Abstract

Practicing Justice: Justice in a Millennial, Wesleyan-Holiness Context
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The concept of justice has emerged as a significant rallying point for millennials which has led many of them to engage in justice-related work. As the word justice has gained momentum, there are varying ways the concept is used and understood. Utilizing ethnographic interviews, this research offers insight into the foundations on which millennial, Wesleyan-holiness justice is grounded, the discourses and theologies which are emerging around the concept, and the types of practices millennials engage in including how those practices affect their views of justice.

In terms of foundations, the research explores how technology, a culture of paradox, and family systems have affected the grounding of justice. Next, in terms of discourses, the research shows that though millennials draw the same definition of justice across the spectrum of those studied, "righting wrongs," the experience of millennials vastly shifts how that definition is framed. The final aspect of the research looks at practices of justice and examines five elements which coincide with a lived theology of justice: life is meant to serve others, justice is holistic, justice is done within community, justice is done for/with a specific community, and justice encompasses advocacy and political action.

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Practicing Justice
Justice in a Millennial, Wesleyan-Holiness Context

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by

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On this journey through research I have been able to meet, interview, question, process with, and be challenged by the lives of passionate young people. Though I offer some basic statistics of the demographics of these participants in the following chapters, each number carries with it a story. Many of the people I interviewed are actively seeking ways to live out justice within their lives and families; they are relinquishing dreams wrapped in American comfort for the often-lonely road of caring for those with whom they live in community. It has been a joy and honor to listen to their stories, the good and the messy. As I begin to look at their collective expressions of justice through this research, parsing out thoughts and values, I first wanted to extend my appreciation and gratitude to them for their willingness to share their lives, journeys, and stories with me. I hope I treat their stories with the care in which they shared them.

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In my time at Asbury, I came to know more about John Wesley than in the many years of study prior. I started researching his sermons and found myself drawn to the use of the phrase, "justice, mercy, truth." In his sermon, "On Living Without God," John Wesley writes, "Indeed nothing can be more sure, than that true Christianity cannot exist without both the inward experience and outward practice of justice, mercy, and truth." I hope that my life is an expression of this inward experience and outward practice just as the lives of those I have encountered during this research have exemplified those characteristics.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Research

Why Justice? The Journey Thus Far

Recently, while driving our old minivan to the store with my daughter, I heard a song that made me think of New York City. I love cities; the movement, anticipation, and expectancy one finds there is captivating. My roots are in Kansas where the largest city is dwarfed by the magnificence of New York City.[1] As the song played, I kept imagining skyscrapers, gray skies, and glossy, glass-walled buildings. I tried to think of what about the song made me think of New York specifically, as there was no mention of it lyrically. Was it the rhythm or the chord progressions? Is there some kind of musical instrumentation that sounds more New York-esque than other instrumentations? I could not seem to pinpoint immediately what about the song suddenly transported me to a place I have only visited on one occasion. Finally, I realized it. The music was from a movie that took place in New York. My mind associated the music with that specific location because that is where it had originated for me. But if the movie had been set in a desert, when I heard the music would I not have thought about a desert? Minds work this way, creating categories or compartments for everything that one takes in. Justice, like music, has been categorized differently throughout Christian history and is subject to our compartmentalization.

As I started studying justice and millennials, I came in with a sense of frustration for the lack of dialogue and engagement with the topic from my experience growing up in the church. Justice has deep theological roots; roots that are meant to spur action. As I studied theology, I

[1] For reference, in 2016, New York City's population was 8.538 million where the population of Wichita, the largest city in Kansas, was 389,000.

found intimations of justice in diverse Christian communities, spanning generations, connected only through their biblical foundation. I saw a passion for the poor in the writings of early church fathers and mothers. I read sermons from John Wesley where he commanded Christians to seek justice for the vulnerable in their communities. And, in recent years, I have again heard the call through the writings of liberation theologians in Latin America. Why did all of these people, from different contexts spanning time and geography, have such a firm grasp on justice and my immediate faith community seemed unmoved by it? Much of my writing and research early on began looking at what I saw as the lack of dialogue on justice issues. I lamented the way the church had missed what, to me, seemed such a key component of the Christian faith.

But then there was a change. As I heard stories from millennials of the ways that they understood justice, how justice mobilized, empowered, and revolutionized their faith, it seemed different than how the churches I grew up around had spoken of it. I realized that maybe if other millennials experienced a lack of discussion around justice in church, as I had, it might actually have been a benefit. It seemed Christians in generations prior had compartmentalized justice and given it a specific mental construct. Just as I categorized a style of music, they placed justice in specific categories. For that generation, as I illustrate in the second chapter of this research, justice was commonly related to personal, individual atonement, negatively associated with communism, or predominately future oriented and unattainable. In short, justice had been given a fairly limited spectrum of meaning. When the generations prior to millennials heard justice, they primarily saw these categories, just as when I heard the song I could only picture New York City. But millennials did not have these mental constructs; they did not immediately relegate justice to the compartments their parents did. Instead, millennials had the freedom to re-envision justice and to find a new way of understanding it. Now, when the music of justice is played in

churches, millennials create their own categories. Through this research, I hope to express some of the music of justice that millennials imbibe.

Prevalence

One assumption of my research is that Christian millennials are, in fact, interested in justice. Before moving to my research, I first want to validate the prevalence and growth of justice-related discourses among millennials. Dominique Gilliard writes of Micah 6:8[2] that it "has enjoyed a renaissance due to the ever-growing emphasis younger believers are placing on doing justice."[3] Millennials are rallying around justice, both literally and figuratively. They are engaging with global issues such as human trafficking, war, gender-related violence, health-related issues such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, clean water, poverty, education, and so on.

For example, awareness of human trafficking has become an issue at the center of many millennial discourses. At a Passion Conference in Atlanta a few years ago, college students raised over three million dollars in just days to fight human trafficking.[4] The Student Abolitionist Movement[5] and Campus Coalition Against Trafficking represent two of a myriad of student-led initiatives to bring awareness about human trafficking to college campuses around the country. These advocacy groups reach a variety of universities including Ivy League schools, state colleges, and Christian academic institutions and are capable of rapid mobilization through social media.

[2] It is paraphrased as: "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

[3] Dominique Gilliard, "What Does Micah 6:8 Really Mean?," *Red Letter Christians* (blog), March 23, 2013, http://www.redletterchristians.org/what-does-micah-68-really-mean/.

[4] Jordan Hultine, "College Students Raise Funds to Fight Slavery," *CNN Belief Blog* (blog), January 6, 2013, http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/06/college-students-raise-funds-to-fight-slavery/.

[5] Associated with the organization Not For Sale.

Justice is something that other researchers, and millennials themselves, are using to identify this generation. Fritz Kling, a missiologist, writes that millennials "are especially dedicated to being agents of compassion, justice, and mercy toward the last and the least, pulling the global church into the world in new ways."[6] Ashley Easter, a millennial, wrote in a blog for Missio Alliance, "Millennials are sometimes called The Justice Generation and truly justice is our heartbeat."[7]

Another way one can assess the prevalence of justice in the millennial generation is by looking at marketing to millennials. Authors are realizing the consumer interest in the concept of justice and writing about it. Within the Christian realm, a plethora of books have been written with the word justice in the title since 2007.[8] Podcasts are emerging, both from within the

[6] Fritz Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters: 7 Global Currents That Will Propel the Future Church*, 1st ed (Colorado Springs, Colo: David C. Cook, 2010), 44. Kling goes on to write, "That is not to say that their focus on justice and mercy is brand new, because Christian workers have always embraced 'holistic' ministries (Christian outreach that seeks to meet both spiritual and physical needs) to some degree. What is new, though, is the *universal* emphasis on Mercy by an entire generation of followers of Christ all around the world."

[7] Ashley Easter, "Awakenings: A Millennial's Perspective – An #Awakenings17 Reflection," *Missio Alliance* (blog), June 6, 2017, http://www.missioalliance.org/news/awakenings-a-millennials-perspective-an-awakenings17-reflection/.

[8] I have listed 26 books here that I am familiar with, all written since 2007. And this is only those with the word "justice" in the title and within the Christian realm. If I expanded that the list would grow dramatically. Bethany H. Hoang, *The Justice Calling: Where Passion Meets Perseverance* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016); Bethany H. Hoang, *Deepening the Soul for Justice*, Urbana Onward (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2012); Gary A. Haugen, *Good News about Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World*, 10th anniversary ed (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009); Gary A. Haugen, *Just Courage: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2008); John Heagle, *Justice Rising: The Emerging Biblical Vision* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2010); Ken Wytsma Jacobsen, David, *Pursuing Justice: The Call to Live and Die for Bigger Things* (Nashville, [Tenn.]: Thomas Nelson, 2013); N. T Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Intervarsity Press, 2013); Abraham George, *God of Justice: The IJM Institute Global Church Curriculum* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015); Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*, 1st ed (New York, N.Y: Dutton, Penguin Group USA, 2010); Paul Alexander, ed., *Christ at the Checkpoint: Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace*, Pentecostals, Peacemaking, and Social Justice Series (Eugene, Or: Pickwick Publications, 2012); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 2011); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice: Personal Encounters in the Global South*, Turning South: Christian Scholars in an Age of World Christianity (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Eddie Byun, *Justice Awakening: How You and Your Church Can Help End Human Trafficking* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2014); Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace*, Theology in Global Perspective Series (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2007); D. Thomas Hughson, *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice: Classical Christology and Public Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2013); Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing*, Resources for Reconciliation (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2008); Charles Marsh and John

millennial generation and by those wanting to connect with millennials.[9] There are a number of conferences that either focus solely on justice or have a peripheral focus of justice issues.[10] Music artists are creating songs that connect to justice issues.[11] There are blogs and social network groups to engage in the conversation.[12] Some of these resources are produced by millennials and some are not, but the influx shows the growing interest in the topic. Those attending the conferences, listening to the music, and joining social media conversations are millennials. The materials are predominately created for them.

Even prominent evangelical leaders are noticing the increase in dialogues around justice, whether they are supportive of it or not. John MacArthur did a series of blog posts and sermons in the fall of 2018 that highlighted his concern with evangelical involvement in social justice.[13] MacArthur writes, "Evangelicalism's newfound obsession with the notion of 'social justice' is a significant shift—and I'm convinced it's a shift that is moving many people (including some key evangelical leaders) off message, and onto a trajectory that many other movements and

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M. Perkins, *Welcoming Justice: God's Movement Toward Beloved Community* (InterVarsity Press, 2010); Vic McCracken, ed., *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell, *Our God Is Undocumented : Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012); David J. Neville, *The Bible, Justice, and Public Theology.* (Wipf & Stock Pub, 2014); Stephen Offutt et al., *Advocating for Justice: An Evangelical Vision for Transforming Systems and Structures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016); John M. Perkins, *With Justice for All: A Strategy for Community Development.* (Regal Books, 2011); Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation*, Studies in Strategic Peacebuilding (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Will Samson and Lisa Samson, *Justice in the Burbs: Being the Hands of Jesus Wherever You Live* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2007); H. G. M. Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good: Old Testament Justice Then and Now : The Trinity Lectures, Singapore, 2011* (Cambridge, U.K.: Lutterworth Press, 2012).

[9] Recent podcast stations where the focus is primarily justice issues include: The New Activist, Generation Justice, Chasing Justice.

[10] For instance: Justice Conference, Passion Conference.

[11] For instance: Propaganda, Josh Garrels.

[12] For instance: Wesleyan Justice Network, Twitter and Facebook groups called "Just Missions."

[13] MacArthur produced five blogposts and three sermons over the month-long series. John MacArthur is not part of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, nonetheless, he is a prominent voice that is respected across various denominational groups.

denominations have taken before, always with spiritually disastrous results."[14] MacArthur is distinguishing social justice from biblical justice, but his distinction places things like racial and economic inequality outside the purview of biblical justice. In his blog, MacArthur notes common accusations of justice, namely, that it is postmodern, infused with the social gospel, Marxist, and not grounded in the Bible.[15] Though MacArthur is not simply talking about millennials (actually, he rarely cites anyone he is talking about) he does clearly express the increased prevalence of justice dialogue and especially the prevalence within Christian, evangelical circles. "This recent (and surprisingly sudden) detour in quest of 'social justice' is, I believe, the most subtle and dangerous threat so far."[16]

Finally, Jim and Judy Raymo, in their book *Millennials and Mission*, offer a helpful perspective on missions engagement within the millennial context. The book comes from Jim Raymo's dissertation that focused on the presence or absence of fear about cross-cultural work within millennials. One area of the book that was given only a quick review was millennials' view of justice. In the chapter they mention that, "Millennials respond enthusiastically and passionately to exhortations regarding justice"[17] and that "they rise to the call to act in the interest of others, feed the hungry, do justice, and love mercy."[18] They also discuss how missions agencies must recognize the importance of justice when recruiting millennials, saying, "any mission agency or other ministry hoping to attract young workers to its membership must

[14] This is the introductory blogpost to the series. John MacArthur, "Social Injustice and the Gospel," *Grace to You* (blog), August 13, 2018, https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180813.

[15] I explore some of these negative characteristics, including the social gospel and Marxism, in chapter two. John MacArthur, "The Injustice of Social Justice," *Grace to You* (blog), September 7, 2018, https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180907.

[16] MacArthur, "Social Injustice and the Gospel."

[17] Jim Raymo and Judy Raymo, *Millennials and Mission: A Generation Faces a Global Challenge* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2014), 80.

[18] Raymo and Raymo, 81.

address the implications of God's concern for justice in its fullest sense."[19] It was not the goal of the Raymos' book to look at justice within the millennial context, but it is obvious from their research that it is a topic which is paramount for understanding this generation. Justice is not just a fad, justice has infiltrated many aspects of the lives of millennials.

Personal Story

Justice entered my vocabulary and stole my attention in college at Anderson University. It was discussed in chapel settings and spiritual emphasis weeks. There were groups that formed around specific issues, like human trafficking.[20] I took classes that focused on issues of justice like one called "Theology of HIV/AIDS." The class taught me about people living with HIV/AIDS and challenged the simplistic ways I thought about the disease. The next year, I traveled to Uganda and met men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS. When I returned, I joined a stateside coalition and became an advocate for those I met in my travels. I bought merchandise that supported them and I worked on a documentary to share their stories. I knew that pursuing justice meant making sure that people living in difficult situations received proper care.

I left college bright-eyed and ready to prophetically speak about the lack of justice in the world, but I was not always met with the same enthusiasm. The first time I used the phrase "social justice" from the platform of the large suburban church I worked at, I was quickly made aware of my ignorance. One person in the church pulled me aside and corrected my wording. "Social justice is a political term, we should use 'biblical justice' when we are talking about justice in the church." His use of the modifier "biblical" insinuated only spiritual justice,

[19] Raymo and Raymo, 80.

[20] One specific group was called "Bound for Freedom," which made and sold journals and then used the profits to support organizations working on issues of human trafficking.

justification. The person was in every way attempting to save me from the backlash I would receive if I continued talking about such a "liberal" notion. "But isn't social justice biblical justice?" I wondered to myself. "If biblical justice holds its weight it must speak to social realities, right?" This was one of the first times I was confronted with a dualism created around justice, that biblical justice must not be tied with the political baggage of social justice. The separation of social and biblical justice and the separation of politics and spirituality are just two of many dichotomies that surround the conversation of justice, ones I will explore through this research. From those moments forward, I began a journey to understand how different groups construct their view of justice. In this research, I look at that in light of the "justice generation," the millennials.

Research Foundations

Statement of Problem

The concept of justice has emerged as a significant rallying point for millennials which has led many to engage in justice-related work. As the word justice has gained momentum, there are varying ways the concept is used and understood. *The goal of this research is to gain insight into the discourses on and practices of justice among Wesleyan-Holiness millennials and the theology that is emerging from those discourses and practices.* I accomplish this by moving through the historical context around the term justice within the Christian tradition (chapter two), exploring the millennial context and their foundations for justice (chapter three), defining justice among Wesleyan-Holiness millennials (chapter four), and sharing how justice is practiced (chapter five).

Research Questions

How are millennials within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition formulating a theology of justice?

1) On what epistemological foundation(s) is/are millennials' view of justice grounded?
2) What are the current discourses on justice among Wesleyan-Holiness millennials?
3) What is the relationship between these discourses on justice and the practices in which they engage?

Original and Revised Thesis

When I first started exploring this topic, I assumed that much of the language around justice that emerged from the millennial context was less grounded in theological thought and more upon a secular, humanistic language of rights. After doing the research, my original thesis was not fully confirmed. Instead, as one will find in this research, there are many aspects affecting the millennial view of justice. Rather than assuming millennial justice arises out of their reaction toward global injustice, I think millennials justice is better understood as a "lived theology."

The thesis I will be expounding in this dissertation is that the justice expressed by Wesleyan-Holiness millennials engaged in justice-related activities is different than those of unengaged millennials. For engaged millennials, practices of justice engender a perspective on justice that is rooted in scripture, holistic, victim-oriented, community-focused, and which encompasses advocacy and political action.

Terminology

Millennial: For this study, I focus on a subset of the population known as the millennial generation. Though the term is used internationally, I focused on North American millennials.

Millennials are also called Generation Y, mosaics,[21] new boomers, Mercy Generation,[22] "Generation Me" (suggesting narcissism), and the "Boomerang Generation" (because they come back to live at home)[23] among other names.

One important key to the research is determining a range of birth years that define millennials. Elwood Carlson uses the dates of 1983 to 2001 to delineate what he calls, "New Boomers." Carlson's use of the term "New Boomers" and the beginning birth year of 1983 is based on the increase in births as the Boomer generation began to have kids.[24] David Kinnaman, in *You Lost Me,* uses the range of 1984 to 2002.[25] In a March 2015 article, Pew Research Center defined millennials as those born between 1981 and 1996.[26] Jim and Judy Raymo in their work on millennials use the range of 1982-2002.[27] Scott Pontier and Mark DeVries use 1980-2000 to define the age.[28] I, as well, am choosing the range of those born between 1980 and 2000 because it includes the oldest millennials and ends at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

A challenge to studies that focus on generational specifics is that they over generalize a population that is significantly more varied than what is expressed in research. My goal in utilizing the millennial generation is not to generalize the views of millennials, but to recognize

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[21] David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: BakerBooks, 2011).

[22] Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*.

[23] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 9–10.

[24] Elwood Carlson, *The Lucky Few between the Greatest Generation and the Baby Boom* (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2008), 29.

[25] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*.

[26] Pew Research Center, "Comparing Millennials to Other Generations," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/03/19/comparing-millennials-to-other-generations/.

[27] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 1.

[28] Scott Pontier and Mark DeVries, *Reimagining Young Adult Ministry: A Guidebook for the Ordinary Church*, 2017.

and engage the specific contextual changes that influence the ways in which this generation interacts within their world.

Wesleyan-Holiness: In 2004, the Wesleyan-Holiness Study Project (later renamed the Wesleyan-Holiness Consortium and now Wesleyan-Holiness Connection) was created by churches who identify as part of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. There are significant theological distinctions within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition (including Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal strands), but all hold to the importance of biblical holiness and claim some historical connection to John Wesley. In my research, I use participants from any denomination or movement who align with this tradition. Those groups who are current members of the Wesleyan-Holiness Connection are: Assemblies of God, Brethren in Christ Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God (Anderson), Church of God (Cleveland), Church of the Nazarene, Free Methodist Church, Grace Communion International, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Shield of Faith, The Evangelical Church, The Foursquare Church, The Salvation Army, The United Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan Church.[29]

Evangelical: As terms like justice change with time, so do terms used as modifiers for groups. Words like evangelical, fundamentalist, liberal, and conservative are all entrenched in historical context. And yet, even if one were able to minutely define each category, one would also find a significant amount of overlap and exchange between the groups. My goal in offering preliminary definitions is not to debate the relevance of these definitions, but to give context for where I am drawing boundary lines so that the exploration of tendencies within a theological group is possible. David W. Bebbington's definition of evangelical is one of the most prominent. Bebbington holds to four components for evangelicalism: Biblicism (or reliance on the Bible as ultimate religious authority), conversionism (or reliance on the new birth), activism (or energetic,

[29] "Wesleyan-Holiness Consortium," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.holinessandunity.org/.

individualistic engagement in personal and social duties), and crucicentrism (or focus on Christ's redeeming work as the heart of true religion).[30]

As with any term, there are outliers and challenges. For instance, it is important to note that not all Wesleyan-Holiness affiliated groups identify themselves as evangelical. The Church of God (Anderson) makes a theological distinction between their theology and that of evangelical theology, namely that the Church of God (Anderson) is historically linked to pietism where evangelicals are linked to Protestant scholasticism.[31] In a similar way, Church of God (Cleveland) would more closely identify with the Pentecostal tradition than with mainline evangelical theology. Though there are historical and theological connections between the Church of God (Cleveland) and the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, they also share historical and theological connections outside the scope of Wesleyan-Holiness theology, creating a weaving of beliefs rather than a single thread.

Though these distinctions are historically valid and academically affirmed, if one were to ask an ordinary person on a Sunday morning at an average Church of God (Anderson) congregation if they identified as evangelical, there is a strong likelihood that they would say they do. Their response should not be judged as a historical or theological comment as much as a distinction from the alternative of being identified as a mainline protestant or theological liberal. In this research, I use the term evangelical (especially in setting the historical context in chapter two), but it is used in this more colloquial understanding of the term.

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[30] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Routledge, 2003), 2–3.

[31] Merle D. Strege, *Tell Me Another Tale: Further Reflections on the Church of God* (Anderson, Ind: Warner Press, 1993), 17.

Currents in Justice Literature

One of the terms I am not defining in the terminology section is justice. The reason for this is I did not want to bias myself or the reader but allow the definition of justice given by the participants to emerge. At the same time, a foundation of justice discourses through history is important. Justice is a complicated term, but one can see hues and nuance when looking at how others have defined it throughout history. My goal in this section is to offer prominent definitions of justice throughout history, including those that have surfaced in recent years, that aid in understanding the definitions that millennials are using. With my population being Christian in background, I am also not only focusing on historic definitions of justice, but those which are located within the Christian narrative and dialogue. In this section, I begin by briefly looking at justice in the biblical narrative and then offer a broad look at definitions of justice historically before exploring recent Christian iterations.

Biblical Foundations

Before exploring historical and recent Christian iterations of justice, I share a brief foundation from a biblical perspective. Exegeting justice within the biblical text takes on many forms. For this section, I share some socio-historical background affecting the concept of justice in the Old Testament and then look at associated words, a philological approach, within the Old Testament and New Testament.

For Israel, as with their contemporaries, the role of justice was the duty of the king or deity. Walter Houston utilizes the research of H.H. Schmid in his translation of 'righteousness' in the Old Testament which he says is indicative of world order, a role in which the king or deity

played a major part.[32] In many ancient cultures the king represented the deity on earth making the two concepts inseparable. A king's claim to rule is dependent on his justice and compassion for the poor.[33] The image presented of the king as caring for the marginalized may not have matched reality, but the concept of justice was nonetheless tied to the right of the king.[34] Within the Old Testament, where the concept of king and deity were not representative of the same person, one does find impetus for kings to follow the justice laid out for them. Motivation to follow laws that benefitted the poor was created through the fear of God's retribution, God's justice.[35]

Malchow and Williamson believe Israel garnered their concept of justice from other neighboring kingdoms.[36] One example of a contemporary community that Israel could have drawn ideas from in regards to the role of the king is the Ugarits, a kingdom found in modern Syria whose writings date back to the fourteenth century B.C.[37] Their proximity to Israel and close cultural and religious traditions make them a viable candidate for Israel to draw upon.[38] In multiple texts from the Ugarit kingdom, including the epic of King Kirta and the legend of Aqhat, the duty of a good king is expressed as making decisions on behalf of the widow and orphan.[39] This is found in other local cultural texts like the law-code of Hammurabi which all

[32] Walter Houston, "The King's Preferential Option for the Poor: Rhetoric, Ideology and Ethics in Psalm 72," *Biblical Interpretation* 7, no. 4 (January 1, 1999): 346.

[33] Houston, 360.

[34] Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 29.

[35] Bruce V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What Is New and What Is Old* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1996), 26–27.

[36] Malchow, 1; Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 24.

[37] Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 25.

[38] Williamson, 25.

[39] Williamson, 26.

suggest justice is bound-up with the role of the king.[40] Houston even remarks that there is no hint in these texts that the poor are to defend themselves from exploitation, but that justice is completely in the hands of the king.[41]

Once justice is understood as a kingly, divine duty one must ask to whom this justice is required. Within the local communities with whom Israel may have had contact, the ethical claims of the king were closely connected to care for the poor, the widow, and the orphan.[42] Once again, this is indicative of other communities outside of Israel. Malchow suggests that defense for the poor, widow, and fatherless was "common policy" in the Near East.[43] Certainly the most vulnerable in these patriarchal communities would be the widow and vicariously the children of the widow. Added to this list are the poor, who were at the will of the powerful who controlled land and credit.[44] All three of these, the widow, the orphan, and the poor are part of marginalized communities who could easily be taken advantage of.

