (Twenge, 2017; Jones, 2021). As significant portion of protestant Christianity, declining church participation does not preclude Pentecostalism (Wilson, 2016). Declining participation places churches in danger of closure. Church closures present an alarming problem considering the role the church plays in the socialization process of America's youth (DiBianca Fasoli, 2018; DiBianca Fasoli & Lozano, 2020; Widjaja, 2017). Therefore, declining church participation contributes to a growing national problem for America's youth.

The growth of Pentecostalism increased exponentially over the past 100 years (Tennison, 2006; Wilson, 2016). Presently, Pentecostalism represents a sizable portion of the protestant Christian church. In the United States, Pentecostals number approximately 20 million (Gooren, 2004; Walsh, 2018; Wilson, 2016). Therefore, recent studies on declining church participation included Pentecostals (*The State of the Church*, April 17, 2018). For Pentecostal leaders to ignore the increasing problem of declining Generation Z church participation could jeopardize the future of Pentecostalism in America. By examining how other Pentecostal churches successfully engage Generation Z young adults, Pentecostal church leaders can protect themselves against the threat of declining church participation among this group.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

I chose to conduct a qualitative single case study to answer the central research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years old through its use of new technologies, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members? I designed this study to determine what interventions successfully engage Generation Z young adults in a Pentecostal church. In addition, the study examines three areas of innovation using Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework: new technologies, administrative structures, and new member processes. An analytical exploration of these components gives Pentecostal leaders a better understanding of how to engage Generation Z young adults. I chose a qualitative single case study because it best answered the central research question and investigated a forecasted crisis in Pentecostal churches.

Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour's (1997) theoretical framework provided an a priori model for interviews and observations. I interviewed four Generation Z young adults aged 18–25 congregants and two members of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, pastoral leadership team. In addition, I observed participants in church worship services and events specifically designed to engage Generation Z young adults.

After I completed the data collection, I transcribed the interviews and organized the observation field notes. I analyzed the data using the following five steps: first, I employed Creswell & Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral. This step allowed me to filter the data to ensure the study remained congruent with the a priori theoretical framework chosen to answer the central research question. Second, I developed codes for the three categories derived from the theoretical framework. Third, I closely examined data from

the three categories and developed codes for the emerging themes under the three categories. Fourth, I triangulated the three categories and the themes relating to them. Finally, I prepared to present the themes according to how frequently each surfaced in the participant interviews. Finally, I used the observations to triangulate with the Generation Z young adult and pastoral leadership participant interviews. The observations augmented participant interviews and balanced the findings.

Summary of Key Findings

The analysis of the data revealed three themes congruent with the theoretical framework used in this qualitative single-case study: new technology, administrative structures, and processes to involve new members. A within-case analysis of the three main themes revealed several sub-themes. An analysis of new technologies revealed three sub-themes: media/video screens, online streaming, and social media. The Generation Z young adult participants commented on how the high-resolution video screens enhanced their personal worship experience. The IMAG screens' positive influence on Generation Z young adult participants aligns with the scholarship found in the literature review (Bergler, 2020; Rothman, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). In addition to the IMAG screens, Generation Z young adult participants reported the positive impact of online streaming. Participants felt that the online streaming allowed them to stay connected when absent from worship services and allowed people who did not attend the church to experience a sample of the church's worship. However, while Generation Z participants appreciate the conveniences of online streaming at the church, technology did not replace the importance of personal interaction. Finally, social media plays a significant role in the lives of Generation Z participants. Social media platforms of the church announce

upcoming events and provide a daily connection to Generation Z young adults. The influence of social media on Generation Z coincides with the scholarship of Bock & Del Rosario (2020).

The administrative structures of the church influenced engagement with Generation Z young adult participants. Three sub-themes emerged from the data collected concerning administrative structures: staff efficiency, personal interaction, and church worship services and events planning. Generation Z's emphasis on staff efficiency corresponds with the scholarship of the literature review (McIntosh, 2015). An examination of the administrative structures of the church revealed that personal interaction engaged Generation Z participants. While technology remains vital to Generation Z, I noted that every participant mentioned the essentiality of personal interaction. This phenomenon corresponds with recent studies (Pew Research Center, 2018; McMahan, 2020; White, 2022). Finally, Generation Z participants prefer administrative structures that properly organize worship services and events (Smith; 2019; Sparks & Honey, 2014; Starr, 2014).

New membership processes engaged Generation Z young participants in this qualitative single-case study. One sub-theme emerged from the data collection process: positioning new members. The church leadership emphasizes positioning Generation Z to become active church members. Once church leaders discover an individual's talent, they endeavor to develop that person's talent and assimilate them into active ministry in the church. The positioning of new members processes engaged Generation Z participants of this study.

