

Dave Ramseyer

YL 650/651: Culmination Research Project

Executive Summary

6 April 2015

*The Impact of Supervision Practices on  
Millennial Youth Leaders' Ministry Fruitfulness*

**Research Question**

What supervision practices will help millennial YFC Site Leaders be fruitful in their ministries practice?

**Introduction**

The next generation of youth leaders, Millennials, are currently taking the reins from those who ministered to them while they were teenagers. Over half of the millennial generation now falls in the typical adult work ranges (18+). These young adults are coming into youth ministry positions with passion, new ideas and often creating tension with those given the role of overseeing them. This millennial generation is literally our future right now as they make up 14 year olds all the way to 32 year olds (Lancaster & Stillman 15). This generation, sometimes entitled "GenNext", "Generation Y" or even the "Tech Generation" is "76 million strong and compose the fastest growing segment of workers today" (16). These current teenagers and young adults are very quickly becoming the next leaders of the Church. However, this generation has created discomfort with older generations who have a hard time supervising them into strong leaders (16).

The overall intent of this study was to determine important connections between supervision practices and millennial youth ministry leaders that directly impact their fruitfulness in ministry. Therefore I set out to contribute to robust practices of supervision of this millennial generation so that they might be healthy and vibrant ministry leaders for the church in the years to come. As well, I hope to foster greater relational respect between other generations and millennials so they see each other as helpful in this journey forward rather than obstacles to overcome. If older generations find successful ways to develop these newest adult leaders for Kingdom impact, the Church will be more vibrant for decades to come.

### **What I Did**

To accomplish this study, I approached my research from a conventional content analysis lens. I focused my data collection on millennial site leaders inside of Youth for Christ/USA (YFC). This allowed me to work with a rich sample that was both small and representative enough for me to do adequate collection and analysis. "Millennial" is defined as those born between 1982 and 2000 (Lancaster & Stillman 15). Between December 2014 and February 2015 I conducted three waves of data collection and analysis, each giving me more detailed insights than the one previous. The first phase started with an inductive analysis of 10 site leader interviews to determine key categories, themes and framework for the next wave. In the next phase I used an online survey designed to explore themes that had surfaced through my literature review and the first phase of my research. A total of 89 surveys were analyzed during this second phase of my research. During this analysis key trends and themes rose to the surface. These themes were the focus of my third and final research inquiry, where I interviewed

10 different randomly-selected, millennial, YFC ministry site leaders to gain deeper understanding about the sort of supervisory practices that help them most. In this way, each phase of my research methodology informed the design of the next, ultimately contributing to my final conclusions.

### **What I Learned**

- While millennials value personal care behaviors from their supervisors the most, these actions alone do not necessarily make a positive impact on their ministries.
- Millennial site leaders who experience the least frequent supervision practices feel this need the most. Apparently, the lack of supervision activity can amplify its importance, creating the largest value gap between what millennials desire from their supervisors and what they actually receive.
- Supervisors who regularly talk about clear job expectations make a positive influence on millennials, adding benefit to all of their other supervision practices.
- Supervisors who regularly discuss growth areas and leadership development pathways with millennials also see this behavior positively affect their other practices. This discipline helps to shrink the overall dissatisfaction gap between what millennials value and what they actually experience from their supervisors.
- Supervisors who model what YFC site leaders are expected to do are not only seen as more helpful in this distinct practice, but are perceived to be more effective across all 30 supervisory behaviors.
- When supervisors regularly visit ministry sites and subsequently talk about what they observe, millennial site leaders experience greater satisfaction and benefit to their ministries.

## **Recommendations for Supervisors of Millennials**

- Anchor all other supervisory practices in the context of a caring personal relationship.
- Increase the consistency of connections to reduce dissatisfaction and create realistic expectations.
- Provide detailed and ongoing job clarity to maximize impact on millennial ministry efforts.
- Partner with millennials in their growth journey by regularly talking about their development as a leader.
- Model what is expected while allowing flexibility in how millennials apply what they observe.
- Join with them in their ministry sites, speaking informed and caring counsel into their ministry activity as a positive advocate for their increased success.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that this is one of the most distinct and different generations in history. These young leaders are quickly becoming the future of the Church. Despite the many frustrations older generations may possess about their current connections with these millennial leaders, it is each Kingdom leaders' responsibility to grow in their competence and expertise to lead this growing generation. If we can apply much of what was discovered in this study it will help to foster deep caring relationships that propel ministry forward through these young leaders. In the end the Body of Christ wins.