There is a distinctive that sets apart Old Testament justice from the common policy of the Near East. Though other Near Eastern cultures have statements of justice toward the widow, the orphan, and the poor, there is currently no evidence that any other culture included resident alien or sojourner on that list.[45] The sojourner or alien is another character whose vulnerability is created by the lack of land and legal standing. Malchow says that as Israel dealt with issues of justice they utilized not only the concepts they found in other Near Eastern culture but also their

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[40] Williamson, 27–32; Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 1–6.

[41] Walter Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 428 (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 149.

[42] Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 33–34; Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 1.

[43] Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 1.

[44] Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 28.

[45] Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 89.

own experience and especially the Exodus.[46] The Exodus was an experience that certainly made an indelible impression on Israel's concept of justice and a moment to which prophets would point back in remembrance of when God cared for them as a vulnerable people in the hands of the powerful.

Another avenue of studying justice in the Old Testament is to look at the concept from a primarily word-based exegesis. Two concepts that stand out as vital to understanding justice within the scriptural context is the relationship of justice with shalom and justice with righteousness. Shalom in the Old Testament, often translated as peace, means welfare or well-being.[47] Nicholas Wolterstorff writes that "the right relationships that lie at the base of shalom involve more than right relationships to other human beings. They involve right relationships to God, to nature, and to oneself as well."[48] Shalom is an all-encompassing peace that includes far more than simply the absence of conflict, but the presence of a right order.[49] Justice, then, acts as the righting of a wrong or wrongs that prevent shalom; it is the way by which one moves towards shalom. The relationship between shalom and justice is integral as one points to the other.

The relationships between justice and righteousness can be even more precarious, though an understanding of the relationship between the concepts in the Old Testament is paramount to understanding the concepts in the New Testament. In the Old Testament there are at least four words translated as "justice" (*sedaqa*, *mispat*, *hesed*, and *emet*) though the first two are the most

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[46] Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 5.

[47] Mark Lau Branson and Juan Francisco Martínez, *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2011), 35, 61.

[48] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Kampen, Netherlands: Uitgeversmaatschappijj J.H. Kok, 1983), 71.

[49] Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 24.

common.[50] *Sedaqa* implies behavior which fulfills the claim of a relationship, covenant.[51] *Mispat* signifies lawful justice. In the Old Testament one finds these words, *sedaqa* and *mispat*, paired together where the former will be translated as righteousness and the latter as justice.[52] Malchow writes that justice in the Old Testament is understood as social justice when writers connect the words justice and righteousness, *sedaqah* and *mishpat,* in a single thought.[53]

Though the term "social justice" carries cultural baggage in North American evangelical contexts, it illuminates the inherently communal nature of justice found in scripture. Social justice is about equal dignity and participation in community.[54] In Israel, justice is necessarily tied to relationship.[55] In the same way, righteousness in the Old Testament relates to relational justice, right-standing between members of a community. This is not to say that there is no individualized nature of righteousness, sacrifices represent one way there is a more individual connection with God, but the pervasive belief that righteousness is completely interior, spiritual component of faith is not prevalent. Contemporary theologians writing for a mainstream North American Christian audience attempt to point out this distinction by using the term "social righteousness" as a challenge to the individualized nature of the term.[56]

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[50] Mary Elsbernd and Reimund Bieringer, *When Love Is Not Enough: A Theo-Ethic of Justice* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2002), 46.

[51] Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 16.

[52] Though there are numerous examples, a few often cited passages for reference are Psalm 36:6, Isaiah 28:17, and Amos 5:24.

[53] Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 61.

[54] Hughson, *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice*, 12.

[55] Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 16.

[56] Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 55; Cynthia L Rigby, *Promotion of Social Righteousness* (Louisville, Ky.: Witherspoon Press, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2010).

In the New Testament, there is an absence of the term justice, at least in English transitions. As Nicholas Wolterstorff aptly assesses, for those reading the Bible in English the word justice seems to be missing from the New Testament.[57] One reason for this is that in the Old Testament there are at least two prominent words translated as justice and righteousness from Hebrew, *sedaqa* and *mispat,* but in New Testament Greek these two concepts are given only one word, *dikaiosune*. For this reason, those reading in English find the word righteousness far more frequently than they do justice.[58]

Historic Definitions

Eric Havelock claims that the first evidence of justice as a concept or principle is in the writings of Plato (writing in the fourth and fifth centuries BC).[59] Havelock states that Plato expressed justice with a bifocal meaning: public/societal justice (order) and personal morality (quality of justice in a person).[60] This separation moved justice from order or property to justice as an internalized virtue of the soul.[61] Plato's development of justice as a concept,[62] one of the

[57] Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice*, 92.

[58] With differing opinions on the translatability of *dikaiosune* as justice, a helpful proposal of the role of justice in the New Testament is seeing it as the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is understood as a place of shalom. Jesus encourages his followers to seek first God's kingdom and God's justice (Matthew 6:33; *dikaiosune*). In the beatitudes, *dikaiosune* is the only category of people mentioned twice (those who hunger and thirst for *dikaiosune* and those that are persecuted for *dikaiosune*). The final beatitude could be translated as such, "blessed are those who are persecuted because of justice, for theirs is the *kingdom of heaven.*"[58] The kingdom of God is representative of God's shalom and God's justice is thus a movement towards God's kingdom.

[59] Eric Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* (Harvard University Press, 1978), 14.

[60] Havelock, 312. In essence, the split suggests we can pursue justice publicly out of unjust reasons.

[61] Adonis Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 9.

[62] Most often cited by philosophers is in his text, *The Republic.* Plato, *The Republic* (AmazonClassics, 2017).

first to do so in literature, allowed future philosophers a starting point from which to develop their views. Augustine of Hippo picks up on Plato's concept of right order in his writings.[63]

In the realm of political philosophy there are a few names that stand out as actors who have shaped the North American view of justice, the most notable is John Rawls. Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* holds as one of the most influential texts on political philosophy of the twentieth century with many other writings reacting to his theory. Rawls offers a view of justice as fairness, utilizing the social contract theory of Locke, Rosseau, and Kant.[64] Rawls' definition of justice has two elements: liberty and equality.[65] First, justice is present where there is freedom, or liberty, within a society for people to have equal rights. Second, if there is inequality, it must only be present when there has been equal opportunity at representation and the inequality must bring the greatest benefit to the least advantaged. Rawls' views have been debated, but they remain one of the seminal views of justice.[66]

Though Rawls is important for North American definitions of justice, his iteration of justice is entangled with a highly individualized, American cultural paradigm. One attempt to correct this came from Scottish moral and political philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre who proposed that justice has contextual particularities. MacIntryre chose to look at ethos and values

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[63] Though Augustine writes from a Christian perspective, much of his writing has a broad historical appeal.

[64] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 11.

[65] John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 227.

[66] The thinning of national borders through globalization is making political justice a more nuanced discussion, something Rawls attempted to address in his later works. John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,"* 5. pr (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003); John Rawls and Erin Kelly, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Though Rawls' writing is foundational in political philosophy it is in not without its criticism. Robert Nozick proposed a more libertarian view of a minimal state in his text suggesting that the way in which one acquires goods is more important than distributive equality. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 213–14; Another challenge to Rawls' work was his reliance on principles of justice that happen within a single society. Jon Mandle, "Globalization and Justice," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 570 (July 1, 2000): 129.

over rules.[67] MacIntyre's writing, especially *Whose Justice, Which Rationality*, places modern liberal-individualism as one of many traditions rather than an ahistorical, objective reality.[68] Michael Walzer, in his book *Spheres of Justice*, also tackles the challenge of non-contextualized justice by situating his justice within political communities within which one has membership. Differing communities, based on Walzer's view, might recognize or organize justice differently.[69] Both of these men, Rawls and MacIntyre, speak of justice primarily as distributive justice, within economic terms, and conceptualize their understanding of distributive justice within a Western, academic framework.[70] Next, I offer views of justice from recent Christian theologians.

Christian Definitions

Within Christianity, justice has been called upon in conversations of civic and social change, as with slavery in Great Britain in the late 1700s. Justice was the cry of Christians during civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s that challenged the status quo of economic and political inequality. Others confine justice to the theological realm and discuss Paul's New Testament notion of justification, seemingly leaving out any physically or socially tangible understanding. And though the same word is used as the foundation for each, the assumptions that underlie each of these claims is vastly different. Theologian Paul Tillich expresses this conundrum in his text on justice, "Legal justice, moral righteousness, and religious justification seem to struggle with

[67] Alasdair C MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); This is also explored in Elsbernd and Bieringer, *When Love Is Not Enough*, 130.

[68] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*, 2–4.

[69] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 31.

[70] As well as, one might add, from a masculine perspective.

each other."[71] Though there are many ways to delineate views of justice, for the sake of clarity, I am choosing to create two broad categories that I believe encompass the current narratives of justice: a justice of being and a justice of doing.[72] It is important to note that none of the authors fit neatly into one category or the other; there is significant overlap and interplay for all of them. Even so, there are unique foundations that differentiate their views.

The first category for a Christian[73] definition of justice that I am proposing is a justice of being.[74] The theological component connected to this definition is the concept of the image of God, the *imago Dei*. As one reads Christian writings on justice, there are a number of theologians who ground their view of justice in the theological concept of the image of God. I outline this thread of dialogue through Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann, and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

Paul Tillich tackled the concept of justice in his book, *Love, Power, and Justice* which grounds justice in the idea of equality through his concept of the "justice of being" or the intrinsic claim of every person to be considered a person.[75] When someone chooses not to

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[71] Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 9.

[72] These categories are not meant to be seen as mutually exclusive but are highly interrelated and connected. And yet, there are distinctions in the ways different theologians approach the dialogue that make them unique and worth noting. These two categories are part of Paul Tillich's forms of justice. Tillich identified three forms of justice: 1) justice as intrinsic claim (justice of being), 2) "tributive" justice, or giving proportionately, and 3) creative/transforming justice – the kingdom of God.[72] Though I agree with his assertion of three forms, I have seen the first and third form represented in Christian writings on justice much more concretely than the second. In writings that I have encountered, justice in terms of giving proportionately, what Tillich refers to as tributive justice in his writing, is often located within the realm of transformative justice and the kingdom of God. So, though I do not deny his second form of justice, I see it as an outflow of the third form.

[73] One point of clarification, just because a definition falls under my heading of a Christian definition does not preclude it from being accepted in a historical or public sense, just as historic or public views of justice are accepted in Christian realms. For instance, MacIntyre's treatise, *After Virtue,* which looks extensively at views of justice, is used by Christian ethicists as a starting point of virtue ethics. The distinction is in foundation, that the definitions in this section are founded, in part or on the whole, from a Christian frame of reference.

[74] In ethics, this might be called an ontological approach to justice.

[75] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 60.

recognize this claim of personhood in another human, as in a master treating a slave as something other than a human, it does not only endanger the slave being treated poorly, but it questions the master's claim to personhood.[76] Interestingly, though this concept of justice of being has theological undertones in Tillich's writing, he does not directly use the term "image of God" to describe it. Instead, Tillich grounds humanity's being in the ultimate being, God, and subsequently grounds his justice of being in personhood.[77] Though Tillich does not directly engage the concept of the image of God, later theologians have used the concept of the image of God to create a foundation for their justice of being.

Jürgen Moltmann, like Tillich, grounds justice in equality, but, unlike Tillich, Moltmann directly relates justice and the image of God. As Moltmann explains, equality in its social context is justice and this equality is shared by all humanity.[78] Moltmann sees the foundation of this equality in being made in the image of the trinitarian God, a social image. He continues by clarifying the image of God language by saying, "the human being's likeness to God is not based on the *qualities* of human beings. It is grounded in their relationship to God."[79] Moltmann also points to another view of justice as connected to personal rights.[80] Defining rights would become a major point of dialogue within justice conversations and the author who is most recognized for his premise of justice as rights is Nicholas Wolterstorff.

Wolterstorff grounds his justice in the concept of inherent rights.[81] One of the distinctions Wolterstorff draws between himself and his contemporaries is his foundation of inherent rights

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[76] Tillich, 75.

[77] Tillich, 109.

[78] Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, 1st Fortress Press ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 69.

[79] Moltmann, 84. Italics in original.

[80] Moltmann, 124.

as based in worth. It is the worth of a person, a worth given by their connection to God, that endows rights.[82] Wolterstorff clearly differentiates between a view of justice as inherent rights and one of equality, claiming that there are times when justice is present that equality is not and when equality is present that justice is not.[83] Though each of these theologians approaches their definitions of justice from slightly different vantage points, there is common grounding in humanity's relationship to the ultimate being, or the image of God.

The second common view of justice is a justice of doing.[84] The theological component connected to this definition is the concept of the kingdom of God. The distinction between the previous view and this one is the focus on action toward an end as opposed to the static nature of one's being. Daniel Groody, a Roman Catholic theologian writes, "When theology loses a sense of justice as a central reference point of the Kingdom of God, it can easily become a hollow reflection on abstractions that have little connection to reality and little potential to transform the world or the human heart."[85] The reference point of justice being an aspect of the kingdom of God is expressed, whether explicitly or implicitly, in the writings of many contemporary theologians, though how each engages in justice may differ. Some theologians call on the action of justice to be done by individuals, where for others the emphasis is on the church. In this section I outline this thread of dialogue through the voices of Miroslav Volf, Paul Alexander, Lisa Sowle Cahill, and N.T. Wright.

For Miroslav Volf, the practical nature of justice stems from his experience. Volf, a

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[81] Wolterstorff, *Justice*, 11.

[82] Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice*, 137.

[83] Wolterstorff, *Justice*, 14.

[84] In ethics, this might be called a teleologically focused view of justice with the telos being the kingdom of God.

[85] Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 23.

Croatian who lived in Serbia during a particularly hostile time, experienced the challenges of justice and reconciliation. Though his theology is fashioned out of his Western academic upbringing, his ability to relate this back to the narrative of his past makes his writings both theoretical and practical. In regard to his writing on justice, Volf leans heavily toward the role of action, and specifically action by the church. In his book, *Exclusion and Embrace*, he writes "reflection about justice must serve doing justice."[86] With this emphasis on action, Volf also understands justice to be found within community, and specifically the church.[87]

Another important segment of Christianity whose voice on justice has been increasing in recent years is that of Pentecostal theologians. Paul Alexander is a Pentecostal theologian who is the current co-director of Evangelicals for Social Action. His view of justice was shaped through his significant time at the U.S. and Mexico border and within Palestinian and Israeli peace conversations. Alexander utilizes a definition in Pentecostal literature of Godly love[88] and refashions it to situate God's justice. He writes, Godly justice is "the dynamic interaction between divine and human justice that enlivens and expands peace."[89]

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[86] Miroslav. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 217.

[87] Volf, 208. This same impulse, that the inception of justice and reconciliation must be the church, is echoed by many authors, including Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice in *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing*, Resources for Reconciliation (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2008), 18. Similarly, William Willimon writes:

> Church is also the only means we have of knowing what justice looks like. When Christians think justice, we must think Church, for the Church is not only where we learn the true story of what is going on in the world, it is also the culture that Christian practices produce. For Christians, the truth of an idea like justice must reside in its practical force, in the way it is embedded in, or absent from, the habits and practices of those who claim to follow Jesus (David Weaver-Zercher and William H. Willimon, eds., *Vital Christianity: Spirituality, Justice, and Christian Practice* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 20.).

[88] Matthew Lee and Margaret Poloma have done extensive research on the idea of benevolence in the Pentecostal tradition. In their work, A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism: The Practice of Godly Love As Benevolent Service, they define Godly love as "the dynamic interaction between human and divine love that enlivens and expands benevolence." Matthew T. Lee and Margaret M. Poloma, *A Sociological Study of the Great Commandment in Pentecostalism: The Practice of Godly Love as Benevolent Service*, Hors Serie (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

[89] Alexander, *Christ at the Checkpoint*, xvi.

Another important voice relating justice to action is ethicist Lisa Sowle Cahill. Cahill, in her work *Global Justice: Christology and Christian Ethics,* grounds justice in its biblical and theological tradition, but says one can only claim authentic Christian theology if one represents the role of just action within their theological framework.[90] Cahill utilizes the framework of the New Testament, Christology, and the kingdom of God as the foundation for her assessment of biblical justice.

Finally, N.T. Wright connects the Christology of other authors with the expectation of action by humanity on behalf of the world. He states that humanity is not simply to wait on justice as a distant goal.[91] Instead, Wright points to two works that are a part of our time and space now: implementing the achievements of the cross and anticipating God's promised future world. Humanity lives into God's kingdom by learning "to borrow from God's future in order to change the way things are in the present, to enjoy the taste of our eventual deliverance from evil by learning how to loose the bonds of evil in the present."[92] Justice has been examined and expressed in a variety of ways throughout history. Its definition has been influenced by the context of the persons approaching it. And, though there are similarities in definition, there are significant gaps in terms of how justice is grounded and how one applies it in action.

Research Methods

Now that an overview of understands of justice has been provided, in this next section I outline the methodology of my research. My goal in research was to explore the discourses and

[90] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

[91] Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 102.

[92] Wright, 147.

practices around justice for Wesleyan-Holiness millennials. Next, I discuss my sources and how I collected, analyzed, and integrated the data.

Sources and Challenges

Sources for this research were broken into two main categories, literature and human research. Both of these categories had significant subcategories that I want to highlight. In this section, I discuss the scope of my research through the sources I chose including the delimitations that defined the scope. I then share challenges that arose because of the chosen scope.

In terms of millennial literature,[93] I engaged books and articles by millennials, including those with a specific focus on justice. The millennial generation does not live solely within the printed word, so "literature" by millennials extends to the internet and other forms of media. For my research, I looked also at social media feeds (Twitter and Facebook, primarily), blogs, podcasts, online discussion groups, organizational webpages, and online videos to name a few. For instance, one of my interview participants began a monthly Twitter discussion called #JustMissions that focuses on the framework of justice when participating in missions. She also took the same concept and later began a Facebook group that engaged in similar discussions. These literature mediums are the ways that millennials communicate with one another and especially the way that information about justice-related issues is promulgated and accessed by other millennials. Literature, then, takes on a wide range of media within this research.

For the human research portion, I broke down my research into focus groups and interviews, each with their own specific purpose and demographic. I chose to study United States

[93] In this usage of literature, I am not describing those resources used as part of the literature background for this research, but sources emerging out of the millennial context.

millennials from the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. I knew from the beginning this might be a challenge for a number of reasons I will explore further. Though these were my initial delimitations, I chose to extend the conversation outside of some of those bounds when necessary, especially in connection to the focus group process.

My interviews and focus groups contained three sections, each corresponding to a different research question: definitions, sources, and practice. An aspect of my research that brought unique insights was the distinctions in thought between focus groups and interviews. Though I will offer more differentiation in the following paragraphs, in short, focus groups were comprised of millennials who were not necessarily actively involved in justice-related activities. In contrast, interviews were comprised of millennials who were actively involved in justice-related activities. My goal in doing focus groups was to gain a broad understanding of justice among millennials. Then, interviews allowed me to explore more deeply the specific views of those millennials who engage in justice regularly. I acknowledge that different methods (focus groups compared to interviews) will provide different environments for dialogue. I also recognize that my methodology affects the outcomes of my research.

For interviews, I maintained the age and nationality delimitation (all participants were born between 1980 and 2000 and from the U.S.[94]). I began recruiting participants from those I knew who worked in justice-related fields and then used snowball sampling to find other participants. All those who participated in interviews were currently or had recently been directly involved in a ministry that they deemed a justice-related ministry. To ensure this, I asked interview participants if they viewed their work as justice-related. Most of those I interviewed

[94] One exception to note was a person whose father was part of the U.S. government stationed in Mexico when she was born. Her family moved to the U.S., but then spent much of her growing up years in Canada.

had ties to the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, though I explain some challenges with this as a delimiting factor in the following paragraphs.

For focus groups, I maintained the age delimitation and also largely maintained the delimitation of United States millennials, though I had one exception. During a focus group at one university, I had a participant who was not raised in the United States. Rather than dismissing the student from the focus group (the student was actually very interested in participating), I decided to use the student's observations as a test case for the global compatibility of some of my theories. Surprisingly, his experience significantly mirrored the experiences of United States students. In my research, this individual is considered one of the focus group participants. I also did not expect focus groups to be made up of people who were actively involved in justice-related activities. This does not mean that there were not those that were, but my goal for focus groups was to get a broad sweep of millennials.

A goal of this research was to look at issues of justice within denominational groups that identify with the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.[95] I knew, prior to embarking on the research, that this may be problematic. Pew Research found that 35% of adult millennials (born 1981-1996) do not hold religious affiliation. This is compared to 23% of Generation X and only 17% of boomers who do not hold religious affiliation.[96] Jim and Judy Raymo concluded the same in their research, millennials are more likely than the general population to identify as unaffiliated or as holding nontraditional beliefs.[97] From the outset, I knew that religious affiliation may prove to be

[95] My reasoning for choosing the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is partly personal as it is the tradition I have grown up in and currently serve in. It is also, as I will expound on more in the coming chapters, a tradition that has a number of denominations which were founded on justice and take practices of faith seriously (two elements that enliven justice conversations). But, as opposed to other traditions, like the Reformed tradition, we have had less emphasis theologically in the concept of justice.

[96] Michael Lipka, "Millennials Increasingly Are Driving Growth of 'Nones,'" *Pew Research Center* (blog), May 12, 2015, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/.

[97] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 15.

a more fluid experience for the millennials I encountered. Though I knew I would be working with Christians, even within Christian circles, millennials are much less tied to traditional denominational lines.

The statistics given by Pew Research and others seemed to match the narrative I found in my research. For instance, in one interview, a pastor mentioned that he would be willing to work in another denomination if the right position came forward. He had been in the same denomination since high school but felt less attachment to the denomination as to his calling.[98] In another, and probably more poignant case, a participant discussed her religious background explaining that she was raised in a Southern Baptist church, but, now in college, was currently attending an Anglican church. Although, she added, on some occasions she also visited a Free Methodist Church she liked. I asked her if she would share what she marked as her affiliation on the demographic portion of the consent form and she admitted to listing "United Methodist" because that was the denomination with which she felt she most closely aligned.[99] There is a fluidity within millennials in terms of denominational affiliation. To clarify, I am not implying that denominations were not important to participants, but that they experienced such variety within denominational churches that they often found themselves connected with a specific local expression of a denomination rather than with a denomination as a whole.

What this meant for my research was that, though I worked to engage specifically within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, my research naturally flowed outside of those borders. In some cases, I met with people who were currently attending Wesleyan-Holiness tradition churches but had not attended them when they were younger. In other cases, I met with people who were no longer attending Wesleyan-Holiness tradition churches, but who had grown up within the

[98] Interview 5, September 23, 2016.

[99] Focus Group 8, March 2, 2017.

tradition. Strict delineation would not have captured a clear picture as it would have inevitably favored millennials who maintain a strong hold to religious affiliation, which, based on my research and confirmed in numerous others, is no longer normative.

Nonetheless, I still endeavored to gain a Wesleyan-Holiness perspective in my research, which I believe I have done. My method was to engage within circles closely tied to a Wesleyan-Holiness denomination. For instance, my focus groups were mainly conducted on four college campuses: Anderson University and School of Theology, Indiana Wesleyan University, Asbury Theological Seminary, and Asbury University. Each of these universities, apart from Asbury, is closely affiliated with a Wesleyan-Holiness tradition denomination: Church of God (Anderson) and Wesleyan, respectively. Asbury, though not directly linked with any denomination, holds definitive Wesleyan roots and was birthed out of the Methodist Church. By staying close to these Wesleyan-Holiness denominationally affiliated institutions, I was able to engage a population that, at the very least, has been influenced in their academic career at a Wesleyan-Holiness tradition school.

One interesting aspect that was not an initial expectation was the plethora of pastors that were part of the interview process. For instance, I met a young person from a local, Indianapolis non-profit serving a largely Latino community. I knew he was connected to the Nazarene denomination and even attended a Nazarene university. I asked to interview him and he kindly obliged. In the interview, I found out that he was also an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene and worked with a church plant in addition his full-time work at the community center. I asked if there were others from the community center I should interview, and he gave me two other names. Both of these suggestions were also ordained Nazarene pastors. I found this elsewhere as well, there is a contingent of young people who see the church as a community

where they can express their views of justice even to the point of being ordained and leading congregations in that way.

The final explanation of my sources and a challenge I faced was the predominance of white, or Anglo-background, millennials I engaged.[100] I have chosen not to distinguish race/ethnicity as a delimitation of my research as I had not initially intended it to be delimiting factor by design. At the same time, I also do not want to invalidate or inaccurately represent the non-white voices I engaged. But, it is important to note, and it will be evident in the demographic statistics I give in the next section, that the majority of those I engaged came from white families which certainly affects the views and responses I received through my research. In addition to those white voices, I also engaged with millennials who self-identified as Latino, Black, White/Indian, White/Black, and White/Latino.