Implications and Recommendations

This study's findings help Pentecostal leaders develop churches that successfully engage Generation Z young adults. Based on the research of this study, Pentecostal leaders must make considerable changes to their current methodologies to engage Generation Z young adults. Without compromising biblically based values, church leaders must implement modern methods to successfully convey the timeless message of the Word of God. These methods include how the church uses technology. As digital natives, Generation Z feels more comfortable with technology in religious spaces than previous generations (Twenge, 2017; White, 2018). Generation Z desires a church that understands the need for cutting-edge technology but does not forget the indispensable value of personal interaction.

The First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, represents a large church in the Pentecostal movement. However, the church leadership understands the importance of personal interaction. The larger a church becomes, the more it imposes a challenge to interact with members personally. Nevertheless, the pastoral leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, manages to connect with members in brief but meaningful ways. The Generation Z participants of this study spoke of the pastoral care they received and how it made them feel appreciated. The church leaders are proficient in discovering and developing the talent of new members. Therefore, church leaders constantly look for opportunities to implement new attendees' talents into the church's ministries. This practice creates an inclusive culture for new members. Once new members are assigned responsibility, they feel a sense of belonging.

This study showcases several innovations that Pentecostal church leaders can use to engage Generation Z young adults. First, I recommend that Pentecostal church leaders strive to implement technology to enhance the worship experience of Generation Z young adults. Long-time church members may oppose new technologies, but the change is necessary to engage Generation Z. Second, I recommend that church leaders develop the talents of new attendees to assist them in becoming active members. The study showed that the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, seeks to discover a person's talents at the earliest stages of their attendance at the church. As a result, the church excels in new member positioning. Third, I recommend that regardless of how large the church grows, church leaders prioritize personal interaction with the membership. Personal interaction was the most common theme of this study.

Findings Distribution Proposal

The findings of this qualitative single-case study provide an opportunity for further study into how Pentecostal church leaders can successfully engage Generation Z young adults. In addition, the results of my findings open a discussion about possible solutions to the growing challenge of declining church participation. Finally, this study emphasizes the importance of a proactive approach and underscores the failures of status quo practices. The following section identifies the target audience of this study.

Pentecostal Church Leaders

Pentecostal church leaders are the target audience of this qualitative single-case study. As church participation declines among Generation Z nationally, I provided an example of a church that continues to grow with Generation Z young adults. This study reveals how implementing specific innovations engages Generation Z young adults.

Pentecostal church leaders desiring to grow with Generation Z young adults will discover the results of this study are compelling. While church leaders and laypeople of other church denominations may find the study interesting, helping Pentecostal church leaders remains the primary goal of my research. I intend to present the findings of this study to Pentecostal leaders in three ways. First, I plan to write articles for Pentecostal publications. In the past, I have published articles in a Pentecostal magazine. For example, I have published articles in *Together* magazine, the primary publication of the Worldwide Pentecostal Fellowship (<https://www.gowpf.org>). Therefore, I intend to present in *Together* magazine focused on specific areas of my study to help Pentecostal leaders successfully engage Generation Z young adults. Second, when I speak at conferences that Pentecostal leaders attend, I plan to incorporate some of the findings of this study into the presentation. Third, I plan to launch a podcast that speaks explicitly to Pentecostal leaders' challenges. The podcast will allow me to present the notable findings of this study.

Conclusion

In America, declining church participation among Generation Z remains a significant challenge for Pentecostal church leaders. As the findings of this study indicate, through the example of a Pentecostal church in Central Arkansas, church leaders can successfully engage Generation Z young adults. According to this study, Pentecostal leaders must proactively implement specific innovations to engage Generation Z young adults. These innovations include new technology, administrative structures, and new membership processes. This study presents a positive path forward for Pentecostal church

leaders, yet it issues a stern warning also. In short, strict adherence to the status quo will exacerbate the problem of declining church participation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A Copy of Email Seeking Consent for the Research Study Conducted at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas

Dear Pastor Holmes,

Choice Christian greetings! I pray this email finds you and your family blessed. I am writing seeking your permission to conduct research at the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. I know that you and I have discussed the possibilities of research study in the past. However, I wanted to send a formal proposal outlining the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, and the ethical guidelines I will follow while conducting research at the church.

The purpose of the research study is to answer the following research question: how does a Pentecostal church successfully engage Generation Z young adults aged 18-25-years-old by modeling innovative leadership? As we have discussed, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engages more young adults in this cohort than a typical Pentecostal church. Therefore, the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock would be a great place to conduct such a study.