Appendix A

Statement of Informed Consent

I have been asked to participate as a subject in a research project investigating supervision practices amongst millennial YFC site leaders.

This project is under the direction of Dave Ramseyer a student at Huntington University and is a part of a course requirement in the Youth Ministry Leadership major. The Supervising professor is Dr. Dave Rahn and can be contacted at [drrahn@comcast.net](mailto:drrahn@comcast.net).

I understand that there are no known risks associated with participating in this project and that I will be asked to honestly answer a few questions related to my supervision experiences.

I understand that information gathered from me during this project will not be reported to anyone outside the project team in any manner which might personally identify me. A report of combined and generalized results involving multiple participants will be prepared and may be presented in a scholarly public forum.

My signature indicates that I understand and voluntarily agree to the conditions of participation described above and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix B

### Phase One Interview Questions for Discovery

1. Describe your interactions with your supervisor.
2. What does your supervisor do to contribute to the fruitfulness of your YFC ministry?
3. What supervision practice has the most influence on your YFC ministry?
4. Is there anything else about what your supervisor does that would help me understand his or her positive impact on your ministry?

#### Prompts:

- Tell me more about this area...
- What do you mean by \_\_\_\_\_?

## Appendix C

### Phase Two Online Survey Template

***For each of the following practices, please identify how often your supervisor engages in the particular activity and how valuable you believe these supervisory behaviors are/would be to help your ministry be more fruitful.***

Each item (question) will have a two tier set up:

**How often?** \_\_Never \_\_Occasionally \_\_Often

**How valuable?** \_\_It's Not \_\_Somewhat \_\_Highly

#### **Category 1 – Items (Ministry Context)**

My supervisor observes me as I lead meetings with kids.

My supervisor observes me as I meet with adults.

My supervisor comes with me when I spend time building relationships with kids.

My supervisor gets back to me quickly when I have a question.

My supervisor and I meet for scheduled appointments.

My supervisor invites me to do ministry with him/her.

My supervisor shows me how to do what I am expected to do.

My supervisor asks questions to better understand my ministry context.

My supervisor shows me how to do what I'm expected to do.

My supervisor talks with me about what they saw me do in my ministry context.

#### **Category 2 – Items (Personal Care)**

My supervisor helps me use my gifts in ministry.

My supervisor shows that he/she cares about me.

My supervisor asks about my personal life.

I spend time with my supervisor outside of work.

My supervisor asks how to pray for me.

My supervisor spends time getting to know my family and/or friends.

My supervisor appreciates my perspective.

My supervisor values my feedback.

My supervisor listens well to me.

My supervisor talks to me about my leadership development.

**Category 3 – Items (Strategy)**

My supervisor makes my job expectations clear.

My supervisor evaluates my ministry performance.

My supervisor sets clear benchmarks for me to work toward.

My supervisor and I discuss areas I can grow.

My supervisor asks me tough questions.

My supervisor helps me dream about the future.

My supervisor processes next steps in ministry with me.

My supervisor helps me problem solve.

My supervisor helps me to build my ministry strategy.

My supervisor gives me more opportunities to lead.



Appendix D

Phase Three Interview Questions for Confirmation

***For each of the following practices, please identify how often your supervisor engages in the particular activity and how valuable you believe these supervisory behaviors are/would be to help your ministry be more fruitful.***

How Often? (Never, Occasionally, Regularly)

- My supervisor makes my job expectations clear
- My supervisor and I discuss areas I can grow
- My supervisor talks to me about my development as a leader
- My supervisor shows me how to do what I'm expected to do
- My supervisor talks with me about what they saw me do in my ministry context

How Valuable? (It's Not, Somewhat, Highly)

- My supervisor makes my job expectations clear
- My supervisor and I discuss areas I can grow
- My supervisor talks to me about my development as a leader
- My supervisor shows me how to do what I'm expected to do
- My supervisor talks with me about what they saw me do in my ministry context

Follow Up Questions after each value answer:

- Talk about why you value this at this level?
- What do you expect or want from your supervisor in this area?

Works Cited

Lancaster, Lynne C. & Stillman, David. *The M-Factor: How the Millennial Generation is Rocking the Workplace*. Harper Collins, 2010. E-book.