Collection of Data

In order to answer my three research questions, I broke up focus groups and interviews into three sections of questions: definitions, sources, and practices. These three areas correspond to the three research questions. The questions asked in each section were, for the most part, the same between the two segments of human research (focus groups and interviews), but the time spent on each section was different depending on the interest and engagement of the participant(s). In each setting, I allowed the participant(s) to control the speed and depth with which each section was engaged, giving more time where they felt more time was needed. In

[100] In this research, I am choosing to predominately use the terms white and black as opposed to the categories of Anglo and African-American. I recognize that with any racial categories there is significant overlap and inaccuracy. I am using these terms not to espouse any specific categorizing of race. On the demographic information of the release form (*Appendix A*) the categories offered to distinguish these two were Black/African-American and White.

contrast to focus groups, for those I interviewed I added a section on their family and life history which I used to gain context for their views on justice.

Focus Group Procedure. In terms of the focus group, I spent the most time engaging questions related to defining justice. The questions (*see Appendix C*) revolved around different ways one might conceptualize an idea. I asked for defining characteristics, images that relate, explanatory stories of how they would explain it, and so on. Though each focus group was unique, I estimate over half the time was spent on this first section.

The other two sections I focused on were sources and practices. I asked about what sources inform their views in order for them to self-identify the foundations on which they were building their concept of justice. This was interesting not only in what was said, but what was omitted. I spent the least amount of time on practices, as I expected to gain more detailed explanation of practices from the interviews which were done of those who were currently involved in justice-related work. The questions I asked related to practices revolved around kinds of involvement and frequency.

Focus groups were conducted through church and university connections. Two churches (Park Place Church of God in Anderson, Indiana and Hope Community Church in Andover, Kansas) provided access to students and leadership for focus groups. The predominant location for focus group research was in coordination with three Christian universities and two seminaries (Anderson University, Asbury University, Indiana Wesleyan University, Anderson University School of Theology, and Asbury Theological Seminary). Institutional Review Board approval from each institution was acquired (*see Appendices D, E, F, G*).[101]

[101] Note that Asbury University and Asbury Theological Seminary are separate institutions and thus, have different IRB recognition. In contrast, Anderson University and the Anderson University School of Theology are part of the same institution and only one IRB approval was required.

The demographics of the focus groups varied, but was predominately younger millennials. The age range was 18-31 with an average age of 21.77. In terms of length of time, some focus groups lasted over an hour with the shortest just over 20 minutes. The average length was 48 minutes, but in each instance, I let the participants determine the pace and when it was natural to move on to the next topic.

In terms of gender, I was disappointed that my focus groups were so disproportionate. Females made up two-thirds of my participants. My intention was to have a more even demographic spread, something I was able to control more easily with those I interviewed. Contacts were made to both male and female participants, and yet, those that took time to join a focus group tended to be female. Toward the end of the research I attempted a few predominately male focus groups (in order to bridge the gender gap), but even in my attempt to recruit males, the final two focus groups only had a combined six males and four females.

Denominational affiliation was varied within the focus groups. As I mentioned above, I knew using denomination as a delimiting factor would be difficult, but my plan was to connect with students on denominationally affiliated campuses to have the best opportunity to engage within Wesleyan-Holiness denominations. The largest subset in terms of denomination was non-denominational (31%). This distinction is problematic as non-denominational churches vary widely in both belief and practice. The second largest denominational subset was Church of God (Anderson) at 28%. Following these two subsets, Wesleyans (9%), United Methodist (8%), and Salvation Army (5%) make up the final groupings of denominations. The final 19% (14 participants) offer denominations ranging from those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition (such as Brethren and Christian and Missionary Alliance), to fringe Wesleyan-Holiness tradition churches (such as Assemblies of God), to non-Wesleyan-Holiness tradition churches (such as

Anglican, Apostolic, Baptist, Free Will Baptist, Southern Baptist, Mennonite, and Catholic). Some even chose more than one tradition.

In terms of education level, 60% of my participants had completed high school and were currently in college. After that, 15% were college graduates, another 15% were college graduates who were currently in graduate school, and 9% had graduate degrees with the remaining 1% being high school graduates who were not in college (though the participant may have chosen that option because of the timing of the interview being in the summer between high school and college).

In my research, I knew my focus would primarily be on white millennials. I did not make this a delimiting factor, but I knew that the channels by which I was engaging millennials would produce more white than non-white participants. For instance, many Christian universities (including many Wesleyan-Holiness Christian universities) are predominately white. I want to be clear that my goal was not to ignore the voices of non-white millennials. In fact, I believe that the next step in research on views of justice within the millennial generation must look primarily at non-white voices. This is imperative because the point of contact for non-white millennials, in terms of justice discourse, is different than it is for white millennials. More simply, white millennials do not normally draw on a view of justice through their experience of injustice. In the few conversations I had with non-white millennials, it was apparent that personal experiences of prejudice and injustice inform their views in ways that white millennials do not fully understand. My focus groups were predominately white (89%) with 5% identifying as African-American, 3% as Latino, 3% as multi-ethnic.

All but one focus group was done in person. The one focus group not done in person was due to travel conditions and was instead done via Skype. Focus groups were conducted in a classroom or study room space and were recorded for transcription. My intention was to have

focus groups that were a minimum of three people and a maximum of five. Eleven of my focus groups fit within that range while eight did not.[102] The intention of having three to five people was so that there were multiple voices involved, but not so many that people felt they could not share. Those which only had two people were still valuable in terms of content and for those larger than five, I gave more time to complete the focus group. In this way, the size was not a hinderance in the research. All participants completed a consent form (*see Appendix A*) prior to the discussion. The consent form included demographic information which was used to give context to the groups who participated in the research.

Interview Procedure. Like the focus groups, I asked questions related to definitions, sources, and practices (*see Appendix B)*. With each interview, though, I began the conversation gaining critical background and historical knowledge. This context, especially of family history and religious upbringing, helped frame the latter conversations. As I mentioned, I used many of the same definition and source questions as I did with focus groups. But, because interviews were done with those actively involved in justice, the final section on practices tended to be more extensive than with focus groups. This additional time, with biographical information, made interviews slightly longer than their focus group counterparts. The shortest interviews were around 30 minutes and the longest was nearly an hour and a half. The average time was 54 minutes.

The demographics for the interviews was easier to manage. For instance, of the 25 interview participants, I had 48% female and 52% male participation. This proportionality was more even than I was able to achieve for the focus groups.

[102] I had four focus groups where only two people were involved. I had two focus groups with six people and two with seven.

The age of millennials for interviews ranged from 22-37 with an average age of 29.68. This is an 8-year gap between the average age of focus groups versus interviews and this plays a significant role in the information I gathered. Part of this was because of my emphasis on those engaged in justice-related activities, which meant that I connected with more post-college and career millennials.

As with gender, I was able to get a more proportional outcome for denominational affiliation with interviews than I was with the focus groups. For interviews, about a third of the participants were Church of God (Anderson), 20% identified as Wesleyan, and 20% as Nazarene. After that, I had 12% who identified as non-denominational and 16% who identified with more than one denomination.

Educational background was another difference between focus groups and interviews. My focus groups were mostly college students. For interviews, 40% of my participants had already completed college and another 56% had also done further graduate education. The other 4% had completed high school, but no other educational training.

As with focus groups, my intent was not to look solely at white millennials, but I realized that this would be the majority subset for my research. With that, 88% of those I interviewed identified as white, with 4% choosing categories of Latino, 4% choosing multi-ethnic, and 4% choosing not to identify.

Interviews were done both in person and via technology (phone and Skype). For interviews, 64% were done in person, 24% were done over the phone, and 12% were done via Skype. The reason for this was to engage those living outside of the Midwest. All participants completed a consent form regardless of how the interview was conducted.

Though focus groups and interviews are affected by the means in which they are administered, the technological expertise and prevalence of technology for relational

connectivity (i.e., Facebook and other similar virtual communities) within the millennial generation made the use of Skype and phone calls less of a hindrance to the process than might have been expected.

Within my research, I did nearly 19 hours of recorded interviews with millennials about their views of justice and over 15 hours of recorded focus groups for a total of 33 hours and 50 minutes of recorded dialogue. This amounted to nearly 500 pages of interview and focus group transcripts. Though the amount of material is significant, it is not simply the quantity, but quality of the interviews and focus groups that makes this research valuable. The conversations were candid and offered significant content for understanding justice within the millennial context.

Analysis and Integration of Data

In terms of analysis and integration of data, I first discuss my approach to analysis and then offer the specifics for how I integrated the data into the form it is in for the remainder of my research. The approach to analysis of the data I collected utilized theological and sociological methods. Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen's *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, gives some framework for ethnographic inquiry in connection to theology. Their model is one that, rather than offering broad theological meta-narratives, offers particularist narratives that focus on communities. As Scharen and Vigen state, "The aim is to understand what God, human relationships, and the world look like from their [the participant's] perspective – to take them seriously as a source of wisdom and to de-center our own assumptions and evaluations."[103] Scharen and Vigen see how ethnography allows the researcher to take seriously humanity and the incarnation, but also the divine.[104] It is within the framework of ethnographic inquiry that I

[103] Christian Batalden Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, eds., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), 16.

[104] Scharen and Vigen, 73.

collected, analyzed, and integrated the data.[105] Another resource that was utilized in terms of the ethnographic interview was the work of James Spradley.[106] Spradley's *Ethnographic Interview* helped with the development of dialogue that allowed the participant to share freely and honestly about their understanding of their world.

Next, I share some of how I integrated the data I collected. In terms of demographic information, on the back of the consent form I asked for four pieces of demographic data: birthdate, education level, race/ethnicity, and denominational affiliation. All of this information was self-reported, so the demographic information shared in the research is based on the information that was given by the participant. I compiled the information, including names, on a spreadsheet and it is from that spreadsheet that I drew my demographic data.

For all interviews and focus groups, I recorded them (in order to be attentive to the conversation) and then transcribed them later. I personally transcribed all but a few, for which I used a transcription service that I paid for. While reviewing the data, I began to see themes and then developed a system to explore these themes. Because I used a similar formula for each interview and focus group, I was able to map responses on a spreadsheet. I did not employ the use of any coding software. Instead, for each response to a question, I created a category for the response (for instance, "equality"). When I received a response that matched a previous response, I would add it to same category. When a new response emerged, I created a new category. I was careful to ask follow-up questions in the interviews and focus groups to attempt to understand some of the nuance of each response I received, though any error in data integration was based on how I categorized the information. This categorization allowed me to get statistical data connected to the themes that emerged from focus groups and interviews. And,

[105] The authors offer four values for participating in ethnography: humility, reflexivity, collaborative, and audacious. I worked to maintain these values throughout the ethnographic process. Scharen and Vigen, 17.

[106] James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979).

because I also collected personal data, I was able to compare these themes across demographic categories (such as age, gender, education, etc.).

Throughout the research, I discuss the two settings in which I collected human research data as "interview" and "focus group." In terms of citing interviews and focus groups, readers will find I distinguish between these two categories in each footnoted citation. I chose to make this distinction in each citation because the difference between the two groups is paramount to my research findings. The only additional information in the citation is the date and the corresponding number of the interview or the focus group. The number coincides with a list that includes the name and demographic information of the interview or focus group participants. I use numbers only so that a person's identity is kept anonymous in the research.

Reflexivity

It is also important, at this juncture, to identify biases that I bring to the study. First, I am a millennial who is passionate about and has participated in Christian social engagement with emphases on issues of justice. I worked for two years as a youth pastor listening to, teaching, and directing this generation I am writing about. After that, I worked for five years as a missions pastor where one of my specific areas of ministry was to encourage the participation of millennials in discussions about missions and social engagement through a group I developed, organized, and facilitated called the Youth Missions Institute.

Besides my bias as a millennial interested in the topic I am writing about, another bias is my social location as a white, middle-class American. Each of these plays a specific role in my social location (and even my ability to study the phenomenon of justice). I am American: I have chosen to study justice in the United States, not because I think it is more or less in need of research, but because I thought that to broaden the scope would make the research

unmanageable. I am part of the middle-class: I realize that my thoughts are bound up in the culture of the middle-class, and though I think that some of the ideas presented in the research are systemic in nature, in that they are evident in all areas of socio-economic status, others are certainly bound to my context. I am white: I am certainly aware of how my social location as a white person affects the research I do. Though I have tried to minimize my bias by listening closely to my research participants, I cannot assume my reading of my research is anything but tied to my social context. But I hope that some of the ideas presented can transcend that context or, at least, offer points of connection for those coming from other contexts.

Theoretical Framework

With my intention to integrate theology with social theory, I wanted a framework that would allow for the ethnographically rich data I collected to inform an emerging contextual theology. Within anthropology there is a growing subset of research called "lived religion."[107] A lived religion approach allows researchers to see religious conviction as an integrated part of a person's identity. One important aspect of a lived religion approach is that it challenges the bifurcations of modernist paradigms like sacred/profane, religious/secular, and physical/metaphysical.[108] This is important as many of the participants I engaged with emerge from a post/late-modern paradigm. A lived religion approach allows participants to create their own meaning of their entire life, not relegating religious beliefs and actions to those areas that

[107] Robert Orsi, prominent thinker of lived religion, discusses it as a holistic view of beliefs and practices. Robert A. Orsi, "Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live In? Special Presidential Plenary Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Salt Lake City, November 2, 2002," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 2 (2003): 172.

[108] David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5–6.

seem to bear religious significance. In chapter five, I utilize the work of anthropologist James Bielo who engages the concept of lived religion in his research.[109]

Finally, since my focus is on Christian aspects of religious life and the theological lenses through which adherents understand the work they are participating in, I am choosing to discuss lived religion as lived theology. This allows me the ability to focus on the theology behind the religious lives being expressed. I want to not only understand the religious lives of millennials, but the ways they understand, or theologize about, their religious lives. In this way, lived theology offers a more introspective framework and recognizes the ability of those being researched to express the ways they think about their faith.

Conclusion

Outline of Work

Below is a brief outline of the remaining four chapters and conclusion to my research.

In chapter two, I set the historical context in terms of the theological construction of justice from the beginning of the 1900s until now. In the first section, I look at how four components, the social gospel and fundamentalist divide, dispensational premillennial theology, evolution, and Marxism caused a divide in theological understandings of justice. In closing, I look specifically at justice within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The goal of this chapter is to show the shifting view of justice throughout the twentieth-century which led to, as millennials perceive, a lack of discourse around justice within evangelical Christian circles at the time millennials grew up in the church.

[109] James S Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

In chapter three, I explore characteristics of the millennial generation and how their context leads them to ground their views of justice. I utilize the work of Neil Howe and William Strauss and their three generational characteristics of common location in history, shared belief, and shared behavior. In each of those categories, I look at one key element that emerged from my research that coincides with the characteristic: technology, paradox, and family, respectively. The goal of this chapter is to lay the foundation of the millennial context which aids in understanding how they construct their view of justice, discussed in the following chapter.

In chapter four, I focus on the question of how millennials define justice. This includes what issues millennials place in the category of justice. There are three significant findings that I highlight in the chapter: two different views about the definition of righting wrongs, the prevalence of equality language, and the absence of the role of the Bible and church. The goal of this chapter is to express the unique iterations of justice that emerge from the millennial context.

In chapter five, I draw conclusions on how justice is practiced by millennials, utilizing the concept of lived theology. I begin the chapter with a section on practices within Christian tradition and then specifically within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. I then discuss the framework of lived theology and look at it through millennial characteristics of justice. I close the chapter with five stories from millennials engaged in justice and how their view of justice can be understood as a lived theology shaped by their practice. The goal of this chapter is to integrate the millennial context (chapter three) and definitions of justice (chapter four) and show how that influences, and is influenced by, their practice.

Finally, in the conclusion, I draw together the multiple streams of discourse, summarize my work, and offer some suggestions for further study.

Final Note

I want to offer one note as I conclude my introduction to this study. The goal of this research was not to reduce millennials to a category or predict how they will approach the world in the future, it was to listen to them.[110] There are plenty of resources, from scholarly articles to pithy online videos, that attempt to pinpoint millennial characteristics in what can easily be experienced by millennials as, at best, ill-informed attempts to tame the wild[111] or, at worst, demeaning caricatures. The goal of this research is not to do either. I will not offer practical, how-to tips for parents who are bewildered by their millennial children or soothsay the way millennials will act or vote or work. I offer an ethnographic look at how a generation views a specific topic, justice, which has emerged as a common theme in their language and action. I explore how their lives, shaped by relationships and technology, lead them to experience and express this concept in unique ways, a combination of learning and living out. This study is deeply and intimately rooted in stories from a generation, not in the simplistic labeling that adorns internet diatribes, but in the ever-growing, ever-changing, ever-maturing intersection of faith and life that is encapsulated by the term justice.

I started this introductory chapter stating that millennials are beginning to place the term justice in new categories, categories which seem different than those of their parents. Because of this, Christians find themselves in a unique moment, where one view of justice is diminishing while another is emerging. Anne Fadiman, in her book on the Hmong people, writes about finding oneself at a point of intersection:

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[110] This was one of the most common themes I heard as I researched; millennials dislike all the talk about millennials. Mostly because they see it as a generalization that does not offer a full picture of their emerging community (I speak to this in chapter three when I talk about Howe and Strauss' generational characteristic of perceived membership) . When we lay stereotypes aside, there are unique aspects of millennials that position them to view and enact justice in new and different ways.

[111] For instance, any of a number of articles that tell people how to deal with millennials in the workplace.

> I have always felt that the action most worth watching is not at the center of things but where edges meet. I like shorelines, weather fronts, international borders. There are interesting frictions and incongruities in these places, and often, if you stand at the point of tangency, you can see both sides better than if you were in the middle of either one.[112]

For the last number of years, I have stood on the edge and watched. I have seen how millennials have started putting justice into new categories. I have seen how these categories are opening up new iterations and experimentations within justice-related activities. I have listened to stories, asked questions, and participated with millennials who are living out justice in tangible ways. And, as I look to the past and research the present, I find hope for the future.

[112] Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*, Paperback edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), viii.

CHAPTER TWO

Justice in Recent Historical Context

Introduction

"Although words and concepts may remain outwardly the same for centuries, their particular functions and meanings do not and could not remain static – not as long as individuals attempt to use them to explain new social circumstances and make meaningful new social behavior."[1] The term justice is undergoing reconstruction in the hands of millennials. New social circumstances and behaviors create new or reconstructed iterations of justice which impact individuals, communities, churches, universities, the business realm, and any other societal space millennials inhabit. The overall goal of this research is to better understand a small subset of those engaged in this reconstruction process, looking at discourses and practices of justice emerging from Wesleyan-Holiness millennials. But before reconstruction can be understood, one must understand the context which precipitated the reconstruction in the first place. To do this, it is imperative to understand the shifting societal, and specifically Christian, landscapes from which the millennial views of justice emerge.

In this chapter, I offer a historical background, rooted in the specific American theological and socio-historical context, providing various probable causes for the interpretations of justice that emerged within Christian communities in the late-twentieth century. It is within this social context, in the 1980s to early 2000s, that millennials first encountered meanings for justice (or, for some, a lack of meaning). First, I trace two theological and two socio-historical threads, showing how theological and sociological changes led to a renegotiation of justice away

[1] American historian Gordon Wood, as quoted in Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

from previously held beliefs. Next, after sharing how justice has been renegotiated within Christian circles in the twentieth-century, I briefly sketch how, even among the subset of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, there is evidence of similar movements. This chapter on socio-historical context sets the foundation for the millennial research that follows.

Historical Context

In 1987, Christian ethicist Karen Lebacqz made a disheartening statement in her book *Justice in an Unjust World,* writing "there is no single agreed standard for justice in our contemporary world."[2] Chris Sugden, Anglican theologian and historian, wrote that, in terms of justice, prior to 1989 anything more than relief to the poor was looked on with suspicion by evangelicals.[3] Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright adds that, "the zeal for evangelism was equal only to a suspicion of any form of Christian social concern or conscience about issues of justice. That was the domain of liberals and ecumenicals, and a betrayal of the pure gospel."[4] By the 1980s the concept of justice understood, at least in part, as social responsibility had undergone significant changes within the Christian community. In some circles, as Lebacqz notes, the definition was ambiguous and in other circles, as Sugden and Wright describe, it was seen with suspicion or wholly rejected. Though words and concepts shift over time, it is not simply the word justice that was renegotiated, but the underlying reasoning for engaging in social action as a part of the Christian faith tradition.

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[2] Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1987), 7.

[3] Chris Sugden, "Mission as Transformation – Its Journey Among Evangelicals since Lusanne 1" in Brian E Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma, *Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 32.

[4] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006), 321.

To understand this change, one must recognize how contradictory this is compared to Christian views from just a century prior. The nineteenth-century saw engagement in social issues nationally and internationally where Christians challenged the foundations of slavery at home and developed and ran social programs like schools, hospitals, and feeding programs.[5] Lisa Sharon Harper reflects on revival preacher Charles Finney, who was said to have started the altar call to offer people the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the kingdom of God. But Finney also required them to live outside the institution of slavery. Finney readily spoke against not only personal, but structural sins. "And when they wiped away their tears and opened their eyes, Finney thrust a pen into their hands and pointed them to sign-up sheets for the abolitionist movement. This is what it meant to be an evangelical Christian in the 1800s."[6]

In this section, I show how historical changes within evangelical Christian circles[7] led to ecclesial settings in the mid to late 1980s, and beyond, where the concept of justice was either avoided or renegotiated away from a connection to social responsibility.[8] When exploring historical changes around justice, one discovers a strong interplay between theological and sociological factors. Sometimes a social change affects the way one understands theology. This was the case for evolution, where theology was slowly relegated to only spiritual matters. In other instances, theological variances perpetuate social change. This was the case for

[5] For more on this, see Woodberry's look at "conversionary protestant" missions work: Robert D. Woodberry, "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 02 (May 2012): 244–74.

[6] Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: WaterBrook, 2016), 7.

[7] Though one can find changes within many Christian communities, much of the commentary I am going to share relates more with white, evangelical Christians than other demographic groups.

[8] I am not implying that all evangelical churches in the 1980s avoided or renegotiated justice. But, this research points to what I experienced in my church and what those I interviewed expressed about their church experience growing up, a lack of justice dialogue.

dispensational theology, that led to new views of how humanity interacts within creation.[9] The goal is not to exhaust the historical narrative in regard to justice, but instead, to paint a picture that pieces together historical, theological, and sociological variables that each offer part of the explanation of changes in views of justice throughout the twentieth-century. I focus on two theological and two historical changes during the early to mid-twentieth century. Next, I show how each of these changes influenced the Christian evangelical thought of the time. Finally, I show how each change caused a renegotiation of the concept of justice. The two theological changes I explore are the theological separation of the social gospel and fundamentalism and the emergence (and acceptance) of dispensational, premillennial theology. The two socio-historical changes I explore are the acceptance of evolutionary thought and the emergence of Marxism.

Social Gospel and Fundamentalism

The first theological change I explore is the social gospel and fundamentalist split during the early twentieth-century. This significant moment in history has been analyzed and explored in many writings over the last half century as scholars have wrestled with the theological division between social action and evangelism. Though this is one layer, it is important to nuance that understanding to gain a full perspective of the change. I start by explaining the history of the social gospel and fundamentalist split. Next, I discuss the individualizing of faith that this split precipitated. Finally, I show how these changes led to a spiritualized understanding of justice as individual justification.

Early in the twentieth-century a gap between the Social Gospel movement and conservative evangelical thinkers grew as the former emphasized the biblical imperative of social

[9] Weber also expressed this movement in regard to capitalism and utility and objectification of things within the Protestant paradigm. Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (Lexington, Ky.: Renaissance Classics, 2013).

responsibility and the latter an individualized spirituality. The Social Gospel movement was largely influenced by the writing of Walter Rauschenbusch and characterized by more progressive, liberal theologies. On the other hand, conservative voices, from fundamentalist to evangelical, emphasized personal salvation.[10] Though it is certainly a generalization to assume there were only two categories of Christians, Robert Wuthnow says that even with the recognition of the oversimplification there is general agreement on three things: "(a) the reality of the division between two opposing camps; (b) the predominance of 'fundamentalists,' 'evangelicals,' and 'religious conservatives' in one and the predominance of 'religious liberals,' 'humanists,' and 'secularists' in the other; and (c) the presence of deep hostility and misgiving between the two."[11] This hostility is the first major complication to a unified definition for justice within Christian circles.