The nature of the study is simple. I will be conducting a single-case qualitative research design study. The research study will consist of interviews with you and the young adult ministry department leader, five selected Generation Z young adults aged 18-25-years-old participants, and observations of worship services or gathering where leaders interact with the young adult participants.

I want to point out that if permitted to conduct the study, we will use pseudonyms for each young adult participants. Additionally, the participants can stop their involvement at any point during the study if they do not feel comfortable continuing. After the study, I will provide you with a report of the findings. At that point, you can discuss anything you may feel uncomfortable with me reporting to me. Thank you for considering this proposal. I am excited about the possibilities of this study. If you consent to the above proposal, please notify me in writing for my records.

Sincerely,

Jason C. Calhoun

APPENDIX B

Letter of Permission to Conduct the Single-Case Study



FIRST PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, INC.

April 8, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

As pastor of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, I permit Jason Calhoun to conduct research with Generation Z young adults in our congregation. I understand he will conduct research for a dissertation for Baylor University. I know that he will use pseudonyms for all Generation Z young adult participants.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the pastor.

J. Nathan Holmes, II
Pastor

1401 CALVARY ROAD, NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72116 • 501-758-3090 • FPCNLR.COM

Note: Signature has been removed for security concerns. Original signed documents are available upon request.

APPENDIX C

Participation Query for Volunteers

Dear Connect Member,

Choice Christian Greetings! We invite you to participate in a research study Pastor Jason Calhoun is conducting involving the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas. He is currently a doctoral student at Baylor University. Pastor Calhoun's research focuses on Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old. Since you are among this age group, we invite you to participate in the study. If you want to participate, Pastor Calhoun, please respond to this email. We will forward your contact information to Pastor Calhoun if you are willing to participate. He will be contacting participants to schedule an interview appointment. We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

FPCNLR Pastoral Staff

APPENDIX D

Baylor University Consent Form

EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: **Doctoral Student**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Jason Calhoun**

SUPPORTED BY: **Baylor University**

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to be part of a research study. This consent form will help you choose whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent form.

Important Information about this Research Study

Things you should know:

- The purpose of the study is to explore how the innovative leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engages with Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old.
- In order to participate, you must be a selected member of the pastoral leadership team or a young adult member of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, aged 18–25-years-old.

- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire emailed or given to you personally upon consent. You will then participate in an individual interview with the researcher that will be scheduled during the months of June or July 2022. The researcher will take notes and the interview will be audio recorded. The interview will take no more than 45 minutes.
- There are no foreseen risks to any participants, and all participants will have the opportunity to decline participation during the study without penalty or fear of retribution.
- The possible benefits of this study include participants gaining a greater understanding and appreciation for the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas' innovative leadership practices involving Generation Z young adults.
- Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

More detailed information may be described later in this form. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore how the innovative leadership of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, engages with Generation Z young adults aged 18-25-years-old.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Task One: Fill out demographic questionnaire, 10 minutes.
- Task Two: Inform the researcher of your choice of date and time to interview during timeframe June 6, 2022–July 31, 2022.
- Task Three: Participate in scheduled interview with researcher, 45 minutes.
- Task Four: Attend and participate in the scheduled interview.

We would like to make an audio recording of you during this study. Audio recording is required for this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

How long will I be in this study and how many people will be in the study?

Participation in this study will last June 6, 2022-July 31, 2022. About five subjects will take part in this research study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

We don't believe there are any risks from participating in this research.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might learn how innovative pastoral leadership practices can influence Generation Z young adults.

How Will You Protect my Information?

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by coding each participant's identity and not using names or identifiers. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- Representatives of Baylor University and the BU Institutional Review Board
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

**Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the
Research**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:

Jason Calhoun

Phone:

Email:

Or

Dr. Amy Sloan

Phone:

Email:

**Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research
Participant**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Baylor University Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice Provost for Research

Phone: 254-710-3708

Email: irb@baylor.edu

Your Consent

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT:

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We 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 understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Signature of Subject

Date

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Signature of Adult Subject

Date

Statement of Witness

I represent that the consent form was presented orally to the subject in the subject's own language, that the subject was given the opportunity to ask questions, and that the subject has indicated his/her consent for participation by (check one box as applicable):

Making his/her mark above

Other means _____

(Fill in above)

Signature of Witness

Date

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol for Generation Z Young Adult Participants Aged 18–25-years-old.