One of the most recognized historical voices writing about this split is David Moberg. Moberg writes of the "Great Reversal", borrowing Timothy L. Smith's term, that between 1910 and 1930 a shift happened among evangelicals in regard to their stance on and involvement in social issues.[12] Moberg gives an example of A.C. Dixon, an evangelist who edited *The Fundamentals* and was a major opponent of the Social Gospel movement. Dixon, early in his pastorate, put aside money to help with the physical ailments of people in his community assuming that upon their physical improvement they would be ready and willing to hear the

[10] Wesleyans were not necessarily fundamentalist, or evangelicals, at the start of the 20th century. But as those terms began to represent mainstream, conservative theological traditions, many Wesleyan groups began to associate with these ideas.

[11] Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 340.

[12] David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal; Evangelism versus Social Concern*, 1st ed., Evangelical Perspectives (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972), 30.

gospel message. When this did not happen as planned, Dixon gave up this method and leaned solely on "true evangelism, the divine act of making individuals truly Christian."[13]

George Marsden claims the rise of the Social Gospel is the cause of the Great Reversal.[14] Though Marsden agrees with the idea that there was a movement away from social concern by more evangelical strands of Christianity, Marsden also challenges Moberg's "Great Reversal" as simplistic. Instead, Marsden suggests two stages of movement rather than one. First, from 1865-1900 evangelical Christians began showing a lack of interest in political action, though this did not preclude them from participation in private charity. The second movement, from 1900-1930 is when the reversal took full form and "when all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role."[15] Two major factors which aided in the split, which many scholars note and will be discussed subsequently, were evolution and dispensational, premillennial theology.

The division, though precipitated by sociological factors, was theologically driven. As many scholars have said, the division was not that progressive liberals supported social action and that fundamentalists did not, social action was a major part of the conservative faith just a generation prior. But as Marsden expresses, "It was rather that the Social Gospel emphasized social concern in an exclusivistic way which seemed to undercut the relevance of the message of eternal salvation through trust in Christ's atoning work."[16] Though the division is often expressed as related to social action, conservative evangelicals were concerned with how social action was oriented within the theological framework. The Social Gospel movement began expressing

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[13] Moberg, 32.

[14] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 91.

[15] Marsden, 86.

[16] Marsden, 92.

theology through a modernist lens, relying on the current historical-critical reading of scripture, propagated by Walter Rauschenbusch. This theological framework emphasized the humanity of Jesus. Fundamentalists, in opposition to this perspective, accentuated Jesus' deity in a way that spiritualized Jesus' role in the world and, consequently, the Christians' duty to humanity. The theological framework that was being expressed was one of a significantly more individualized reading of salvation than that of their social gospel counterparts.

As one outcome of this shift, fundamentalists put a growing emphasis on personal, individual salvation. Enlightenment thinking, emerging just centuries prior, makes this a possibility. For that reason, I offer an abbreviated sketch of how the enlightenment impacted the theological framework of fundamentalists. As David Bosch states, the enlightenment gave society the "emancipated, autonomous individual."[17] This is not to say that the individual was not present prior to enlightenment, but persons still functioned within the community of the church. This theological shift narrowed faith to an individual endeavor and bifurcated the physical and spiritual. A person was now compartmentalized into areas of being: physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, and so on. The individualizing of faith placed it within the spiritual compartment.

The enlightenment was not an American phenomenon; it started in western Europe and affected many parts of western Europe and North America. But the view of the autonomous individual that emerged from enlightenment thinking coupled with the developing and increasing individualism of American society (a people marked by the courage to set off on their own to conquer the "barren lands" of the west) created a view of the individual that is largely divorced from a need for society. And this spirit of individualism permeated Christianity. As Patrick

[17] David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth anniversary ed, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 16 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2011), 273.

Nachtigall remarks, the United States is a place "where individuals could thrive, and that individualistic spirit shaped its Christian heritage."[18]

Robert Handy offers an explanation of the social gospel split that incorporates this view of individualism. Handy says in the first two decades of the twentieth-century, social action was widespread in Christianity, but the way in which social action was achieved was understood differently by fundamentalists and social gospel leaders.[19] The social gospel is better used to describe those "reform-minded Protestants who were challenging the individualistic social ethic so dominant at the time and seeking to stress both social and individual salvation, though that balance was not easy to keep."[20] Handy suggests that some who would be considered prominent liberal theologians did not participate in any kind of social reform, a major component of what some understood to separate liberal theologians from fundamentalist evangelicals. Handy's clarity in suggesting that it is too broad a sweep to suggest that evangelicals were not participating at all in social reform is a helpful, nuanced critique. Instead, Handy suggests that evangelical's view of how to reform society was shaped by their individualistic theology. Evangelicals believed that one reforms the person first and that social reform was an outflow of that individual's salvation. Part of the challenge between simply saying that the conservative side of Christianity abandoned social action while the liberal side maintained it is that it misunderstands, as George Marsden has expressed, the underlying reasoning behind the shift. Evangelicals moved toward a theology that derived social action from the private, not public or

[18] Patrick Nachtigall, *In God We Trust?: A Challenge to American Evangelicals* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, Inc, 2015), 46.

[19] Found in Noll, *Religion and American Politics*, 284.

[20] Noll, 284–85.

social spheres.[21] Evangelicals, like Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday did not believe it was possible to reform society as a whole, but instead focused on the individual.[22]

The individualized faith of evangelical Christianity made social engagement (outside of engagement for evangelistic purposes) unnecessary and inadequate.[23] In a book confessing the places where evangelical Christianity has gone wrong, authors Troy Jackson, Lisa Sharon Harper, Soong Chan Rah, and Mae Elise Cannon discuss the division of evangelism and social action in the Social Gospel movement. They write that evangelism and social action were more balanced in the nineteenth-century, as expressed in the work of the Salvation Army and the abolition of slavery. "Twentieth-century evangelicalism witnessed the transition from a holistic understanding of the gospel to a more reductionist individual expression."[24] They go on to say:

> Jesus, however, came for the entire spectrum of human sinfulness. For American Christianity to focus exclusively on the personal nature of Jesus' work on the cross actually diminishes that work. Western culture's focus on the redemption of the individual prevents our engagement with other forms of sin, reducing Jesus to a purely personal God.[25]

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[21] Bryant Myers writes that this shift has continued as the role of the church in society shifted because of globalization leading to a view of church and its mission as pertaining to the private realm of spiritual matters. Bryant L. Myers, *Engaging Globalization: The Poor, Christian Mission, and Our Hyperconnected World*, Mission in Global Community (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 102.

[22] Moberg, *The Great Reversal; Evangelism versus Social Concern*, 33.

[23] Though this was predominately true, there are those who challenge the oversimplification of this kind of narrative. One example of a contrasting narrative to the common claim of a lack of social action by evangelicals in the early 1900s, can be found in Heather Curtis' *Holy Humanitarians.* Her research looks at Louis Klopsch and Thomas De Witt Talmage who partnered together to produce the Christian Herald, a Christian publication around the turn of the century that encouraged Christians to engage in humanitarian relief work around the world. Though Curtis' work offers a corrective to the oversimplification of Christian social engagement (showing how Klopsch and Talmage used stories, articles, and images to encourage charity through financial giving by Christians toward the vulnerable), the encouragement of the Christian Herald was slanted toward relief work, aiding in immediate physical needs like hunger relief. Though this is important work, and certainly offers an important historical perspective, for my purposes, the work of Klopsch and Talmage did not as often challenge structural issues which comes with engaging justice. Though this was certainly part of their work (they engaged political leaders), their goal was not to deal with structural issues that caused the need for relief, but to offer compassion to those in need. Heather D. Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018).

[24] Mae Elise Cannon et al., *Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 30.

[25] Cannon et al., 31.

The view of Jesus and his work as purely personal, and primarily spiritual, framed evangelical Christianity in a way that left little need to engage structural issues.[26]

The social gospel and fundamentalist split was a paramount theological shift that precipitated and reflected an individualizing and spiritualizing of evangelical faith. These theological and sociological factors influenced views of justice. As faith was being recast in more spiritualized and individualized terms so justice, as a consequence, was being reimagined in a strictly spiritual, individualized sense tied to justification. This movement emphasized Jesus' role in justification and his deity but deemphasized the Christian's role in promoting justice within society. The disconnect of the physical and spiritual made it possible to promote and pursue a wholly spiritual justice through justification without ramifications in the physical world. This move to a predominately spiritualized understanding of faith made the entrance of dispensational premillennialism, the next theological change I discuss, an easy transition for many evangelicals.

Dispensational Premillennial Theology

The second theological change I explore is the rise of dispensational premillennial theology. As will be evident, these theological developments are shaped by the historical context in which they happen. For this section, I start by explaining the theological history of dispensational eschatology. Next, I show how this theology led to a loss of reverence for creation. Finally, I show how these changes promoted an other-worldly view of justice as primarily eschatological in nature.

[26] Other authors have focused on the spiritual consequences of fundamentalist theology, namely the way Jesus' divinity was expressed over his humanity: "The split led evangelicals to focus more on Jesus' divinity than on his humanity; truncated their interest in doctrines of creation, providence, and the new creation; and limited theological discussion over the way that power was structured and used by a host of actors in society in economic, environmental, judicial, security, and governance areas," (*Advocating for Justice,* 31).

After the division between social gospel and fundamentalist Christians, the next important theological movement that challenged a view of justice as social concern is the rise of dispensational, premillennial theology. "Dispensationalism refers primarily to the division of history into periods of time, dispensations, seven of which are usually named."[27] It appears in the United States and Canada as early as the 1840s, but its most prominent advocate was John Nelson Darby who traveled to North America seven times between 1862 and 1877.[28] To understand the rise in dispensational, premillennial theology it is important to place its emergence in social context.

Prior to the Civil War in the United States (1860-1865) there was little distinction between premillennial and postmillennial thinkers except in terms of when the return of Christ would happen.[29] But, after the Civil War, thinking on eschatology started to shift as theologians moved away from the supernatural aspects of a postmillennial view of history.[30] This led to a focus on the present rather than future kingdom and a dismissal of the importance of evangelism. Seeing this move by some theologians as incompatible with biblical teaching, fundamentalists and evangelicals began to push in the other direction, leaning heavily on a theology that favored a future understanding of the kingdom of God with a stress on evangelism.

Dispensational, premillennial theology is closely tied to the individualized view of faith that was already gaining momentum within evangelical circles. Ernest Sandeen writes, "The dispensationalist accepted an intensely pessimistic view of the world's future combined with a hope in God's imminent and direct intervention in his [or her] own life."[31] Dispensational

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[27] Found in Martin E. Marty, ed., *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, Reprint 2011 ed. edition (Munich ; New York: De Gruyter, 1993), 21.

[28] Marty, 23.

[29] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 289.

[30] Bosch, 289; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 50.

theology leaves little room for change or positive development through the impetus of human action.

To clarify, it is important to note that fundamentalists and evangelicals of the early twentieth-century were not silent when it came to societal issues, but it is equally important to understand how they framed those issues. In fact, they had social and political commentary centered around specific social issues such as the accumulation of wealth, alcohol, and tobacco. The opposition to such issues, though, was not for the betterment of society, because society was moving inextricably toward destruction, but was for the individual's personal soul. Holiness, a term which was increasingly applied in individualistic terms, referred to personal choices and was rarely used in any social or societal sense. In this way, a person should strive toward holiness by avoiding the social ills of the times, but not necessarily because they believe it would better society as a whole.

The difference between the way fundamentalists, who were largely associated with dispensational theology, and social gospel Christians spoke of the world was seen in the formers' pessimistic view of social history. "When they spoke on [social or political progress], dispensational premillennialists were characteristically pessimistic."[32] As Marsden notes, none of the social commentary of fundamentalists was developed into a cohesive theology that spoke against these ills, as the world was inevitably warped by forces of the current dispensation. Unlike slavery, which was a rallying point for the generation prior, social issues of wealth accumulation, alcohol, or tobacco were not ills to be fixed, but to be recognized as signs of the time.[33]

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[31] Marty, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 21.

[32] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 66.

[33] Marsden, 66–67.

One aspect of the growing pessimistic view of the world is the loss of reverence for the created world. In dispensational theology, the world was moving toward destruction. David Bosch writes of the enlightenment that it was structured in a "subject-object scheme" meaning "it separated humans from their environment and enabled them to examine the animal and mineral world from the vantage-point of scientific objectivity… Nature ceased to be 'creation' and was no longer people's teacher, but the object of their analysis."[34]

The authors of *Forgive Us* express this shift well by exploring the role of the national parks system in the United States. The authors talk about the growth of the national park systems in the United States based on a reverence for the beauty of creation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A shift came in the early to mid-twentieth century when the response to the environment moved from one of awe and "shifted to a modernist framework, stressing utility and functionality… the land provided resources that God intended humans to exploit. It is not only a privilege but an obligation for Christians to use and steward those resources by securing the greatest value for them."[35]

Howard Snyder gives a historical account for what he calls the "divorce of heaven and earth."[36] Snyder suggests this theological divorce took place between the time of the early church until around 1500 with the marriage of church and state, which brought about a division of sacred and secular, the division of clergy and laity. In contrast to this divorce, Snyder suggests that the phrase "heaven and earth" connotes completeness or the entire created order in the biblical text rather than two separate entities.[37] In his text, Snyder also discusses how the

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[34] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 270.

[35] Cannon et al., *Forgive Us*, 39.

[36] See pages 3-27 in Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace: Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven* (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2011), 3.

[37] Snyder and Scandrett, 41.

premillennial dispensational worldview leads to a view of creation as heading to destruction which makes any attempt to save it a distraction from the importance of saving souls.

In one poignant moment in his book, Snyder mentions author Frank Peretti as an example of how, when taken to its ultimate end, dispensational, premillennial theology is a worldview of destruction. Peretti, a Christian fiction novelist who uses dispensational, premillennial theology as a foundation for his writing, wrote a book called *This Present Darkness* in 1986. The book was widely read, Amazon reports 2.7 million copies sold worldwide, and it was translated into several different languages. The book takes place in a fictional town dealing with strange, spiritual forces. The key to note about the book is how those engaged in activities deemed part of the spiritual life (prayer, evangelism, etc.) are protagonists and, as Snyder notes, anyone in the book who is working toward issues related to social justice or creation care are eventually found to be working with the devil.[38] For Peretti, there is no point in dealing with justice in this world as it is all eventually passing.

Dispensational theology did away with any need for justice as societal engagement within the created world. The pessimistic view of society and creation left Christians in disbelief that God would intervene in any substantial way in human history. The kingdom of God, then, was not something that could be experienced or evinced within the created world. Justice became tied with this view of society and creation, Marsden writes, for dispensationalists:

> Christ's kingdom, far from being realized in this age or in the natural development of humanity, lay wholly in the future, was totally supernatural in origin, and discontinuous with the history of this era. This was a point on which the new dispensational premillennialism differed from older forms of premillennialism. For the dispensationalists the prophecies concerning the kingdom referred wholly to the future. This present era, the 'church age,' therefore could not be dignified as a time of the advance of God's kingdom.[39]

[38] Snyder and Scandrett, 59.

[39] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 51.

For evangelicals who accepted the dispensational, premillennial view of eschatology, justice, at least justice within this world, was partial at most. Justice was renegotiated as eschatological or other-worldly justice. Though eschatological justice does not essentially reject justice within the current world, the pessimism of dispensational theology made any desire or effort to express justice within the world seem futile. True justice was just out of reach. Those who were attempting to enact justice within the world were seen, at best, as delusional and misguided, and at worst, as sacrificing the message of the gospel for something that was passing away.

Evolution

The first socio-historical change affecting Christian's view of justice I explore is the development and growing acceptance of evolutionary thought. In this section, I show how evolutionary thought contributed to a privatization of faith and a further division between church and culture. In addition, I show how these changes led to justice being seen as a social issue rather than an issue connected to Christian faith.

The scientific revolution of the sixteenth-century in Europe, which was a catalyst for the enlightenment thinking of the following century, began to categorize the world in ways different than generations prior. Science, to that point in history, had been largely tied with theology and Christian thought. Enlightenment thinking allowed for new categorizations to occur, for instance separating the physical world from the spiritual world. Evolutionary thought became a way to understand and discuss the emergence of the physical world outside of the theological premises of the Christian creation story. George Marsden says that the emergence of evolutionary thought was a turning point for Christianity.[40] What was once the intellectual center, Christianity was suddenly superseded by scientific thought that challenged its very foundation. Marsden suggests

[40] Marsden, 18–21.

two options existed: to say that Darwinism was incompatible with Christianity or to relegate Christianity to spiritual or supernatural matters while science could speak to the natural world. As Bosch notes, "Reason supplanted faith as point of departure"[41] and faith was relegated to only spiritual matters.

Evolution and modernism did not simply challenge Christianity's place in society but challenged the foundation of the Bible. The social gospel's acceptance of a historical-critical reading of scripture, coupled with the growing acceptance of evolutionary thought were seen as attacks on the historicity of scripture. In many ways, rather than offering a competing perspective of faith and scripture that accepted mystery and ambiguity, fundamentalists simply used similar scientific methodology to create clear boundaries of belief. Mark Noll writes that, "theological method came to rely less on instinctive deference to inherited confessions and more on self-evident propositions organized by scientific method."[42] Evangelical Christians accepted beliefs that directly countered the emerging evolutionary thought and leaned heavily on the supernatural.

An example of this trend can be found in the grounding of fundamentalism. The name Fundamentalist comes from the acceptance of the five fundamentals which originated from the 1910 Presbyterian General Assembly. The five essential doctrines are: 1) the inerrancy of Scripture, 2) the virgin birth of Christ, 3) his substitutionary atonement, 4) his bodily resurrection, and 5) the authenticity of the miracles (later changed with premillennialism).[43] As one can see, the fundamentals represent the elements of faith which are grounded in the spiritual or supernatural and the first fundamental, the inerrancy of scripture, is in response to the

[41] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 275.

[42] Noll, *America's God*, 4.

[43] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 117.

evolutionary thought. I have noted already that evangelical Christianity moved toward an individualizing and spiritualizing of faith because of the social gospel and fundamentalist split. The emergence and acceptance of evolutionary thought led to the privatizing of evangelical Christianity. That is, it was not only for the individual and related to spiritual matters, but it moved away from engagement in public spheres.

The relationship of the church to culture has been discussed at length throughout Christian history. Theologians have wrestled with Christianity's engagement in the public sphere through concepts like Luther's expansion of Augustine's two kingdoms or Niebuhr's work *Christ and Culture.* But, at the start of the twentieth-century, there was a growing divide between the church and culture. Marsden notes that Methodism, which emphasized less relationship between culture and church than did Calvinism, became more privatized.[44] In relationship to church and culture, George Marsden came to the conclusion the fundamentalists of the early twentieth-century expressed a "profound ambivalence to the surrounding culture."[45] This ambivalence came from a sense that the world was rapidly moving away from God.

Evolutionary theory and modernism threatened the perceived biblical foundation of America.[46] Dispensational theology left little hope for change. The goal for the Christian and role of the church, then, was not to attempt to create positive change in the world, this was viewed as futile, but instead to maintain a strong, personal faith. The relationship between church and culture was fractured in a way that left a gulf. This is not to say that there was no societal engagement, but, again, engagement was largely understood in terms of rescuing the souls of people rather than a holistic approach to faith and culture.

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[44] Marsden, 87–88.

[45] Marsden, viii.

[46] Marsden, 3.

In an attempt to salvage what they saw as an attack on their faith, evangelical voices allowed Christianity to be relegated to spiritual conversations. This left justice little space within the evangelical social imaginary. Modernism became so entrenched that science became the voice of the natural world and religion the voice of the supernatural. This created a divide between church and culture, putting natural things in the realm of society and supernatural things in the realm of faith. Justice, then, was renegotiated as a social responsibility, part of one's civic duty, but not a mandate of Christianity.

Marxism

The final socio-historical change I explore is the emergence of Marxism. In this section, I start by looking at some of the historical factors relating to the rise of Marxist thought. Next, I discuss how the acceptance of Marxist thought led to a fear of the other. Finally, I show how these changes led to a view of justice as heresy and Marxist propaganda.

Marxism is a view of society and economics developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and their followers. Marxism sets up a dichotomy of the bourgeois and proletariat with the end goal of the latter overthrowing the former. The outcome is a world of socialism, where means of production and distribution are shared within the community finally leading to a communist state where all share things in common. Whether it goes by the name Marxism, socialism, or communism, the idea of communal ownership and the challenge to private property makes this economic system a stark contrast to the economic state of the United States in the twentieth-century. A robust understanding of Marxism is unnecessary for this discussion because the power of Marxism within Christian circles is in its critique of capitalism and religion. In the United States, the free market, capitalist worldview has been the dominant economic system since its founding. In the mid-twentieth century, when Marxism arose as a global challenge to

the capitalistic worldview, many in the United States became threatened by the seemingly growing acceptance of communist thinking.

To understand how this affected Christians in the United States, one must understand the way that the United States identity has been sacrilized within the American church. In one sense, there was a real threat to religion as Marxism is anti-religious in its foundation. But the threat not only encompassed faith, but the economic system of capitalism which was often seen as synonymous with Christian faith.

In his book, *In God We Trust*, Patrick Nachtigall paints a picture of how the language of Christian exceptionalism in the United States is pervasive and how that language shaped the American Christian identity. The term "chosen nation" dates to the Puritans.[47] This historical imaginary, that a persecuted minority from Europe fled to create a Christian nation, weaves a narrative of God's special blessing that makes any attack on the country vicariously an attack on God. And, just as the United States evokes a patriotic Christianity, words like democracy and capitalism are sacrilized in such a way that they are experienced and expressed as Christian (and even biblical) concepts.

The threat of Marxism was viewed not only as an attack on the United States, but an attack on Christianity. This threat led to an elevated fear of Marxism and global communist regimes. Fear bred investigations and terms like "the Hollywood blacklist" and "red-baiting," both referring to people accused of being communist sympathizers. The fear of communism increased throughout the course of the twentieth-century and American evangelicals were among the strongest anti-Marxist supporters. In their book, *Advocating for Justice,* authors Stephen Offutt, F. David Bronkema, Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, Robb Davis, and Gregg Okesson discuss the animosity toward anything that could be construed as Marxist in the American social

[47] Nachtigall, *In God We Trust?*, 22.

landscape of the mid to late-twentieth-century. They write, "evangelicals seldom questioned US foreign policy and were quick to label and dismiss any analyses of poverty, economics, security, and governance that considered the way that power was used and abused as 'Marxist,' including those provided by more progressive Christians."[48]

But not all of Christianity accepted the negative view of Marxist thought. Liberation theology, emerging out of but not confined to, Latin American Roman Catholicism, used rhetoric that seemed to accept some of the premises of Marxist thinking. Liberation theologians brought to light the understanding of God's preferential option for the poor and engaged in the justice-related work that cared for the vulnerable and marginalized. Though liberation theologians did not take Marxism to its extreme end (Marxist thought is ardently anti-religious), they did re-appropriate elements of Marxist thought that coincided with their religious beliefs and traditions. Evangelicals in the United States, worried about the connections made between liberation theology and Marxism, considered the language of justice that was emerging from this theological tradition as an attack on their economic systems and faith. Dom Helder Camara, a Brazilian bishop of the Catholic Church, is quoted as saying, "When I fed the poor they called me a saint. When I asked why they were poor, they called me a Communist." He was later labeled the "red bishop."[49]

It is important to recognize that liberation theologians were not the first to express a view of society that contradicted a capitalist or free market view. Instead, liberation theologians pointed back to theologians throughout history whose views would be contradictory to the economic systems that were becoming prevalent. In his work, *Justice,* Nicholas Wolterstorff discusses early church father John Chrysostom's writing from the fourth and fifth centuries.

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[48] Offutt et al., *Advocating for Justice*, 31.

[49] Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2010), 136.

Chrysostom wrote that the extra pair of shoes in a wealthy person's possession actually belonged to the poor and charged the wealthy person with the extra pair of shoes with having stolen from the poor.[50] Wolterstorff labels this as rights language, suggesting the poor have a right to the pair of shoes. It also points to a view of the world that believes that a person's property is not their own, but that voluntary, generous sharing is necessary for a healthy, functioning society. Though Chrysostom was not foreshadowing Marxism, his views more closely align with a radical view of sharing held by socialism than the capitalist or free market views that have dominated the United States social imaginary.

Wesleyan history has its own voice on this topic. John Wesley made several remarks in his sermons that are reminiscent of Chrysostom's writing. For instance, Wesley commonly discussed the importance of gaining all one can, then saving all one can, so that one can give all one can. Limiting personal monetary use by eliminating frivolous expense increased the amount which one could give to the poor. In "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," Wesley said, "Surely you cannot be ignorant, that the sinfulness of fine apparel lies chiefly in the expensiveness: in that it is robbing God and the poor; it is defrauding the fatherless and widow; it is wasting the food of the hungry, and withholding his raiment from the naked to consume it on our own lusts."[51] Wesley remarks, as did Chrysostom, that the person with bounty was robbing from God and the poor. Elsewhere in his sermons, Wesley points to the early church and two contemporary communities of his time, the Quakers and Moravians, as communities who were able to hold things in common in a way that left no one in need.

Patrick Nachtigall references the continual tension between triumphalism and apocalypse in which American evangelicals find themselves. On the one hand, they see America as God's

[50] Wolterstorff, *Justice*, 60–61.

[51] John Wesley, *Wesley's Appeal*, Fifteenth (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1890), 180.

chosen country and on the other that it is evil and corrupt. And they often hold these two views simultaneously.[52] The role of triumphalism comes most prominently into play when evangelical Christians see their faith, and vicariously their country, or vice versa, under attack. "When we are faced by a threat such as Soviet communism or Islamic terrorism, we American evangelicals view ourselves as the primary beacons of Christian truth and freedom on Planet Earth."[53] These perceived challenges by the "other," the non-evangelical or non-American, threaten the delicate fabric of God's chosen nation and thus must be dismantled. For evangelicals in the mid-twentieth century who feared their country's foundational principles of capitalism, democracy, and freedom of religion were threatened by the future domination of communism and who saw ties between liberation theology and Marxist views, justice, understood and expressed almost entirely as social justice, was heresy. Social justice, in the American cultural milieu of that time, was anti-American and, thus, anti-Christian.[54] Throughout the twentieth-century justice was renegotiated, but by the latter half of the century, justice had been exorcised from many American evangelical churches, marred by its correlation to a political and economic system that was seen as incongruous with American Christian values.

[52] Nachtigall, *In God We Trust?*, 6.

[53] Nachtigall, 6–7.

[54] This rhetoric continues today with many of the same accusations made of social justice engagement. In May 2018, a Southern Baptist pastor in Texas proposed a resolution to be taken up at the June Southern Baptist Convention stating that social justice is unbiblical. The pastor said, "Social justice is based on Marxism and Postmodernism, and should be opposed because of its antibiblical stance and worldview, but still Christians are attempting to blend social justice with Christianity, however they must realize that to accept social justice ideology is to invite liberal theology and liberation theology into our churches, schools, and institutions." Leonardo Blair, "Texas Pastor Urges Southern Baptists to Denounce 'Evil' Social Justice Ideology," *Christian Post: Church & Ministries* (blog), May 16, 2018, https://www.christianpost.com/news/texas-pastor-urges-southern-baptists-to-denounce-evil-social-justice-ideology-224069/; Then, in August of 2018, John MacArthur began a blog series challenging social justice and claiming it is a threat to the gospel. Leonardo Blair, "Evangelicalism's 'Newfound Obsession' With Social Justice Is Threat to Gospel, John MacArthur Says," *The Christian Post* (blog), August 14, 2018, https://www.christianpost.com/amp/evangelicalism-newfound-obsession-social-justice-threat-gospel-john-macarthur-226768/.

Through this section, I have shown how four theological and socio-historical shifts shaped the common understanding of justice in the late-twentieth century. Justice was now seen through one of four lenses: spiritual justification, future and heavenly, individualized and privatized, or incompatible with Christian faith. In the next section, I look more specifically at how some churches, and especially those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, accepted this minimized view of justice.

Justice Evolving

In the last chapter I gave a general overview of justice, looking at it through public and Christian lenses. Though the definitions of justice are wide, this is not uncommon with words which are reimagined as they pass through social contexts. Mark Noll in *America's God* writes: "Theological changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also involved a shift in meaning for key concepts that operated in both religious and political life, for example, 'freedom,' 'justice,' 'virtue,' and 'vice.'"[55] Noll writes that God's justice was seen as benevolence and honorableness by Jonathan Edwards in the mid-eighteenth century, but by the mid-nineteenth century, for theologians such as Charles Finney and N.W. Taylor, God's justice was expressed in terms of punishment.[56] Just as the term saw significant change in that century, the term justice has continued to change in the last century.

It is important at this juncture for me to express clearly my intentions in developing the historical arc as I have. It would be misleading to suggest that the language of justice as social responsibility was completely absent or that justice-related activities came to a standstill during the twentieth-century. There were significant leaders and justice-oriented movements that took

[55] Noll, *America's God*, 4.

[56] Noll, 440.

place during the twentieth-century.[57] Theologians and practitioners of justice advocated for the church to engage.

In terms of literature, in 1971, Jim Wallis began a Christian community in Washington D.C. called Sojourners. The group published a monthly magazine called *The Post-Christian* (later renamed *Sojourners)* which continues today to encourage churches and communities to engage in social action. Ron Sider wrote *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (1977) which challenged the church to incorporate evangelism and social action together as a single component of faith.[58] Christian ethicist Stephen Mott wrote *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* in 1982 which grounds social change movements within a biblical framework.[59]

Literature was accompanied by action as well. As I mentioned, Jim Wallis began a Christian community along with the monthly magazine. In the 1950s, organizations like World Vision and Compassion International began work globally assisting kids in poverty.[60] And in 1989, John Perkins co-founded the Christian Community Development Association, which continues to play an important role in justice-related work by people from all generations. These are just a few of the prominent voices from the evangelical left working to engage the church in social reform. And though their books were read widely, their messages did not always permeate the local church.

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[57] Soong-Chan Rah and Gary VanderPol, *Return to Justice: Six Movements That Reignited Our Contemporary Evangelical Conscience* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016) Rah and VanderPol offer the most recent example of this conversation that others, such as Donald Dayton, have expressed prior.

[58] Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1977).

[59] Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[60] These organizations started under different names. Also, their focus began as primarily global relief work (compassionate ministries) and transitioned to more systemic, justice-related work later.

In contrast, the average, white, evangelical church attender would not have heard the language of justice related to activities on behalf of the vulnerable. Though writing on justice was being released, it was not reaching the pews. This pushes me to ask, from where does this interest and involvement in justice-related activities, and the proliferation of the use of the term justice to describe these activities, emerge among Christian millennials if it was not a part of their ecclesial upbringing? More so, if it was not a learned concept from their faith communities, does the justice that millennials engage in embrace the rich theological and historical attributes of justice or is it developed from secular sources? On one hand, there is a passion related to justice that non-millennial Christians can learn from, but there may also be a depth of understanding of justice that is lacking within millennial communities because of a lack of engagement from ecclesial communities.

Justice and the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition

Now that a cursory understanding of shifts in justice within the evangelical tradition has been expressed, it is important to look at how this is the same or different within the narrowed group of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. For that, one needs to not only think whether Wesleyan-Holiness communities enacted justice but how the concept of justice was understood. Moberg points to Nazarene leaders who, prior to 1910, were involved in issues of social welfare and even supported labor movements, but who changed their stances prior to World War I. "Their social welfare work suffered from steadily increasing neglect."[61] Another scholar who examined the role of justice-related work within the evangelical tradition is Donald Dayton.[62] Though Dayton stresses the existence within holiness churches of social reform movements,

[61] Moberg, *The Great Reversal; Evangelism versus Social Concern*, 30.

[62] Donald W. Dayton and Douglas M. Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014).

these movements did not always base their social reform around a concept of justice. Moberg shows this by making the distinction between the work The Salvation Army and the Nazarenes[63] did as "welfare to alleviate problems" and not "social action to get at the causal root of the problems."[64] The goal to make a difference in the lives of the vulnerable was pursued in light of evangelistic efforts, as was expressed in the earlier section on the spiritualizing of justice.

In a recent dissertation on political theology, Nathan Willowby discusses changes within holiness movement churches. Willowby, like Dayton and others, cites the early history of political activism within holiness movement churches, but notes the change in the early twentieth-century. He points to three major factors that precipitated the theological change in regard to political activism: narrowing of the scope of sin, premillennial eschatology, and the culture shift from the Second to Third Great Awakenings. Willowby's first two points align closely with concepts I have already drawn from, though I applied them more specifically to the concept of justice.

If social action has not historically been correlated to the concept of justice within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, some might assume justice has no theological roots within the tradition. Other traditions, such as the reformed tradition, can look at theologians like Abraham Kuyper as a reference in terms of justice theology. Though it may be true to say that there has not been a current Wesleyan voice that has developed a theology of justice, justice has in fact had a place in the Wesleyan theological landscape historically. The founding voice of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, John Wesley, spoke often about justice. In studying Wesley and his writings, one finds the phrase, "justice, mercy, truth" used consistently in his sermons. Its use was not simply as a moralistic expression, like "holiness" became for twentieth-century

[63] Both are Wesleyan-Holiness tradition communities.

[64] Moberg, *The Great Reversal; Evangelism versus Social Concern*, 30.

fundamentalists, but instead offered a deeply rooted soteriology to the outworking of justice in the lives of those who called themselves Christians.[65]

At this point, one can understand the challenge that the term justice creates. As one reaches the twentieth-century, the waters of justice discourse within Christianity are significantly muddied by views of justice that express it only as other-worldly, theologize it into terms of individual salvation, relegate it to a societal issue, or demonize it as anti-Christian in its entirety. Though these were not the only stances taken by churches, many evangelical churches in the 1980s and 1990s stressed only elements of justice which supported their Christian narrative. Scholars have mentioned that the stance of evangelical Christianity by this time in history had so limited its view of what was considered appropriate to engage in related to justice that younger evangelicals were discouraged from engaging in justice issues that older generations deemed as liberal.[66] Eddie Byun is a pastor and writer of *Justice Awakening,* a book focusing on the church's response to human trafficking, who grew up in the suburbs of Chicago in the 1980s and 1990s. He mentions that in the church where he was raised he "rarely heard anything about God's heart for justice."[67] Within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, in general, a robust theology of justice which could speak to more than individual salvation was not present in many churches. It is within this historical context that millennials were born and began their learning and maturing in the church; a church seemingly void of substantive conversations around justice.

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[65] For more on this, see my article: M. Andrew Gale, "'Justice, Mercy, Truth,' a Theological Concept in the Sermons of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 109–25.

[66] Offutt et al., *Advocating for Justice*, 168. The authors go on to say,

> It is no accident, therefore, that young evangelicals who face the problem of homelessness in their cities, extreme poverty in mission trips, and police discrimination against their African American friends in schools are confused and unprepared to react as Christians to these issues, since in their churches they have never heard sermons on these subjects; nor should it surprise us that they then tend to drift away, seeing their churches as irrelevant and meaningless in tackling key issues in society (168-9).

[67] Byun, *Justice Awakening*, 29.

CHAPTER THREE

Foundations for Justice

Introduction

We were forty-five minutes into what would turn out to be a near hour and twenty-minute interview. A young couple, seated on a large couch, shared their experience of serving in Uganda. Their stories were woven with moments of joy and struggle, passion for their work and personal challenges. As I had done in other interviews, after listening to them share the many ways they defined justice, I began asking about where they learned about justice. The wife shared about growing up in an ethnically diverse school system; they both shared about experiences of travel. Then, the husband interjected that he learned about justice, and injustice, by seeing it. When I pressed into what he meant by "seeing it," he shared about some of his experiences. The couple were friends with some Turkish citizens living in Uganda who are unable to return to Turkey because of safety concerns. The stories and information he heard from these friends seemed to be in contrast to what news sources reported, if they reported on it at all. News, he said, had proven to be biased. "I think a lot of where I learn from lately, especially in Jinja [Uganda], is personal experiences… actually having conversations about what they actually have experienced. Personal experience. And that's the only thing, honestly, I trust anymore."[1] Experience alone is trusted.

In the previous chapter, I gave historical background to the context of justice within the evangelical church, looking back at the last century. My assertion, based on historical research I offered and the stories of millennials I engaged, is that the language of justice was either absent or over-spiritualized in the church in a way that did not resonate with millennials. If that is the

[1] Interview 11, January 21, 2017.

case, and if millennials are indeed interested in justice as I have expressed, then on what foundations do they base their views of justice? As the story of this young couple illustrates, two primary epistemological foundations for millennials are relationships and experience. Millennials forge and filter their view of the world through their relationships and experience. The goal of this chapter is to distinguish contextual factors which influence millennial's view of justice and I do this through a framework of generational characteristics set forth by Neil Howe and William Strauss. This chapter will show how relationships and experience, through a common location in history, shared beliefs, and shared behavior, have impacted millennial's views of justice. It is from these contextual foundations that I will build in order to express both the definitions of justice (chapter four) and practices of justice (chapter five) that millennials employ. I begin this chapter by offering a brief explanation of my use of Howe and Strauss' generational characteristics before exploring relationship and experience in light of the three characteristics.

Generational Characteristics Theory

Neil Howe and William Strauss are considered pioneers in millennial research. Their text, *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation,* was written in 2000, when some who are considered millennials were still in diapers. And yet, even though the generation was still emerging, their work has endured as a prophetic voice. They pinpointed a number of crucial millennial characteristics that have since proven to be true.[2] They are also known for being the first to bring the designation "millennial" into common parlance. There are components of their text that,

[2] Howe and Strauss have prophetically identified a number of millennial characteristics including the optimism of this generation, their positive relationship with their parents, and the team-ethic that has emerged, among other things. In 2000, Howe and Strauss wrote: "A new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of collegial (rather than individual) action, support for (rather than resistance against) civic institutions, and the tangible doing of good deeds" and this has proven to be true over and over again, even up to recent research by the Millennial Impact Report 2017 that continues to validate Howe and Strauss' nearing two-decade-old hypotheses. Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 216.

because it was written so early, were unable to account for the changing landscape of millennials.[3] Nevertheless, their work stands as a seminal text in millennial theory.

In *Millennials Rising*, Howe and Strauss note three components of generational theory that affect the way someone identifies themselves: perceived membership, common location in history, and shared beliefs and behaviors.[4] Though Howe and Strauss discuss these as three components, their third component, shared beliefs and behaviors, actually incorporates two different elements. Shared beliefs are not the same as shared behaviors, though they certainly influence one another. With this in mind, I look at these as two separate concepts.

Two Outliers

Before moving on to the three characteristics, I want to briefly discuss two generational characteristics that have significant grounding in scholarship but did not bear themselves out in my research: perceived membership and common location in history based on historical events.

The first characteristic that Howe and Strauss note that did not fit my research was perceived membership. Howe and Strauss discuss how people of certain generations tend to think of themselves, and openly self-identify, as a having membership based on common generational characteristics. Boomers identify as boomers, and Gen X as Gen X, and there is a pride associated with those designations. Howe and Strauss note the same with millennials, they even identify this as their first characteristic for the generation, perceived membership. Though

[3] For instance, their understanding of millennials view on finances has turned out to be different, largely based on the 2008 recession. Howe and Strauss noted an optimistic view toward money, which has changed in the last decade. One article notes high post-secondary education debt and high unemployment as contributing factors. "When compared with the Gen Xers and boomers, millennials have less wealth and income than the two immediate predecessor generations had at the same stage of their lives." Michelle Singletary, "Millennials' Money Misfortune," *Washington Post*, March 15, 2014, sec. Business, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/millennials-money-misfortune/2014/03/13/c6659b1e-aa17-11e3-9e82-8064fcd31b5b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.15a319c44414.

[4] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 40–46.

this may be true for some, I also encountered a significant number of people who did not like the categorization of millennial.

Millennials are the most diverse generation in American history.[5] This diversity causes millennials to be frustrated when others perceive the generation as monolithic. In one interview, a participant shared openly that they were "a little leery" when they heard that my study was about millennials. He commented he felt like the "token millennial" at his organization and that there were people of all generations that shared common characteristics.[6] I do not have hard data to say what percentage of millennials feel a certain way on the issue of perceived membership as my purpose in researching was not around whether millennials agree or disagree with the designation of millennial. But I can say, even if only anecdotally, as I approached millennials about being part my research, there was often hesitancy about the term "millennial." For them, it carries with it negative, stereotypical connotations and they were not interested in being lumped into those categories. After I explained that my interest was less about generational theory and more about how the context of millennials (travel, family, faith, history, etc.) affected their view of justice, they were much more open to discuss with me. Because of this, I have chosen not to use "perceived membership" as a category and instead look at the specific factors that contribute to that membership.

The second generational characteristic that did not bear itself out in my research was common location in history based on historical events. Here, I am making a distinction in the way that Howe and Strauss have used these terms, adding the designation "based on historical events." When Howe and Strauss, along with many other scholars, discuss millennials location in

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[5] Howe and Strauss, 4; Natalie A. Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University" (Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, 2007), 28; Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Pub. Group, 2011), 96.

[6] Interview 2, August 12, 2016.

history they often lean on historical events as major catalysts for how millennials make sense of their world. I agree with Howe and Strauss that a common location in history has made a profound impact on millennials, but I think the impact has been related much more to technology (which I discuss later in this chapter) than historical events.

Let me clarify more why this distinction is necessary. Scholarship on millennials is flush with references to major historical events. Natalie Clark, in her research on millennials, draws on political theory that states that events from a youth's formative years will have an impact on how they engage in the political process.[7] With that as a foundation, much of millennial research works to reconstruct what events during the maturation of millennials will have an effect and what kind of effect these events will have. The event that is most often cited as being a prominent event in the life of millennials is the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The role of 9/11 in shaping the worldview of millennials is well-documented. Claire Raines writes, "Their catalyzing generational event – the one that binds them as a generation, the catastrophic moment they all witnessed during their first, most formative years – is, of course, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001."[8] The way it is described by Raines, it seems there is no other alternative than to believe that 9/11 was a foundation on which all millennials stand. It is important to note, though, that when Raines wrote this, it was only two years after 9/11.

Though 9/11 was a powerful moment, I am not as confident in its significance as Raines and others are. The oldest millennials were 21 when 9/11 happened, but the youngest millennials were only 1 year old. The effect of an event like 9/11 and the extent to which parents explained

[7] Natalie A. Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University" (Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, 2007), 13; cited from M. Kent Jennings, "Residues of a Movement: The Aging of the American Protest Generation," *The American Political Science Review* 81, no. 2 (June 1987): 368.

[8] Claire Raines, *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook for a New Workplace* (Crisp Learning, 2003); Also, noted in: Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 58; Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 27.

or deferred explanation based on age, would drastically change one's experience. In my research, there were a few interview participants who mentioned the event, but they tended to be the older segment of my interview population. Interestingly, their engagement with the event was not emotive, but expressed as stating the obvious. In a book on millennials written more recently, Thom and Jess Rainer have a timider response to the question of the importance of 9/11. They say, "Though we are reticent to overplay the significance of 9-11 and the subsequent war on terrorism, it does seem to be a defining event."[9] This statement, ten years after 9/11, lacks the zeal of earlier authors such as Raines, but is closer to what I found in my research.

A majority of my interviews and focus groups never mentioned 9/11.[10] But, to be fair, a majority of my interviews and focus groups did not mention any major world or national event. During the portion of the interview and focus group that looked at sources, I asked the question, "When was the first time you realized there was injustice in the world?" This was the question I assumed I would get responses around major world events. Instead, I got stories of kids standing up to people who were picking on a physically disabled sibling or people traveling to another country and witnessing poverty for the first time. The more I searched the data, the more I saw how the millennials I interviewed filtered their answers through personal experience.

An example of this was expressed clearly by a student from a focus group who juxtaposes a national event, 9/11, with a personal story. When asked about when she first realized there was injustice in the world, the participant shared this story:

> For example, 9/11, I'm fully aware of how devastating that was. But I never cried about it and I've been to the memorial… I was aware of injustice and I felt bad for these people, but it never really hit me until this past year when all this stuff about my sister's abuse came out. She was raped when she was six by a complete stranger. We

[9] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 160.

[10] For context, only one focus group and four interviews mentioned 9/11. Focus groups were younger than interviews, so it was suspected that they would bring it up less. But even in interviews, I only had 4 of the 25 interview participants mention 9/11 (and at least one of those was not during the conversation of sources or foundations, but an explanation of the patriotic church culture they were serving in).

> have no idea who he is, where he is, whatever. And then again when she was 9… it affected not only my sister but my entire family.[11]

She went on to discuss how, because the person was a stranger, justice could not really be achieved. This was the defining moment that crystalized her understanding of justice, or, in this case, injustice. Though historical events may play a role in grounding justice, for most of those I met their foundation for justice was immersed in a personal experience.

In the following pages, I look at what I consider the three other elements of Howe and Strauss' generational characteristics: common location in history, shared beliefs, and shared behavior. In each of these categories I explain how Howe and Strauss define the category and then explore a different feature that emerged in my research as part of that generational characteristic.

Common Location in History

In discussing the generational characteristic of common location in history, Howe and Strauss write that, "At any given age, every rising generation defines itself against a backdrop of contemporary trends and events."[12] Trends and events play an important role in shaping the common language that a generation speaks. Trends shape the way generations access and engage in the world. Events become signposts in maturation and crystalize people, places, moments in time, and ideas. In this section, using Howe and Strauss' common location in history, I explore the millennial context through the lens of technology. I begin exploring technology in scholarship and then compare it with my research findings and how technology has impacted the views of justice of this generation. Finally, one component I highlight as connected to

[11] Focus Group 17, April 28, 2017.

[12] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 46.

technology is the ease with which travel, and especially international travel, has become a reality for millennials.

Technology

The globalizing world that millennials find themselves in is marked by global interconnectedness where consistent contact and interaction is possible regardless of distance.[13] Millennials, possibly more than any generation prior, have the capacity to see and experience firsthand global inequality because of their heightened access. This access can be seen through technology, namely the emergence of the internet and mobile phones, but also through the speed and relative inexpensiveness of travel. The world has become accessible virtually and physically in new ways to this generation.

Technology has changed the world and the change has been sweeping and swift. Facebook was launched in 2004 and, as of March 2018, boasts 1.45 billion daily active users.[14] In the spring of 2005, YouTube registered as a website. Twelve years later, 400 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube each minute, or 65 years of video a day.[15] YouTube recently released the statistic that over 1 billion hours of YouTube videos are watched a day (that is over 114,000 years of videos).[16] Technology has changed the world. For many millennials, they are technology natives, having it integrated into their life from an early age. In this part of the section on millennial's common location in history, I look at the prevalence of technology as cited in

[13] Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds., *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, 2nd ed, Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 1 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 4.

[14] "Facebook Statistics," *FB Newsroom* (blog), accessed May 7, 2018, https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/.

[15] Jack Nicas, "YouTube Notches Global Video Milestone," *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2017, sec. Tech, https://www.wsj.com/articles/youtube-tops-1-billion-hours-of-video-a-day-on-pace-to-eclipse-tv-1488220851.

[16] Nicas; Cristos Goodrow, "You Know What's Cool? A Billion Hours," Blog, *YouTube Official Blog* (blog), February 27, 2017, https://youtube.googleblog.com/2017/02/you-know-whats-cool-billion-hours.html.

scholarship and my research, I show how exposure through technology has shaped this generation's global perception, and close by offering thoughts on how the use of technology creates connectivity.

The prevalence of technology within the millennial generation is staggering. Technology is not simply a passing part of the millennial life, it is integrated into every facet. Technology has infiltrated all aspects of their life, for instance, 83% of millennials use computers for work.[17] In terms of social media involvement, 75% have profiles on a social network and 20% have uploaded a video of themselves to the internet.[18] Roughly one-third of millennials' waking lives are spent on a computer.[19] And, even when they are not awake, 83% of millennials sleep with their cell phones.[20] Millennials are comfortable with technology. And this comfortability is not a new phenomenon but can be seen through the earliest research on millennials to today.[21] Though the mediums and content may have changed, the use of technology has always been a defining characteristic of millennials.

Technology also emerged as a common topic in my research. When asked about where they get information about justice-related issues, all but one focus group[22] mentioned at least one of the following: social media, internet, Facebook, online news sources, or technology. In one focus group, I asked where they got information about justice-related issues and there was a silence. I waited for a response. Somewhat sheepishly, one person responded, "well, I mean, the

[17] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 197.

[18] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 14.

[19] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 198.

[20] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 15.

[21] Clark cites three other authors (between 2002 and 2005) that all say the same thing. Clark, 28.

[22] The only focus group that did not mention the internet directly was a shorter focus group that did not discuss sources as thoroughly.

internet."[23] At that, the group began laughing. They acted as though it was a trick question. They then began talking about social media as a venue for learning about justice as opposed to traditional news networks. One participant responded, "I feel like the only time I really read the newspaper is when I click on it from Facebook." Another participant echoed that, "yeah, it comes from a social media site."[24] This corresponds with a Pew Research poll from 2015 that said that 63% of Facebook and Twitter users say each platform serves as a source for news about events and issues outside the realm of friends and family.[25]

But it is not simply social media. The internet is a vast landscape of information and millennials are tapping into those resources many different ways. One example of the variety of responses related to the internet that I received when asked about sources, one group gave this list: Facebook, social media, Twitter, New York Times (print and online), BuzzFeed, Google, MSN News, YouTube and friends. Just for clarification, the only response they gave from that list which does not expressly point to a source with an online presence (besides some of the news agencies that overlap print and online) was friends.[26] In the list, there is a variety of types of online sources from social media to news agencies, search engines to video platforms.