Interview Protocol: *The perceptions of Generation Z participants aged 18–25-years-old from the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, regarding the influence of innovative leadership practices within the church.*

Date:

Time of Interview:

Location:

Interview Type: Phone, In-Person, or Virtual Meeting

Interviewer: Jason Calhoun

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Description of the study: The interview will stimulate discussion on how the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas’ leadership implements innovative communication styles, worship service enhancing technology, and discipleship programs to engage Generation Z young adults aged 18–25-years-old.

Introduction of the study: This interview will give insight to future Pentecostal leaders regarding how to successfully engage young adults. I fully understand the spiritual aspect of becoming and being a Pentecostal. However, I want to ask questions focused on the practical aspects of church leadership and administration. I want to gain insight about

how the church's leadership communicated the gospel to you and how the implementation of innovative ideas engaged you as a young adult.

This interview is being recorded for research purposes; however, your name will be omitted and disassociated with any data collected. Please know that you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

Questions

Demographic questions:

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) What is the level of your education at this point in life?
- 3) How long have you attended the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?

Questions About the administrative strategies of the leadership:

- 1) What are some of the administrative practices and policies of the church that influence you?
- 2) How have these administrative practices successfully engaged you?
- 3) How does the leadership (pastor or youth pastor) of the church use these administrative practices to engage you personally.

Questions About the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas'

Implementation of Innovative Technology in Worship Service and Young Adult Events:

- 1) What types of technology have you noticed implemented during the worship services?
- 2) How do these technological innovations engage you?
- 3) How do they help with your personal worship experience?

- 4) What types of technology have you noticed the preachers and teachers of the church implementing during their presentations?
- 5) How do these technological innovations help you better understand the message the preacher or teachers is endeavoring to communicate?

Questions About the Discipleship Processes of the Church:

- 1) What discipleship program are you involved with in the church?
- 2) How does the program engage you as a member of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?
- 3) How did the program equip you to becoming an active member of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?

Thank you for participating in this interview. I assure you that confidentiality will be kept and all documentation, audio recordings, and transcription will be locked and secured.

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol for Pastoral Leadership Participants

Interview Protocol: *The perceptions of Generation Z participants aged 18–25-years-old from the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, regarding the influence of innovative leadership practices within the church.*

Date:

Time of Interview:

Location:

Interview Type: Phone, In-Person, or Virtual Meeting

Interviewer: Jason Calhoun

Interviewee: Nathan J. Holmes and Corey Townley

Position of Interviewee: Lead Pastor of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little, Arkansas.

Description of the study: The interview will stimulate discussion on how the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas' leadership implements innovative communication styles, worship service enhancing technology, and discipleship programs to engage Generation Z's young adults aged 18–25-years-old.

Introduction of the study: This interview will give insight to future Pentecostal leaders regarding how to successfully engage young adults. I fully understand the spiritual aspect of becoming and being a Pentecostal. However, I want to ask questions focused on the practical aspects of church leadership, administrative strategies, and the use of new

technology. I want to gain insight about how the church's leadership communicated the gospel to you and how the implementation of innovative ideas engaged you as a young adult.

This interview is being recorded for research purposes; however, your name will be omitted and disassociated with any data collected. Please know that you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable:

Demographic Questions:

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) How Long have you been a Pentecostal?
- 3) How long have you pastored the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?

Questions About the Pastor's implementation of technology:

- 1) What types of new technology tools do you use to specifically engage young adults?
- 2) Why do you feel those tools are successful?
- 3) How have you adapted technology into your preaching and teaching to engage young adults?

Questions About Technologies Implemented in Worship Services to Engage Young Adults and Enhance Their Worship Experience:

- 1) What technologies have been implemented specifically to engage young adult attendees?
- 2) What challenges have these implementations presented to you as a leader?
- 3) How have you navigated those challenges?

- 4) Why do you feel technology is important to the church worship experience?

Questions About Discipleship Processes in the Church:

- 1) What discipleship programs have you implemented since you have become the pastor that you feel are specifically engaging young adults?
- 2) How does these programs equip young adults to become active and productive members of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas?
- 3) How do you envision these programs adapting to future needs of young adult ministry?

Questions About Administrative Strategies:

- 1) What administrative strategies do you and the church leaders implement that you consider uniquely designed to engage Generation Z young adults?
- 2) How have these administrative strategies increased your success engaging Generation Z?

APPENDIX G

Observation Protocol

Location: The Main Campus of the First Pentecostal Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Length of Activity: 90–120 minute

Participants	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Young Adult Participant #1		
Young Adult Participant #2		
Young Adult Participant #3		
Young Adult Participant #4		

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