Focus groups, tending to be younger millennials and those not engaged in justice-related activities, expressed more reliance on internet and technology driven sources than did the interview participants. A major factor in this, I presume, is that the interview participants are engaged in justice-related work on a daily basis. Of those I interviewed, 75% mentioned some kind of internet or technology-based source for learning about justice. Interview participants,

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[23] Focus Group 11, April 24, 2017.

[24] Focus Group 11.

[25] Michael Barthel et al., "The Evolving Role of News on Twitter and Facebook," *Pew Research Center* (blog), July 14, 2015, http://www.journalism.org/2015/07/14/the-evolving-role-of-news-on-twitter-and-facebook/.

[26] Interestingly, even friends could have been referencing friends on social media. Focus Group 3, January 22, 2017.

those engaged in justice-related activities, listed a wider variety of sources than did focus groups. So, although there were three times as many people who went through focus groups as interviews, interview participants drew on a wider selection of sources for justice-related learning.

Technology also allows for the opportunity to be exposed to life different than one's own. This idea was echoed throughout my focus group and interview dialogue. One interaction in particular encapsulates the idea of exposure thoroughly. I was asking some follow-up questions about a young man's view of justice and how it differed from that of his parents. He expressed an ability to see a disconnect between the privileged life he lived and those with fewer benefits. I asked him, "what gives you, at a young age, the ability to see that disconnect?... What is it that has created a space where you can see life from another's perspective?" He responded: "I would say exposure via technology to more people." I pressed in again, do your parents have the same access to technology you have? Why did they not engage in the world the same way? The participant went on:

> but during their [his parents] formative years they were probably much more isolated in their communities and social class and structure and so don't have or maybe can't develop that same type of the empathy or understanding. That's the only thing I can think of because… I don't think that it is that my perception and understanding is isolated to my particular social class. I think people from many social classes or conditions are able to see the same thing at our age because of the exposure to a lot of things through technology, T.V., that type of thing. And during a time as formative in which we're beginning to decide who we're going to trust and what information we're going to believe in and follow and care about.[27]

Technology has given unparalleled opportunities to learn about justice-related issues at important moments of maturation. This participant suggests that technology has united the millennial generation across social location (those born to socio-economically different communities). He

[27] Focus Group 2, January 20, 2017.

contrasts that reality with his parents' experience which lacked the connection point of technology.

The use of technology for millennials has exposed them to the world in ways that their parents' generation did not have the ability to experience. This exposure is not simply passive, but also a part of the way that many millennials view their role in the world. In a number of focus groups and interviews, millennials shared about the importance of using technology to learn about points of view other than their own. This was expressed in a few different ways. Some millennials would mention their use of multiple news websites to gain a clearer picture of the world, believing that any one news agency would have a slanted perspective. Some millennials even expressed that social media might be a more honest perspective than any news agency. "That's why I like social media because you can have people that are actually in those situations posting stuff. So, you might see a news story that says one thing but here's this real-life person that's experiencing it that's showing you something different."[28] Others suggested that technology allowed them to explore views of the world contrary to their own.[29] In this way, the participant is not simply trying to understand a fuller perspective of a story, but what those who think differently than him or her might believe. There seems to be an intentional desire to understand perspectives other than their own.

Though technology, and specifically the internet, can be a place of exposure for millennials, it is also important for relational connectivity. Just as millennials seek out opinions other than their own, social media, specifically, can be a point of connection and community. One interview participant, just after the 2016 presidential election, was struggling with the role of white evangelicals in Trump's ascendency to the presidency. She disagreed with Trump's

[28] Focus Group 10, March 27, 2017.

[29] Focus Group 11.

stance on many issues, including immigration, but was not finding like-minded, Christian individuals in her physical community. She explained that Twitter became a place where she could follow specific, often more socially progressive, Christians. She did this to remind herself that her "tribe of Christianity is out there, it's just not right next to me right now."[30]

Scholarship and my research both point to the prevalence of the internet and technology in the life of millennials, not just for knowledge, but for engagement. The internet has become a force for engagement in justice for millennials. It is a place where action happens. Millennials see technology as a means to remedy social problems.[31] As the President and Founder of the "Millennial Impact Report," Derrick Feldmann, wrote of millennials in a 2017 statement: "The first generation to grow up with digital outlets for their voices is turning them into megaphones for good."[32]

Finally, it is important to understand the way that technology is experienced within the millennial generation. Generations before millennials have viewed and engaged with technology through the lens of entertainment or utility – technology is either enjoyment or does some task for me. Certainly, there is an element of entertainment and utility that is embraced in the millennial use of technology. But for many, technology is much more an extension of the person. Social media allows millennials to develop, maintain, and even create communities at a distance. This means that the transiency of millennials is not seen as much of a hinderance to community building. Missiologist Fritz Kling says that millennials "know that they can be active participants in worldwide movement without permanently relocating."[33] Technology allows them to stay

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[30] Interview 8, January 13, 2017.

[31] Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 28.

[32] "The Power of Voice: A New Era of Cause Activation and Social Issue Adoption," Millennial Impact Report (Achieve and The Case Foundation, 2017), ii.

[33] Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 47.

connected when they move far away from family and friends, but they also recognize that they will not live in one location permanently. This mobility, technologically and physically, makes this generation a much more interconnected community, even if that connectivity looks different than it did in generations prior. Technology connects. Technology allows for relationship, a primary focus for millennials. Technology is not an added resource; it is an integral part of their world.

Travel

One outflow of increased technology is increased travel. Travel around the world has become increasingly more accessible, both in economic terms as well as the time it takes to get to places. First, in this section I look at the prevalence of travel in scholarship. Then, I look at the prevalence of travel in my research and how travel played a role in participant's views of justice.

Scholarship is starting to assess the immense growth in travel, in general, by North Americans. Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt estimate 1.6 million U.S. churchgoers are participating in short-term missions trips annually.[34] This number includes more than just millennials, but they note an increase in international travel to 12% for those who were teenagers in the 1990s (as opposed to only 2% for those who were teenagers in the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s).[35] In another book by Wuthnow, he reports that nearly two-thirds of church members in the U.S. have traveled or lived in another country.[36] The authors of *Advocating for Justice* express how access has encouraged evangelicals toward advocacy efforts because they have been

[34] Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt, "Transnational Religious Connections," *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2008): 218; Other estimates are similar at 1.5 million. Craig Ott, Stephen Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission : Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010), xii.

[35] Wuthnow and Offutt, "Transnational Religious Connections," 218.

[36] Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2010), 3.

affected, whether directly or indirectly, by injustice. This happens on international and domestic missions trips as people interact with those living in poverty in ways they had not experienced poverty themselves.[37]

Travel affects millennials. Experiencing the world firsthand makes distance much more relative, which changes the way millennials understand their world. The relative nearness or farness of something is dependent on how big or small one sees the world. My 5-year-old daughter believes that my in-laws, who live 2 hours away, are the same distance as my parents, who live 12 hours away. Her misunderstanding of space and time is not just a part of her maturation, but the fact that her world has, up to this point in her life, revolved around a very small plot of land and a hundred-mile radius around that. As children grow older their world expands and grows, suddenly things that seemed so far away seem reachable. In many ways, this life experience mimics the experience of millennials. For a new generation, travel is more accessible, meaning the world has shrunk. They have seen different lands and experienced different cultures in ways that many of their parents did not have the opportunity to. Fritz Kling says that travel gives millennials "a thoroughly new view of geography and place."[38]

Technology gives millennials information about global injustice and travel allows them to see it firsthand. For some millennials, this newly found access to the world leads them to seek solutions on behalf of those they meet through travel. Brian Steensland and Philip Goff are studying the changes happening within the evangelical Christian community as millennials are living in this newly accessible cultural context. They suggest "consciousness-raising movements," which are movements started to share about a specific global injustice through technology, have led to a wider awareness of injustices around the world including global

[37] Offutt et al., *Advocating for Justice*, 122.

[38] Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 47.

inequalities, sex trafficking, and health-related illness.[39] These "consciousness-raising movements" have the capability of rapid mobilization through social media, as evidenced by campaigns like "Kony 2012." Kony 2012 was organized to put pressure on governments (both the U.S. and Ugandan governments, as well as international agencies like the U.N.) to find and arrest Joseph Kony who is wanted by the International Criminal Courts for war crimes and crimes against humanity.[40] The Kony 2012 website calls the campaign the "fastest growing viral video of all time" and says it reached 100 million views in 6 days.[41] Access enables avenues by which millennials can create networks with other likeminded individuals and communities interested in their cause.

Travel can make the world smaller, but it can also shine a light on disparities of the world causing one to feel significant guilt. In a conversation with a friend, a millennial pastor in the Midwest, he shared that though an interest in justice certainly arises out of increased access, so do feelings of guilt and shame. The pastor expressed that those feelings of guilt and shame can be the impetus for justice-related work, but that guilt is often not a good foundation for prolonged engagement.[42]

My research points to this growth in travel and affirms the effects that travel has on those going. For example, in one focus group I asked each person to name every country they had been to, but that they could not repeat a country someone else said. In a group of 5 people, with an average age of 25 years, they came up with 13 different countries.[43] Another focus group of 5

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[39] Brian Steensland and Philip Goff, eds., *The New Evangelical Social Engagement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

[40] "Wanted: Joseph Kony," accessed August 17, 2018, https://www.state.gov/j/gcj/wcrp/206078.htm.

[41] "Kony 2012," *Invisible Children* (blog), n.d., http://invisiblechildren.com/kony-2012/.

[42] Josh Tandy, Personal Communication, April 2016.

[43] Focus Group 3.

people with an average age of 23 had been to 21 different countries on 6 continents.[44] One interview participant said that she was so excited to go on a missions trip that, even though her church did not have an opportunity for her to go on one, she sought out another youth group to participate in theirs.[45] This is certainly not true for all millennials and one might find significant difference in different socio-economic and ethnic communities. Even so, travel is more accessible to millennials than it was to their parents and this is affecting the ways millennials envision and experience their world. It causes them to want to see the world from the perspective of another. Technology has increased the accessibility and affordability of international travel for millennials and has, and will continue, to shape their engagement in justice.

Shared Beliefs

In the previous section, I looked at the generational characteristic of common location in history through the lens of technology, including travel. In this section, I look at the second generational characteristic, shared belief. As I expressed earlier, in Howe and Strauss' work they combine this characteristic with shared behavior. But as I have unpacked characteristics of millennials, I see these as two separate topics and will treat them as such. In this section, I explore two aspects of the millennial generation that have divided researchers: millennials are more optimistic than prior generations and millennials are influenced by postmodern thought. In each subtopic, I discuss how my research compares to each. Finally, I end this section relating how the divisions in scholarship can be explained through the millennial characteristic of paradox.

[44] Focus Group 4, January 27, 2017.

[45] Interview 13, February 27, 2017.

Optimism

The spirit of optimism in the millennial generation is something that has been noted by a number of millennial scholars. But how that optimism affects the actions of millennials is not agreed upon. In this subtopic, I explore the spirit of optimism within millennials, the way optimism causes them to engage in institutions, and finally, how participants in my research expressed optimism.

First, I look at optimism in scholarship about millennials. Howe and Strauss were some of the early writers on millennials to pick up on this spirit of optimism. Howe and Strauss write, "With high levels of trust and optimism – and a newly felt connection to parents and future – Millennial teens are beginning to equate good news for themselves with good news for their country."[46] From a young age, millennials have believed, and have been told by older generations, that they have the potential to make a difference in the world and they are pursuing that in nearly every aspect of their life.

Other scholars concur with the notion that millennials have a high level of generational optimism. In Rainer and Rainer's study of millennials, they found nearly 90% of those they researched indicated they feel responsible to make a difference in the world.[47] But they did not only feel responsible, when asked to respond to the prompt, "I believe I can do something great," 96% at least somewhat agreed. Even more startling, Rainer and Rainer note that of the 1,200 respondents, not one said they disagreed strongly to the prompt.[48] The Millennial Impact Report, a research study done since 2009 on the philanthropic activities of millennials, has consistently found optimism as a strong characteristic of this generation. Their study is much more far-

[46] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 44.

[47] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 7.

[48] Rainer and Rainer, 116.

reaching than Rainer and Rainer, but they found over half of those they surveyed believed their actions would lead to improvement, while only 14% did not believe that actions they were taking would lead to improved conditions.[49]

Optimism may seem insignificant in terms of a generational characteristic, but it is important to note that it is a shift from previous generations and a dramatic shift from Gen X (the generation directly preceding millennials). In contrast, researchers note that Gen X is considered a highly cynical generation.[50] This optimism leads millennials to experience their faith in different ways than generations prior, as well. For example, Jim and Judy Raymo noted that millennials tend to be motivated by the "glory of God" over the "fear of hell."[51] "What perhaps makes this generation's situation unique from those of the past is its overly optimistic expectations and immediate exposure to global events."[52] Raymo and Raymo also point to the optimism in millennials even in the way they view other religious traditions. When they asked people of the Boomer generation what the first word they thought of when they heard Muslim, the majority answered "terrorist." Millennials, in contrast, answered "devoutly religious" or "blind and misguided." And, even more intriguing, the word "terrorist" was never mentioned, with only 8% suggesting anything related to violence or hostility.[53]

Next, though scholarship asserts the presence of optimism among millennials, how that optimism is evinced in the generation is contested. Some scholars say millennial optimism leads them toward a hopeful work ethic and positive relationship with authority.[54] In agreement, Howe

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[49] "The Power of Voice: A New Era of Cause Activation and Social Issue Adoption," 27.

[50] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 7; Raines, *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook for a New Workplace*.

[51] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 43.

[52] Raymo and Raymo, 1.

[53] Raymo and Raymo, 63.

and Strauss add that half of the millennials they researched said they trust the government to do what is right, which is twice the level of older generations.[55] It is important to note that Howe and Strauss wrote at the cusp of the millennial generation, when only the very oldest (those born between 1980-1982) could even vote.

Other authors writing later, such as David Kinnaman, see authority as a much more contentious concept within the millennial generation. Kinnaman uses three words to describe millennials: access, alienation, and authority. The third characteristic, authority, is evidenced in a skepticism towards institutions.[56] David Kinnaman suggests millennials are more apprehensive of impersonal institutions, an apprehension leading them to approach even the established church with caution.[57] Why the disparity in perspectives? And, simply stated, who was right, Howe and Strauss or Kinnaman? Are millennials more or less trusting of institutions? The answer is yes; a paradoxical answer, I realize. I briefly touch on this paradox as it relates to optimism in my research, but I flesh it out more in final subtopic of this section.

Finally, I look at optimism within my research. Optimism, as an idea, was not something I brought up specifically in the focus groups or interviews I conducted. But there are two ways that it can be evinced in my research. First, it can be seen in the belief by those I interviewed that the work they were doing had the ability to make a difference in the world. One interview participant, after sharing about a moment of joy in her work, said it's "such a gift to be able to see your impact."[58] For millennials, technology has given them the opportunity to know what is

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[54] Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 34. Clark ties this to healthy family dynamics which I discuss in the following subtopic.

[55] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 8.

[56] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 55.

[57] Kinnaman and Hawkins, 14.

happening in the world and, because of their optimism, believe they can be a part of the solution. It will be interesting to see whether this confidence will last if global insecurities escalate in coming years.

The second way it is evinced in my research is through the belief that the government or politics can be a beneficial means to enact change.[59] Rather than believing that there is no hope in engaging in politics, millennials believe in engagement and do so through political activism on a number of different levels. A number of focus groups and interviews mentioned the benefit of politics and even shared their stories of joining marches or protests.[60] The caveat for many, and where the paradox is found, was that the role of a Christian was not to lean fully on a political solution.[61] The political option aids as part of the whole. Overall, interview participants more willingly offered political action as a solution to justice-related issues than were focus groups.[62] When asked whether the church should engage in political action, one interview participant said, "Oh yeah, absolutely. I think the church should be more involved in politics. I think our members should be more politically informed. And I think the gospel and our theology should directly reflect into how we vote."[63] There is a great sense, among those I interviewed, that the

[58] Interview 24, June 9, 2017.

[59] An important contextual note: many of my focus groups and interviews happened just before or just after the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. Only 37% of millennial voters voted for President Trump. This highly contentious election may have led to more politically charged responses by participants. William A. Galston and Clara Hendrickson, "How Millennials Voted This Election," *Brookings* (blog), November 21, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2016/11/21/how-millennials-voted/.

[60] Focus Group 2; Focus Group 6, March 1, 2017; Focus Group 19, September 8, 2017; Interview 7, November 4, 2016; Interview 11; Interview 14, April 11, 2017; Interview 16, May 19, 2017; Interview 18, May 12, 2017; Interview 20, May 26, 2017; Interview 22, May 26, 2017; Interview 24.

[61] For instance, one focus group that mentioned this, Focus Group 6.

[62] A note on interview political activism, a number of those I interviewed participate in political action either on a volunteer (serving on community boards, etc.) or professional level (working within immigration reform, prison reform, etc.), which also skews the data for those I interviewed. That being said, a number of others, outside of direct political work, also noted the value and importance of political engagement.

[63] Interview 18.

government has a place in remedying issues in the world and they are optimistic in their ability to be a part of the solution.

Postmodernity

The second element that is part of the generational characteristic shared belief is the role of postmodern thought.[64] First, I look at the way scholarship has expressed postmodernity and its influence within the millennial generation. Next, I discuss how my research, though it did not have many references directly to postmodern thought, was influenced by it.

To begin looking at whether millennials are affected by postmodern thought, one first has to decide whether the world is actually shifting towards postmodernity. Scholarship discusses this in a variety of ways, some affirming and some countering the prevalence of postmodern thought. With the rise of modern science, humanity began to use an epistemological framework of positivism that claimed, "the purpose of science is to formulate universal and immutable laws."[65] Postmodernism challenged the view that there are universal laws, instead suggesting that everything a person knows is shaped by their context.[66] Regardless of whether society has fully embraced a postmodernist worldview, there are certainly shifts that are felt by millennials related to the way they understand and engage in knowledge. I briefly look at how some authors have expressed that shift.

[64] There are divergent opinions in scholarship about whether society finds itself in postmodernity, late modernity, liquid modernity, or any other number of expressions. I am choosing to use the term postmodernity in my research (and specifically in this chapter) to highlight the confliction with modernity that is found within the millennial context, not to endorse or oppose a specific theory.

[65] Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture, 1999, 3.

[66] Hiebert, 57.

Christian Smith says that in the postmodern climate in which millennials find themselves, religion has lost any ability to make truth claims that it might have had in previous generations.[67] Smith writes:

> popular postmodernism debunks those beliefs [belief in reason, progress, science, universal rationality, the nation, and truth], however, teaching instead that 'absolute truth' does not exist, that reason is only one parochial form of knowledge, that truth claims are typically masked assertions of power, that morality is relative, that nothing is universal, and that nobody can really know anything for certain.[68]

Smith is one of the strongest writers in terms of the effect of postmodernism. Though I think he is touching on a powerful reality for millennials, I think he overstates some elements. For instance, rather than debunking any view of truth, postmodernism has reshaped the lens through which millennials see truth. I discuss some of these trends in an article on the reshaping of the concept of truth within millennials. In it I show how truth, a core concept challenged by postmodern thought, has suffered a loss of language (millennials are not using the word "truth" in the same kinds of ways, vis a vis truth claims, that previous generations have) and a loss of location (the church is no longer where millennials find truth).[69] Instead of seeing truth as monolithic, millennials realize that context influences the way they view the world. It is true they are more skeptical of sweeping truth claims, but that does not mean they have lost interest in truth, they simply want to understand it on a micro rather than macro scale.

Smith is not the only author who brings issues of postmodern thought to the fore. Anthropologist James Bielo, writing on a group he terms emerging evangelicals (a group which

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[67] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101.

[68] Christian Smith, ed., *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults in, out of, and Gone from the Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6.

[69] M. Andrew Gale, "Justice and Truth, Theology in the Context of Emerging Youth Adults," *The Asbury Journal* 71, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 65–82.

is not bound by generation, thus it includes millennials along with Gen Xers) describes them as represented by a unique interplay of modernity and late-modernity. Bielo says this interplay can be seen in many aspects, not the least of which is the abstraction of youth from absolute truth.[70] David Kinnaman hints at postmodern critique in *You Lost Me* when he writes that "the lines between right and wrong, between truth and error, between Christian influence and cultural accommodation are increasingly blurred."[71] He later mentions that millennials sense the church does not want to deal with the complexities of the world.[72]

Barna Research did a study in 2017 of practicing Christians in America (1,456 web-based surveys) about how other worldviews played a role in their beliefs.[73] Barna defines postmodernism as a critique of rationalism and that it is a view that there is no such thing as objectivity. In this way, postmodernism puts a primary focus on context, "that is, we are all limited by our experience, and at best we can know only what is true for ourselves."[74] The research was multi-generational but shows the difference in generational perspective. For instance, 54% of those responding, across the age spectrum, resonated with postmodernist views. But the researchers noted that when looking at Gen X and millennials, those two groups were sometimes 8 times more likely to accept these views than were their Boomer and Elder predecessors. Barna notes that 23% of respondents (millennials and non-millennials as a set)

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[70] Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity*, 8.

[71] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 12.

[72] Kinnaman and Hawkins, 97.

[73] The worldviews they focused on were new spirituality, secularism, postmodernism, and Marxism. "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians," *Barna* (blog), May 9, 2017, https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/.

[74] "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians."

strongly agreed that "what is morally right or wrong depends on what an individual believes." For those under 45 (which includes Gen X and Millennials) it raises to 37%.

Whether society finds itself in a postmodern context or not, millennials believe that the world has changed. One comment I found in literature has stood out as encapsulating the kind of tension I saw in my research. Jim and Judy Raymo wrote about the connection of millennials and postmodernity, saying:

> These young Christians find themselves caught between modernity's unfounded confidence in rationality, science, and technology, and postmodernity's skepticism about any universal idea/truth, including the exclusive claims of Jesus and their implications. This generation abhors arrogance to the extent of struggling over how to demonstrate both humility and certainty.[75]

This was one of the most prevalent tensions I felt in my research. Millennials are the most educated generation in history[76] and yet, postmodernity has caused them to question everything. They find themselves at a strange juncture of wanting to demonstrate humility and certainty.

Next, I want to share the ways postmodern thought emerged in my research. With postmodernity being an academic concept, it was not discussed much by participants, though one focus group did mention it.[77] But the climate that postmodernity has created is felt by those who participated in my research. One of the ways it is felt is through the disconnect between parents and their millennial kids, which I discuss more in the next section on family.[78] A second way this is felt is through the growing disconnect between the church and the millennial generation. The postmodern world of millennials is a world of complexity and, as David Kinnaman has noted,

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[75] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 32.

[76] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 4.

[77] Focus Group 19.

[78] For example: Interview 12, March 10, 2017; Interview 13; Interview 22; Focus Group 2; Focus Group 3; Focus Group 6; Focus Group 8.

millennials see the church as reticent to engage in that complexity.[79] This, too, was voiced throughout the focus group and interview process and will be discussed in the next section.

The third way I saw postmodernism expressed was through the way participants expressed their understanding of the world through their specific social location or context. For the millennials I interviewed, the phrase used in the Barna research would resonate, "we are all limited by our experience, and at best we can know only what is true for ourselves."[80] Those I researched were reticent to make sweeping statements about others and started many of their explanations with the clause, "for me." For instance, when asked about what issues they consider justice-related, one participant said, "I mean, *for me,* orphan care is a really big one."[81] Or when asked about what images come to mind when they hear the word justice, one participant said, "I think a courtroom, *for me*."[82] The insertion of "for me" was not in an attempt to be polite, but to distinguish that the speaker recognizes their experience may differ from others. Howe and Strauss point to this in their research. They mention millennials are frustrated by the narcissism[83] and racial conceptions[84] of their parent's generation. Their frustrations with their parents' generation is that they simply do not understand the world from a context other than their own. Millennials have grown up in a socially fragmented world where they have had to learn to navigate a number of different contexts.[85] And technology continues to give them tools to expand their perspective.

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[79] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 97.

[80] "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians."

[81] Focus Group 6.

[82] Focus Group 5, March 1, 2017.

[83] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 66.

[84] Howe and Strauss, 218.

Paradox

In the last two subtopics on optimism and postmodernity there were a number of places where there was a lack of resolution. For instance, millennials are optimistic, but they are affected by postmodern thought that is often seen as skeptical. Millennials are both more trusting and more apprehensive of institutions. Millennials struggle with the balance of certainty and humility. Or, as I present in the next section, millennials both respect and disagree with their parents. In this final subtopic, I first explore a number of resources that propose the idea of paradox within the millennial generation. Next, I look at one reason I believe paradox has emerged in the millennial generation. Finally, I close with passages from a book written by a millennial living in the tension of two worlds.

The more I trekked into millennial scholarship and listened closely to those I researched, the more I saw what a number of scholars have noted about millennials, the paradox.[86] Jim and Judy Raymo write, "If we were to choose one word to describe Millennials, that word would be 'paradoxical.'"[87] In another book on how to relate to millennials from a practical ministry standpoint, the authors write, "To the typical either/or question, the quintessential Millennial will answer, 'Yes!'"[88] Though one might assume that technology and travel would lead to more

[85] Howe and Strauss, 103–10.

[86] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*; Pontier and DeVries, *Reimagining Young Adult Ministry*, 95–99; John Leo, "The Good-News Generation," *Townhall* (blog), October 27, 2003, https://townhall.com/columnists/johnleo/2003/10/27/the-good-news-generation-n853102; Tim Elmore, *Generation IY: Parenting a Generation of Paradox* (Norcross, GA.: Growing Leaders, 2011).

[87] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 16.

[88] The second half of their book on young adults, Pontier and Devries look at six paradoxical priorities of millennials. The six paradoxical priorities that they espouse are: succeed by being willing to fail, focus on young adults by taking the focus off young adults, reach young people by gathering more old people, reach one young adult at a time through a system to reach them all, respond to lack of commitment by asking for more, attract young adults to your church by sending them away. Though many elements are simplistic in view, I think there are a couple with merit. Focusing on the sending (practices, which I will discuss in the final chapter) is certainly a way to engage millennials. Their book is situated much more as a book to aid in practical ministry rather than research, but it draws many of the same conclusions that research has found. Pontier and DeVries, *Reimagining Young Adult Ministry*, 96.

opportunity for relationship and connectivity, David Kinnaman argues that in reality it leads to alienation, his second defining characteristic of millennials.[89] This is one of the many paradoxes of millennials; they are community minded, yet extremely isolated. And, as I noticed in my research, they did not so much try to eschew the paradox as live within the tensions of their competing priorities.

Next, I want to explore why millennials find themselves in paradox. One reason for this paradoxical world may be because they are a generation living between modernity and postmodernity. James Bielo sees this discontinuity between modernity and late/postmodernity in his study of emerging evangelicals. Bielo writes that "the simultaneous presence of both sets of dispositions [modernity and late-modernity] results in a religious subjectivity with multiple roots, all relied on as resources for forms of action, decision making, and institution creation."[90] An example he gives of this is the way that emerging evangelicals mix modern and postmodern thought even though they critique modernity. Bielo cites church planters as a prime culprit. At one point they critique the institutional church's leaning on modernity and then utilize modern methods to measure and understand the communities they are planting in.[91] Bielo describes in detail the business plans put together by church planters that range from ten to over one-hundred pages, outlining the exact neighborhood in which they plan to plant, the amount of people that live there, the growth rate at which they expect the church to grow, and how they will remain financially viable.[92] Millennials are functioning, already, in two different worlds. But, instead of feeling trapped, they simply draw from each.[93]

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[89] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 48.

[90] Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity*, 176.

[91] Bielo, 164.

[92] Bielo, 160–64.

Finally, one other area to find paradox is in literature by millennials. In her book, *Assimilate or Go Home: Notes from a Failed Missionary on Rediscovering Faith*, D.L. Mayfield shares openly about her difficulty to find her calling. Even the subtitle begins to share the struggle that Mayfield felt as she engaged with Somali refugees in Portland, Oregon. In one passage, Mayfield wrestles with the oversimplification of faith she experienced at the Bible college she attended. For her, there was too much clarity, the lines were too neat. "I needed the truth, but I needed it to come from a similar question-asker."[94] In another passage, connecting to other elements of postmodernity, Mayfield describes her journey of working with refugees as an experience of strange paradoxes, the more she failed to communicate God's love, the more she received it.[95] Mayfield expresses that she had planned to go in and save the refugees she was called to serve. Instead, she felt they were saving her. There is a recognition among millennials that the world has shifted, and, because of their positive outlook, they intend to shift with it.

Shared Behavior

In the previous two sections, I looked at the generational characteristics of common location in history and shared beliefs, focusing on how technology and paradox have shaped the millennial context. In this section, I look at the final generational characteristic, shared behavior,

[93] During the course of my research, Dr. Stephen Offutt pointed out that this phenomenon, drawing from different worlds to create a new one, connects with Claude Levi-Strauss' concept of 'bricolage.' Levi-Strauss writes, "Now, the characteristic feature of mythical thought, as of 'bricolage' on the practical plane, is that it builds up structured sets, not directly with other structured sets but by using the remains and debris of events: in French 'des bribes et des morceaux', or odds and ends in English, fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or a society." Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, The Nature of Human Society Series (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 21–22; In a similar way, Robert Wuthnow uses the term 'tinkerer' to describe the millennial generation. "A tinkerer puts together a life from whatever skills, ideas, and resources that are readily at hand." He does not suggest that tinkering is absent in generations prior, but the abundance of sources from which to create makes this a unique generational moment. Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13.

[94] D.L. Mayfield, *Assimilate or Go Home: Notes from a Failed Missionary on Rediscovering Faith* (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2016), 25.

[95] Mayfield, xiii–xiv.

in light of family systems.[96] Though it may seem odd to have the role of the family listed as a behavior, it is placed here because of the role families have in behavioral development. Family is not itself a behavior, but the family system does enculturate behavior which is then expressed outside of the family. It is from this perspective that family is integrated into shared behavior. First, I look at the prevalence of the role of family to millennials in scholarship before looking at some points where there is divergence. Next, I discuss how my research affirms both those who claim strong familial bonds and those who discuss a divergence in families. Finally, I close by sharing how the millennials I researched are impacting their families of origin.

Family

The importance of the role of the family for millennials can be found throughout scholarship.[97] Howe and Strauss discuss the changing family system by looking at two aspects of the millennial generation, that they are sheltered and team-oriented. In some ways, these represent the positive and negative consequences of strong families. On the one hand, Howe and Strauss discuss the growth of the child-safety movement during the 1980s and the rise of school shootings that led to school lockdowns. They describe this as the "most sweeping youth safety movement in American history" which has led to millennials being sheltered, and at times risk-averse.[98] On the other hand, millennials are considered more team-oriented than past generations. From a young age, millennials have been encouraged to embrace teamwork through group-

[96] It is important to note that I am not assuming that every millennial has had the same (or even similar) family relationships. The goal is not to say that family is always the same across this generation. But there is no other source that was mentioned more in my research, and which is confirmed in scholarship on millennials, as having a significant impact than the family. Also, when I use the term parent, I am referring to any guardian of the millennials I research.

[97] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*; Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*; Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University"; Leo, "The Good-News Generation"; Lou E. Pelton and Sheb L True, "Teaching Business Ethics: Why Gen Y?," *Marketing Education Review* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 63–70; Smith, *Young Catholic America*.

[98] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 43.

learning in school and extra-curricular sports and activities. This team-orientation, promoted through strong family ties, leads to strong peer bonds.[99] Whether seen through a positive or negative lens, families have played an important role in the maturation of millennials.

Other scholars attest to strong familial connections. Thom and Jess Rainer found in their research of 1,200 millennials that 88% said their parents had a positive influence on them.[100] Even though only 60% of millennials were raised by both parents, the lowest of any generation so far, there is a strong correlation to parents and the behavior of millennials.[101] There are three ways that parents have affected millennials: respect of authority, faith, and the value of relationships.

The first effect that parents have had on millennials is their respect and trust of authority. Natalie Clark, looking at other sociological studies of millennials, writes that because of the closeness millennials have with their parents they, in turn, "place a significant amount of trust in authorities."[102] Howe and Strauss affirm that millennials accept authority, saying that "most teens say they identify with their parents' values."[103] Again, as I mentioned in the last section, this has been challenged by some millennial scholars such as David Kinnaman, who suggest an apprehension to institutions. I think there is a distinction that must be made between respect for an authority or institution and trust in an authority or institution, which I flesh out more in the section on divergence in scholarship.

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[99] Howe and Strauss, 44.

[100] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 19.

[101] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 15.

[102] Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 34.

[103] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 8.

The second effect that parents have on their millennial children is in the realm of faith. Christian Smith writes that the single most important measurable factor that determines the religious lives of millennials is "the character of the religious lives of those who brought them into the world and primarily socialized them into participation in it."[104] Smith continues saying that this is, of course, not deterministic. But the fact that millennials engage in faith based on the faith of their parents points to a high level of acceptance of the views of parents. This may seem to contradict the current statistics and research that show a decrease in religious activity, but there are other factors, some sociological, which are not always taken into account.[105] Secondly, some of that research uses measurements (like church attendance) that measures only outward signs of faith. So, though millennials may not be attending church as much as their parents did, this does not automatically correlate to a loss in faith. Howe and Strauss have noted that millennials are religious, though not in the same ways their parents were.[106]

The final effect that parents have on their millennial children is the value of maintaining relationships. Throughout this chapter I have expressed how experience and relationships are paramount to millennials. Much of this is owed to the value of relationships that families have instilled in their children. Some of this, as Christian Smith notes, is because of global economic changes that force millennials to be more financially connected to their parents into their 20s and 30s.[107] Regardless of the reasons, researchers such as Regina Luttrell have noted a continuing strength in relationship even when millennials leave home. Luttrell notes that this connectivity,

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[104] Smith, *Young Catholic America*, 27.

[105] As Robert Wuthnow explains, there are sociological factors that affect a person's church attendance. One example he offers is that women are more likely than men to attend church, so marriage often affects church attendance. With millennials choosing marriage later in life, the return to church is also protracted. Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 56.

[106] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 234–37.

[107] Smith, *Young Catholic America*, 5.

made more accessible through technology such as texting and social media, is unique to the millennial generation.[108]

Scholarship, though flush with conversations on the role of family, is not in full acceptance as to what that role is. The divergence seems to be at what level millennials depend on parents for advice. David Kinnaman writes that millennials are actually turning to their peers, rather than parents, for advice.[109] Chap Clark, who has studied youth culture for decades, writes that adolescents feel like they can be more authentic with their peers than anyone else.[110] This contrasts with the research done by Thom and Jess Rainer who say that 60% of millennials look to parents for advice.[111] Rainer and Rainer get much of their direction from Howe and Strauss' research who write that millennials look to their parents for not only matters of right and wrong, but when needing to make decisions.[112]

Now that I have shown the role of families as expressed in scholarship, I want to look at my specific research that I believe helps add nuance to the discussion of whether parents' views and advice are accepted by millennials. With both interviews and focus groups, I heard lots of conversations about parents. For the most part, the conversations were positive. Like other scholarship has shown, the participants from my research had positive relationships with their parents. Of those interviews that I asked about sources, none mentioned their parents as a source for where they learn about justice and only three of the focus groups mentioned parents. Aside

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[108] Regina Luttrell, *The Millennial Mindset: Unraveling Fact from Fiction* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 23.

[109] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 48.

[110] Chap Clark and Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, Youth, Family, and Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 60.

[111] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 33.

[112] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 185.

from a low response rate on parental involvement in understanding justice, parents were still important figures to my participants. None of my interviews or focus groups mentioned having adversarial relationships with their parents, they simply were not a source for justice.

In one interview, a participant shared their view of justice versus that of their parents. For her, justice meant making things right, equality between people that eliminates suffering. In contrast, she said, "I think my parents view would be like bringing down the hammer. Kind of like punishment justice. Yes, very much so. So, I think of healing, reconciliation kinds of things with justice as opposed to punishment."[113] This same idea, that participants had differing views on justice than their parents, was expressed in focus groups as well. One focus group participant said she would assume that someone her own age would agree with her view of justice. This is in contrast to her parents. "In a conversation with my parents, if they agreed with me I would be very taken aback, and I would see it as a win."[114]

This directly contradicts the predictions of Howe and Strauss who stated that millennials tend to agree with their parents on matters of right and wrong.[115] And my research affirmed this contradiction with a majority of those I engaged expressing a disconnect between their view of justice and the view of justice of their parents. Rainer and Rainer remark that their findings showed that millennials overwhelmingly respect older generations.[116] Scholarship, on the whole, has talked explicitly about the respect for parents and older generations. The nuance that I see in my research, is to understand the tension between respect and acceptance.[117] In my research,

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[113] Interview 13.

[114] Focus Group 19.

[115] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 185.

[116] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 59.

[117] Even in popular culture there is this sense of tension between child and parent. A recent movie, *Lady Bird* (2017) exemplifies this. The movie is written and directed by a millennial (Greta Gerwig, born in 1983) and it expresses the tension Lady Bird has with her mom, desperately wanting her respect, but trying to make her own way

though there was respect for parents, there was certainly not agreement in thought between millennials and their parents in terms of how they understand and engage in justice-related issues. Millennials may respect their parents, but that does not mean they agree with them.

One intriguing element I found in my research, that has not yet received much attention in scholarship, is the impact that millennials are having on their families of origin. In a book by Lisa Sharon Harper titled *The Very Good Gospel*, she looks at the concept of shalom and what shalom could look like between genders, between humanity and creation, and between different races and nations. In Harper's section on shalom and broken families she looks at family systems theory. In an interview with psychologist Claudia Owens Shields, Harper shares this explanation from Shields, "General family systems theory says that anytime any one individual in the family is affected by something, it sends a ripple through the whole family."[118] Though this is often seen through the lens of the negative (for example, a person in the family is affected by alcoholism and it affects the entire family), can the same be true for positive changes in the life of a family member?

In my research, I found a number of participants who, during the conversation about their view of justice versus that of their parents, discussed the changes happening in their family because they were bringing these conversations to the fore. It was not simply that their parents affected their views (both in resonance and dissonance with the views of justice of their parents), but that these millennials believed that their views of and engagement in justice were shaping their parents' views. One interview participant discussed the change in perspective that her mother had about immigration after some conversations. Her mom had read some posts she had

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at the same time. Interestingly, Gerwig mentioned that the movie has elements that mirrored her life, one of those being the struggle between parental respect/affirmation and acceptance. Richard Brody, "Greta Gerwig's Exquisite, Flawed 'Lady Bird,'" *The New Yorker*, November 2, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/greta-gerwigs-exquisite-flawed-lady-bird.

[118] Harper, *The Very Good Gospel*, 122.

made on Twitter about immigration and they began dialoguing about their views on the topic. The participant suggested that her mom read some more information about it and, within a few weeks, her mom had shifted her view, even if just slightly.[119] In another interview, the participant said that through conversations with her mom she has seen her mom's faith grow, moving away from being very individualistic and private.[120]

A person in a focus group expressed the idea of familial change this way, she said about her parents:

> I have seen them, in the last 10 years, really expand their view of social justice. And I think some of that is that I'm the youngest of three, so all their kids went off to college and came back with a much greater awareness. And we're pretty close with our parents and shared those things and, so, them hanging out with millennials, it brought them into that conversation more.[121]

The family is a key interlocutor in the lives of millennials and the shaping of their views, even those related to justice. Millennials view these interactions as multi-directional conversations where both offspring and parent are being influenced by the views of the other.

The Church

Throughout this chapter I have been analyzing the foundations of justice that are present within the millennial generation. These foundations are built on personal experience through mediums of technology, family systems, and travel all of which leavened this generation with optimism amid paradigm shifts in modern thought. But, in so many of my conversations with Christian millennials, the church was viewed as being absent from helping millennials define, sharpen, and call to action on behalf of justice-related work. With part of my interest in this

[119] Interview 12.

[120] Interview 24.

[121] Focus Group 8.

study revolving around the role of the church in shaping views of justice, when millennials finished sharing the many sources they used to ground justice, if the church had not yet been mentioned, I asked about the role of the church. When asked about whether their local church had influenced their view of justice-related issues, a number of responses were like this interview participant: "No. Zero, I would say."[122] Another interview participant offered this response: "Yeah, maybe not in the best way."[123]

In another interview, when I asked about whether the church influenced her view of justice she started by saying "Yeah, 100%." I was excited to hear a positive response, a contrast from most others I encountered. However, I quickly realized this was in response to the church she was currently attending which had a community center that she worked at providing support to vulnerable youth in the city. I asked whether she would say the same about the church she grew up in. She responded:

> I think they influenced my views of justice by not – oh man, I hate this so much, because I love those churches. I have great memories from those places and it's hard to come to terms with [the fact that], wow, they were missing this huge piece. So, I think they influenced my view of justice by not participating... I just feel like if we did participate in justice-related issues it was at an arm's length, where we never got too close.[124]

Though these responses are from interviews, I received mirroring responses from the focus groups I conducted. One of the participants shared nearly the same sentiment as the previous quote. He expressed his struggle with churches:

> I love church, I love going to church and interacting with my fellow believers. But, I kind of struggle with that because churches that I have kind of grown up in were more – they didn't necessarily talk about stuff like racial issues. They didn't talk about like those really heavy issues and, I mean, that's something that I wanted to be a part of.

[122] Interview 13.

[123] Interview 4, September 23, 2016.

[124] Interview 21, May 26, 2017.

> But it's hard, at least right now for me, to try to find a church that really likes to tackle those things.[125]

One of the things that fascinates me about both of the two previous comments (representative of both interviews and focus groups), and something that I found to be true for many of the people I interacted with, is that you can sense the sadness they have for the church. Neither person expressed anger or frustration or contempt for how the church handled justice issues. That is not to say that there are not millennials who would express anger and frustration about the lack of conversations about justice in the church.[126] But those I interviewed were simply disappointed that the church did not see these issues as important enough to discuss and, as they have had opportunity to seek out churches on their own, have looked for churches that willingly engage in justice issues.[127] This phenomenon correlates with other research. In her book, *The Millennial Mindset*, Regina Luttrell writes, in terms of religion, millennials do not tend to be anti-Christian or anti-religion, but simply less religious.[128] Sadly, as other scholars have pointed out, when the church is silent on justice-related issues, millennials simply find the church irrelevant.[129]

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to distinguish factors which influence millennial's view of justice. I started by stating that two primary epistemological foundations for millennials are

[125] Focus Group 10.

[126] One simple explanation as to why I did not experience as many angry millennials is that my research focused on those who still call themselves Christian. Thus, they tend to have a more favorable view of the church or at least a hope for the future.

[127] That may be one reason more churches are engaging in events to support justice-related causes. For example, Freedom Sundays, which raise awareness and money for organizations fighting human trafficking. Byun, *Justice Awakening*.

[128] Luttrell, *The Millennial Mindset*, 34.

[129] Offutt et al., *Advocating for Justice*, 168–69.

relationships and experience and that millennials forge and filter their view of the world through these two lenses. I then explored the role of technology and travel, optimism and postmodernity, and finally family and the church.[130] In each of these sections, the relationships and experiences of millennials were the primary foundation for how they understood their world. I closed by showing the perceived absence of the church in terms of justice dialogue. With experience and relationship as foundations, the next chapter explores definitions and discourses of justice.

[130] For instance, technology connects relationally, and millennials want to experience the world through travel. Historical events were overshadowed by personal experience. Optimism was birthed out of familial relationships. Postmodernity challenged millennials to learn from others' experiences. Parental relationships are foundational.

CHAPTER FOUR

Justice, Constructing a Definition

Introduction

It was late winter, and I sat with four university students in a comfy, upstairs study room in the library of a Christian university. Participants often exuded at least slight apprehension as the group gathered in those first moments of the focus group. No one knew what to expect. As we started, we went around and shared names and what each of them was studying, gaining a little context for each person. Attempting to diffuse any angst they carried in with them, I explained that the goal in the focus group was to have a dialogue with one another around the topic of justice. Then, I asked the first question, "so, how would you define justice?" Silence resulted, as the students looked at each other trying to decide who had courage enough to speak first. Some eyes darted to the wall while others explored the carpet, looking as if they wished they were invisible. Finally, one student responded, "Oh good, we're starting out easy," and the others laughed.[1] Defining justice is not a simple task; its definitions are numerous. It has been used in a variety of sectors of public life from philosophy to economics, religion to politics, and, in each of these venues, it receives a different treatment.

This chapter offers definitions of justice among Wesleyan-Holiness millennials that emerges from my research. Prior to offering the definitions I discovered, I give a brief review of my research process and findings, specifically, explaining how I developed the categories I used so the definitions that emerge are understood in context. After the brief review, I offer analysis of the definitions focusing on three major themes I uncovered: different definitions of righting wrongs, the prevalence of equality, and the role of faith.

[1] Focus Group 6.

Research Process and Findings

Before moving on to definitions and analysis, I want to briefly refresh the reader on the process I employed for gathering information. My goal in this research was to listen to millennials. Because of that, I allowed my focus groups and interviews to be spaces of dialogue. The goal of the questions I asked was to engage different ways one might conceptualize justice, ranging from directly asking how one would define it to more aesthetic questions about images, songs, or phrases that come to mind when one hears the word justice. I allowed the conversation to take natural turns and for the focus group participants to dialogue amongst themselves, as much as they desired, about specific issues before moving to the next topic. Focus group participants were often college-aged students who did not have any specific engagement in justice. In contrast, interview participants were actively engaged in justice-related work and tended to be older (with a nearly eight-year differential in median age).

In this section, I share three components: language, definitions, and issues. First, I discuss language that emerged around justice and how it was categorized. Next, I look at preliminary definitions as the first analysis of what was expressed. This analysis lays the foundation for the three elements of justice that emerged. Finally, I explore definitions tied to justice-related issues.

Language

After interviews and focus groups were complete, I began compiling the information into a spreadsheet, categorizing definitions to find frequency and to contrast the groups. It is this collected data that I will be exploring in this chapter. In order to understand the definitions of justice that emerge from millennials, I offer some ways of categorizing the language.

First, it is important to note that when possible I use the language of millennials to define justice. This is done to avoid overlaying my personal understanding of concepts onto their

definitions. At the same time, it is important to create meaningful categories for analysis purposes. An example of this is the often-expressed view of justice as "righting a wrong." This is an ambiguous concept that was used by millennials to connote positive change (such as restoration from an injustice like rescuing a woman out of sex trafficking) and by others to connote consequential action (such as punishment for a wrongdoing like a person being put in prison for a crime). This makes the same phrase problematic as one could say that "righting a wrong" is understood as both restorative and punitive justice. In these cases, I asked clarifying questions and from there was able to lift themes and concepts that emerged in order to categorize them together.

Second, as one can imagine from the example above, the concept of "righting a wrong" for many people was not either solely restorative or punitive, but an intersectional understanding of many definitions. Thus, though categorization helps gain an understanding of definitions of justice, one must realize that there are multi-layered views of justice that incorporate a number of definitions. For instance, one focus group participant agreed with another participant that justice was restoring creation back to what God had originally designed, but said his first inclination was a definition tied to the government and judicial system. Together, they went on to say that "getting your due" could include both punishment for the offender and care for those in need.[2]

There were eleven categories that emerged from the millennial's definitions of justice compiled from both interviews and focus groups. These categories were created by the interviews and focus groups themselves. I began by creating a primary list from the most commonly heard definitions. Then, while transcribing the interviews and focus groups, I created a new category when a definition was given that had not yet been given or was not fully

[2] Focus Group 1, September 16, 2016.

encompassed in a previous category. Others who gave the same definition as someone prior were counted toward the overall number that category received. The eleven categories are:

- Flourishing/Harmony/Shalom
- Punishment/Consequence
- Restorative/Rectifying
- Recognition
- Participation
- Salvation
- Equality/Fairness
- Lifestyle
- Distributive
- Care for Vulnerable
- Jesus
- What's due

Certainly, the argument could be made that some of the categories overlap, but my goal was to use the language that my participants gave me which meant that if, after hearing more about how the person defined justice it did not easily match another category, I created a new one. This both makes the research more problematic (as it is based on my bias and interpretation) but also thicker (as it uses language that participants utilized).

Definitions

At this time, I begin looking at the information I collected from focus groups. When asked how they would define justice, 14 out of the 19 focus groups (or nearly three-quarters), defined it in terms of punishment or consequences for a wrong doing. In justice literature, this refers to retributive or punitive justice. This does not mean that retributive/punitive justice was the only definition they gave, but it was given as one way they defined justice. Retributive or punitive justice encompassed the most often expressed way of defining justice within focus groups. Almost as prevalent as retributive/punitive justice were discussions of justice as fairness or equality, which was discussed in nearly 60% of focus groups (11 out of 19). This definition of

justice is not a surprise for those who study millennials, which I explore more thoroughly in the section on equality.

Also, within focus groups, when asked about images that come to mind when they heard the word justice, legal images, such as gavels, court rooms, and Lady Justice[3] were mentioned. They also discussed TV shows that take place in courtrooms and the Justice League, a DC Comics superhero team that sets out to bring evil to justice, was mentioned as well. In all cases, the imagery expressed was predominately legal in nature, tied to punishment or consequences for wrongdoing, a sharp contrast, as I show in the analysis section, to the definitions and images of those I interviewed.

Each focus group could share as many definitions for justice as they could come up with. With that, one might expect diversity in responses from seventy-five people who went through focus groups. The group size is three times what my interview pool was. But responses were primarily in the two categories mentioned, retributive/punitive (mentioned in 74% of focus groups) and equality/fairness (60%). After those first two categories, one category (restorative) got 37% and another category (flourishing) got 32%. The other categories all fell between 5% and approximately 20%.

Interviews offered similar collective thinking across participants in terms of definitions, but they were not the same definitions that focus groups offered. Instead, 48% of respondents defined justice in restorative or rectifying terms. Restorative justice was the most commonly used definition. Two other definitions were close behind at 40% each, a combination of flourishing/harmony/shalom and equality. One challenge with the idea of restorative justice and the definition of justice around terms like flourishing/harmony/shalom is the significant overlap

[3] Lady Justice is the image of a woman, commonly with a scarf over her eyes, holding a scale in one hand and a sword in the other. It is commonly thought of as a representation of the Roman goddess Justice (*Justitia*) and is equivalent to the Greek goddess Dike.

in these concepts.[4] Three interview participants even used both of these concepts in their definition of justice.[5] Looking at responses from participants who said justice was about restoration or about flourishing (combining these categories and excluding overlap) the percentage of participants who chose one or the other of the categories is 76%. In short, three out of four interview participants saw justice in a light of restoration and/or shalom. In comparison, this is nearly the same percentage (74%) of focus groups that defined justice as retributive/punitive.

After those first two definitions, the next highest prevalence was equality at 40%, which coincides with the second highest category for focus groups. As a reminder, those who participated in interviews were actively involved in justice-related work, so their definitions were more nuanced and robust than the focus groups (though there were three-times as many focus group participants as interview participants). About 30% of interviews mentioned participation (or equal opportunity/rights) and 30% mentioned recognition. After those categories, in terms of highest responses, one out of four (24%) mentioned care for the vulnerable as a component of justice and the concluding definitions all fell below 8%.

Issues

Another way to approach definitions of justice is by examining what millennials consider justice-related issues.[6] Even the simple question, "what's wrong with the world?" can give a

[4] These two categories fit very closely together. And though I considered putting them together, the definitions were enough different to warrant the nuance. Nonetheless, they carry many of the same connotations of positive change, complete healing, etc. Restorative justice does not automatically assume a Christian perspective on justice where, for my participants, flourishing/harmony/shalom did.

[5] Interview 14; Interview 22; Interview 25, June 9, 2017.

[6] Karen Lebacqz, Christian theologian and ethicist, chooses to start her understanding of justice with an understanding of injustice because she believes a person can more easily identify injustice. Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World*, 11.

picture of how one quantifies injustice and, conversely, justice. I used a similar approach in my focus groups and interviews. After looking at the concept of justice from multiple venues, I asked the participants what they considered to be issues related to justice. The conversations that ensued gave another layer of explanation around their definitions of justice. The goal was not to be comprehensive, per se, but simply to share what issues immediately came to mind when they thought about justice.

There were thirty-four issues[7] discussed in the course of interviews and focus groups. As with the definitions, I began noting each issue individually and if there were new issues brought up in a subsequent interview or focus group I added them to my list for analysis. There is such incredible variety with issues that I added more when there may have been overlap, but I wanted to make sure I represented the participants accurately. For instance, police brutality and oppressive governments have significant overlap in some people's minds, but I listed them separately when they were expressed (knowing that they are not always connected). Also, though this may seem obvious, I only listed those issues that were verbalized. For instance, issues of education are affected by gender, socio-economic situation, race, and immigration, to name a few. A respondent may have said only education, but conceptually included the other issues within their one response. I listed only education in my analysis. The goal here was not to be comprehensive or definitive, but to gauge what issues take precedence in the minds of millennials. With this, one can also compare the two research groups for similarities and differences.

[7] Food access, abortion, race, women, LGBTQ, poverty, criminal justice, gender, wealth/classism, slavery/human trafficking, ethnic issues (international), disability, medical care, immigration, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, oppressive governments, homelessness/shelter, education, violence/war, water, children, police brutality, loving/belonging, orphans, religious persecution, domestic violence, rape, death penalty, incarceration, unemployment, drug use, maternal death rates, refugees.

For focus groups, the number one issue that was discussed was the issue of race (68%). It is important to note that, at the time of my research, race became an issue of significant dialogue at a national level. Groups like Black Lives Matter and the issues of police brutality were mentioned a number of times, but the focus groups participants were not homogenous in their views of these issues. Also, high on the list of issues were poverty, women's rights, abortion, and immigration. For interviews, the highest issue was poverty with over 60% mentioning it. Other issues with high prevalence were food access, race, women's rights, human trafficking, and education. All other issues received less than 20% mention from participants.

In terms of issue-based dialogue, I expected certain issues to be common across most interviews and focus groups. What I did not expect was the diversity of issues and the lack of consistency. Issues involving justice are very contextual. The idea that there is any kind of meta-issues that all millennials accept as justice-related issues is too simplistic. The only issues pervasive across both interviews and focus groups, were those linked to issues of equality or equal treatment, what some might call rights-based justice (race, immigration, slavery/human trafficking).[8] I also want to note that, within the 34 issues mentioned, there were some issues where there was no overlap between focus groups and interviews.[9] In this section, I gave an initial overview of the data and reviewed the processes in terms of research. I move now to analyze the data and the themes that emerged.

[8] Nancy Fraser lists three elements of justice: equal distribution, legal or cultural recognition, and political representation. The issues that were consistent were those coinciding with the second element, legal or cultural recognition. By Nancy Fraser, "Abnormal Justice," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): 396.

[9] For instance, interviews mentioned maternal death rate and focus groups did not. But focus groups mentioned rape and domestic violence when interview participants did not.

Righting Wrongs – Two Views

Neil Howe and William Strauss write that "Millennials are unlike any other young generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse."[10] But how do the demographics of this generation (their size, affluence, education, and diversity) shape their perception of the term justice? Is there a common perception that is promulgated through the generation? In this section, I explore how the millennials I listened to defined justice and analyze their definitions across the spectrum of voices I heard. I examine three major themes that emerged: 1) the differentiation in terms of defining "righting wrongs," 2) the prevalence of equality language, and 3) the role, whether present or absent, of faith and the church in defining justice.

The first theme I want to explore in terms of defining justice among millennials is the correlation of restorative and punitive definitions. Both of these definitions, though distinct, can fall under a commonly expressed idea, "righting wrongs." Though the language may be the same, the context behind the words makes the definitions quite different. As one continues to parse the language, two differentiated views of justice emerge. In this section, I begin by giving examples of how interviews and focus groups used the same term, "righting wrongs," but in significantly different ways. Then, I discuss how the pervasiveness of punishment within the American cultural paradigm, including the church, may have influenced a focus group's reliance on a punitive definition. Next, I explain how those I interviewed expressed a definition of "righting wrongs" that created space for understandings of systemic and structural injustice. Finally, I close by identifying contributing factors that shaped these views of justice.

[10] Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The next Great Generation /by Neil Howe and Bill Strauss; Cartoons by R.J. Matson* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 4.

Same Phrase, Different Meaning

One of the most interesting findings in terms of the way justice was defined was the stark contrast between focus groups and interviews. Fourteen of the nineteen focus groups discussed justice as connected with punishment or consequences. It was the most common definition of justice among focus groups. In one focus group a participant gave this definition, "Making things right. When I think of justice, I always think of like superheroes bringing justice to the bad guys. Avenging."[11] In another focus group, when I asked what images come to mind when they think about the word justice, the participant responded, "I would say a gavel." And right after another participant added, "Yeah, a judge."[12] Seven different focus groups used the term "court" in discussing justice where only one interview used the term.[13] There were also more terms like judgment and criminal in their definitions.

Putting this in perspective, in the twenty-five interviews I did, not one began their definition of justice using terms that related to consequences for wrong-doing and only one mentioned imagery connected to criminal justice at all.[14] In contrast, 76% of interviews discussed some aspect of restorative justice. In one interview, the participant said, "I think immediately when I think of justice what comes to mind is putting wrongs to right."[15] As he expressed what it looked like to make wrongs right, he went on saying, "so it's easy to see the idea that all children should be able to gain a good educational foundation, one that's going to set them up well for the

[11] Focus Group 15, April 24, 2017.

[12] Focus Group 2.

[13] Interview 24.

[14] In the interview, after defining justice as setting things right, the participant used the term "social justice." I pressed in on what she meant, and she said that justice seemed more connected to "someone standing in court and they get their sentence, and that's justice setting things right" and that social justice was "more physical needs." Interview 24.

[15] Interview 2.

rest of their life. That's something that is right. That's something that's good. That's something that we should work to provide."[16] The "right" he describes was a good for society, taking care of children's educational needs, as opposed to punishment for a wrongdoing.

The sentiment was common across interviews. Another interview participant discussed righting wrongs as connected to the vulnerable, "when somebody has been injured, taken advantage of, things like being able to stand up when other people can't stand up."[17] Framing it in a biblical context, another participant said, "I think ultimately, God's plans for restoration for the whole world are plans for that restorative justice… So, as we're identifying injustice, we are then opened up to be able to say this isn't right for these reasons and we hope for a different future in God and this is what we imagine it to look like or imagine possibilities to look like in a community."[18] The definitions tended to be more hopeful. They saw the power of justice to restore what was broken. And, as expressed in all of these examples, the focus of the definition was on the vulnerable and how to care for them rather than on the perpetrator of an injustice and how to punish them. Though there is significant overlap, the tenor of each of these definitions is unique, and they draw on different elements of justice.

Punishment

Why is there such contrast between these two views of justice?[19] One explanation I explore points to the role of punishment within American culture. T. Richard Snyder says that

[16] Interview 2.

[17] Interview 11.

[18] Interview 25.

[19] Besides the difference in approach to collecting data (focus groups compared to interviews). Though I am sure this played a role, the difference is striking enough to make it worth noting even though different research methods were used to collect the data.

American culture "is captive to a spirit of punishment."[20] It is a part of the culture of music, movies, television, and entertainment. A recent study shows that gun violence more than doubled in PG-13[21] movies between 1985 and 2012.[22] In 2013, PBS did a study on first-person shooter (FPS) video games.[23] They claim that FPS video games represent a $5 billion market and are played by millions of people each day.[24] Though the study of the role of video games provoking violence is inconclusive, many researchers point to the video game habits of those who engage in violent actions.[25] The economy of violence is pervasive in American culture.

Another place one can find punitive cultural values is in the increased interest in superhero entertainment. In 2017, there were six superhero movies that premiered in theaters and they collectively brought in $4 billion dollars (as of the end of November 2017), an annual record for superhero movies to date.[26] Superhero movies portray the quest to avenge injustice and eliminate the threat posed by villains, a narrative of punitive justice. They also play a role in creating a view of justice as rescuing someone from harm, but they can also perpetuate an inaccurate view that there are clear lines of separation between right and wrong, good and evil, which are often more ambiguous in real life.

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[20] T. Richard Snyder, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 3.

[21] PG-13 is the rating given to movies that may have elements that are unsuitable for children under 13 years of age.

[22] Assil Frayha, "Gun Violence Keeps Rising in PG-13 Movies, Study Says," *CNN*, December 20, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/20/health/gun-violence-pg-13-movies-study/index.html.

[23] First-person shooter video games are where the person playing the game is the protagonist attempting to kill their enemies, such as *Call of Duty.*

[24] Brandon Keim, "What Science Knows About Video Games and Violence," *Nova Next, PBS*, February 28, 2013, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/body/what-science-knows-about-video-games-and-violence/.

[25] For instance, Adam Lanza who killed 26 people in the Newtown, Connecticut shootings.

[26] Mark Hughes, "How 2017 Became The Greatest Year For Superhero Movies Of All Time," *Forbes*, November 27, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/markhughes/2017/11/27/how-2017-became-the-greatest-year-for-superhero-movies-of-all-time/#455fe5aa13e6.

This lack of ambiguity and nuance can be seen in media as well. A number of focus groups mentioned a lack of trust with mainstream media sites, opting to engage information from a multitude of locations in order to fully understand a situation.[27] Others blamed the media and their bias for contributing to the complicated understanding of justice.[28] Fox News and CNN were mentioned specifically in a few focus groups, often as an example of the two sides of argument, conservative and liberal.[29] Nonetheless, whether cognizant of their context or not, millennials have been shaped by a twenty-four-hour news cycle that often pits one side against another. And with the goal to rally their market, news agencies create strong lines of separation between who is in and who is out, between good and evil and right and wrong.

Though America may be a fulcrum for punishment culture, theologians point also to the role of the church in perpetuating a spirit of punishment. Heather Thomson, a public theologian, points to Christianity as a culprit of punitive justice. "As a Christian theologian, I am concerned to see that justice, as a central Jewish and Christian virtue and practice, is not hijacked into serving violence as it has been and continues to be."[30] Thomson suggests a strong doctrine of sin can lead to strong punitive justice. She also expresses that the American culture of individualism lends itself to a highly individualized construction of sin. As I expressed in the second chapter of this research, evangelicalism moved toward a more individualized view of sin and salvation in the mid-twentieth century based on a split between the social gospel and fundamentalist traditions and a stronger adherence to enlightenment thinking. Individualistic views of sin lead to

[27] For instance, Focus Group 11; Focus Group 12, April 24, 2017; Focus Group 13, April 24, 2017; Focus Group 15; Focus Group 9, March 3, 2017.

[28] Focus Group 18, June 20, 2017.

[29] Focus Group 11; Focus Group 13; Focus Group 15; Focus Group 10.

[30] Heather Thomson, "Satisfying Justice," *International Journal of Public Theology* 3, no. 3 (May 2009): 320.

the belief that criminals are individually responsible for crimes, masking the contextual factors that also influence crime.[31]

Other theologians have noted this needed shift in individualistic sin-language in the church. For instance, Karen Lebacqz expresses a difference between individual and social forms of sin. She gives the example of the distinction between *individual* stealing or robbing someone of their possessions by physically taking it, and *social* stealing, which is an often-legal way for someone to take more than their share.[32] It was this social view of sin, explored in the next section, that lacked nuance within some focus group definitions of justice.

One reason that Christianity has embraced a punitive definition of justice is the simplification of salvation into a solely personal endeavor. Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice write in *Reconciling All Things*, that many major Christian movements believe that "the biblical call to reconciliation is solely about reconciling God and humanity, with no reference to social realities…. For them, Christianity is exclusively about personal piety and morals."[33] These distinctions were apparent in the different ways millennials framed the idea of righting wrongs. The punitive view of justice which was so prevalent in the focus groups can be understood as much closer to the individual understanding of sin. One focus group participant said, "I think that justice is along the lines of like the judicial system. Righting a wrong that someone committed by breaking laws."[34] In contrast, for those I interviewed, justice must take into account the systemic, structural sins that are apparent in society. It is a holistic view of justice, not bound to individual, personal sin.

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[31] Thomson, 323.

[32] Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World*, 56.

[33] Katongole and Rice, *Reconciling All Things*, 27.

[34] Focus Group 11.

Systemic Injustice

Next, I look at how interview participants were able to express more concretely the difficulty of systemic, structural injustice than were their focus group counterparts. For one example, the issues they named were often qualified in ways that expressed systemic issues. The discussion about food was not just about poverty or deficit but was expressed as "food access." This frames the conversation around structures that limit access to resources. One interview participant was very specific on this as they discussed the role of helping on a local level coupled with systemic change, "If you bring food to someone, yeah, that helps them… but, by and large, that's a tiny piece of the puzzle. So, I think you have to have both [local and systemic change] but I think both work interchangeably because if you're doing great work on the local level, that can create some way to influence the government."[35] This ability to recognize systemic or structural issues and verbalize them as part of a cohesive view of justice was much more pronounced in interviews, though it was certainly not completely absent within focus groups.[36] There are two ways I saw systemic injustice expressed through my research, by broadening individualistic views of salvation to more communal views and removing the over-spiritualization of the kingdom of God.

First, I look at moving from individualistic constructions of salvation to communal views. I found a movement from punitive to restorative justice not only with those I interviewed, but also among Christian millennial authors who tackle issues of justice. I shared some thoughts on the church and paradox from D.L. Mayfield in the last chapter, but she also engages questions of system injustice. Mayfield's book chronicles her dream of becoming a missionary from

[35] Interview 19, May 26, 2017.

[36] For instance, one focus group discussed the need to deal with the root causes of wealth and health care inequity: "I think redistribution, wealth redistribution, is absolutely a necessity if food justice and health care justice are ever to be addressed." But this understanding was not pervasive for focus groups. Focus Group 2.

childhood through her college education and then the awakening she experienced as she taught English to refugees. Mayfield is a millennial and shares about some of the movements of faith she experienced. The quote below is lengthy, but it shows how Mayfield's conception of justice and its connection to her faith changes as her faith moves from a personal, individualistic understanding to a more socially constructed view of sin. Mayfield writes:

> The God of my youth, who when people spoke of him sometimes seemed more like an oppressor, someone who doled out punitive punishments like candy, who was always waiting for the next terrible thing to happen, has changed in my eyes. I see now a sorrowful, hopeful God. One who, no doubt, was exasperated by all the idolatry and murmurings and wanderings and complaining, but whose wrath was directly stoked by oppression. I see how he was the tireless advocate of the poor, the widow, and the orphan. How he saw, time and time again, that these were the first to be forgotten, a sign that the hearts of the people were far from him, even if they weren't quite yet bowing down to Baal. As we see again and again in scripture, righteousness is not simply a clean heart or hands scrubbed of blood. It is a people acting out justice in their everyday lives; they are tied together, everywhere in scripture. The oppressed are written in every book, nearly on every page of the prophets and psalms. How could I have missed it for so many years?[37]

Mayfield's writing is an honest expression of one millennial's movement in understanding from punitive to restorative justice.

Other millennial authors pick up on this same issue. Gena Thomas is a millennial who lived in Mexico as a missionary doing community development for a number of years.[38] Her work linked rock climbers from around the world who came to the region to climb with a struggling Mexican neighborhood. Thomas wrote a book that takes the concept of justice as the foundation for international development. In the book she writes, "restoring humanity involves both individual redemptive justice and systemic redemptive justice… Redemption is needed not only in individual lives, but also in systems and cycles, infrastructures, and societal norms."[39]

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[37] Danielle L. Mayfield, *Assimilate or Go Home: Notes from a Failed Missionary on Rediscovering Faith*, (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2016), 186–7.

[38] I share more of Thomas' story in the final chapter on practices.

Mayfield and Thomas express these issues not only in books, but also through their social media platforms. In May 2017, Mayfield posted a picture on Instagram of a sign that she explains is put up by a kind, older man in the neighborhood to warn drivers of walking children. She posts, "when I write something for general (white) Christian audiences I am struck by how no one has a framework for systemic sin. Everyone wants to talk about individual sin and responsibility."[40] She uses the sign as an example. Though it is a nice gesture, the fact that the city has not prioritized sidewalks or a flashing school sign in their lower income neighborhood is an example of attempting individualistic change when systemic change is necessary. "I am learning this for myself. I need to stop looking past the one or two small interventions and start working to change the systemic, or else nothing will really change. #heyletswalktoschool #systemicinjustice #isabiblicalconcept."[41]

Mayfield ends with the hashtags "systemic injustice, is a biblical concept." This is an idea that she has worked to engage with her Christian community. Her experience of not having a framework for systemic justice it is not a foreign one for many millennials. One participant in my research attempted to express the difference she experienced between the church she grew up in, a church without language for systemic sin, and a church she began attending which had language for systemic or communal sin:

> I think the heart of the shift was from a very individualized spiritual focus to a collective spiritual focus. And it was that shift that has made all the difference. So, the language of mercy was there, but there was such an emphasis on individualized experience, about me and Jesus, that was not naming what communal or collective sin looked like. Or what collective responses to injustice might be like and how that was also a part of our spiritual life. So, I think, in a

[39] Gena Thomas, *A Smoldering Wick: Igniting Missions Work with Sustainable Practices*, 2nd ed. (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 48.

[40] D.L. Mayfield, *Instagram* (blog), May 31, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BUw0o4rhkBc/?taken-by=d_l_mayfield.

[41] Mayfield.

> nutshell it was moving from a very individual focus to a broader communal focus.[42]

From the perspective of the millennials I interviewed and researched, the issue of unrecognized systemic or structural sin seems to be pervasive in many evangelical churches.

One way to engage discussions of systemic justice from a biblical standpoint is through the theological concept of the kingdom of God. Gena Thomas writes "Biblical justice is the act of practicing the rightness of God on earth, therefore making the coming kingdom of heaven a present reality."[43] But, even the theological concept of the kingdom of God has a complicated history in the church. D.L. Mayfield, with her husband Krispen, do a podcast called "The Prophetic Imagination Station." In the podcast, D.L. and Krispen discuss the audio theater series, *Adventures in Odyssey,* which was a production of Focus on the Family. The series came out when they were kids in the late 1980s and now they re-listen to episodes and discuss them in light of current thoughts on theology. In the fourth podcast, they look at the *Adventures in Odyssey* episode, "Thy Kingdom Come." D.L. mentions that she was excited for this episode because the kingdom of God is the number one thing that has changed her life and the number one thing Jesus talks about.

D.L. mentions that in Bible college she was obsessed with the question, "what is the kingdom of God?" And yet, she was frustrated by the Christian-sounding answers that did not seem to deal with the present reality of people living in injustice:

> To me, it's pretty damaging, in a way, trying to tell Eugene [a character in the show] and all of these little kids listening at home that when Jesus was talking about what he was always talking about [the kingdom of God] he just meant heaven. Like when we die we'll get to experience true justice for the first time. That's really sad. Does that mean we are not to work so hard for justice and righteousness and peace and good news for the poor here on this earth? I kind of find that theology damaging.[44]

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[42] Interview 14.

[43] Thomas, *A Smoldering Wick: Igniting Missions Work with Sustainable Practices*, 33, 49.

D.L. suggested that the episode followed the over-spiritualization of the concept of the kingdom of God that has been prevalent in the church. Krispen added that the view of the kingdom of God as a wholly future reality has been used by people for a long time to oppress other people and to "get out of their responsibility and calling to fight for justice and for the kingdom here and now."[45] Millennial justice, especially from those engaged in justice-related activities, understands systemic issues and can engage biblical concepts, like the kingdom of God, to express those issues.

It is important to note not only the movement from retributive to restorative justice with those millennials engaged in justice, but also the lack of retributive justice language that interview participants expressed. As I mentioned, none of the interviews began their definition from a view of consequence or wrong-doing and only one mentioned criminal justice. But, for justice to be complete, it must incorporate both views. The bible clearly offers a retributive view of justice and does not place it in contrast to a restorative view, but as components of an all-encompassing view of justice. The lack of retributive language shows a swing from one view (focused on the perpetrator) to another (focused on the victim). This may be in response to what they perceive as a focus on a strongly retributive view, but in swinging to the other side, it offers a view of justice as a progression (from retributive to restorative) rather than the importance of holding both elements in tension.

[44] D.L. Mayfield and Krispen Mayfield, *Thy Kingdom Come*, The Prophetic Imagination Station, n.d., accessed March 20, 2017.

[45] Mayfield and Mayfield.

Contributing Factors

I want to end this section looking at what may have contributed to the differing views of justice expressed by focus groups and interviews. There are two factors that I see which contributed to the competing definitions: education and experience. First, those I interviewed were older millennials and had more education (in most cases). So, one could say the more education one has, the more their definition of justice shifts from punitive to restorative. Though education was a contributing factor, I do not think it is the most important factor. There were a number of interview participants with less education (ranging from only a high school education to only a college education), and yet, they still came to the same definition of justice, restorative, as those interview participants with advanced degrees. What was the contributing factor? Engagement with justice-related issues. A person's experience, their engagement with justice-related issues, was the most prominent factor in determining their definition of justice.

Equality

The prevalence of equality as a value in the millennial generation has been noted in scholarship from the earliest research by Neil Howe and William Strauss. In 1998, Howe and Strauss asked students grades 7-12 what the major causes of problems in society were. The first seven responses all pertain to what Howe and Strauss deem as adult individualism. The number one response, with 56% of respondents, was "selfishness, not thinking of the rights of others."[46] The desire for unselfish behavior is borne out of a desire for equality, expecting people to think of the rights of others. The second theme I want to explore in terms of defining justice among millennials is the use of language of equality. In this section, I show how the language of equality and fairness is pervasive in previous millennial research. Thus, it was no surprise when

[46] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 181.

participants defined justice, equality and fairness were major components. Finally, I discuss how the foundation for equality and fairness within the millennial generation is grounded in diversity and community.

Prevalence in Scholarship

Since Howe and Strauss' original research, other authors have picked up on this theme of equality. David Kinnaman, President of Barna Research, intimates this participatory equality. Kinnaman writes that a key part of millennial participation is "the fundamental belief that *everyone has a right to belong.*"[47] Natalie Clark wrote her dissertation on millennials, looking at their acceptance of others. From her research she writes, "in their commitment to leave no one behind, the Millennials demonstrate a profound commitment to fairness."[48]

Though much of millennial research points to concerns about equality as a trait of millennials, some research challenges this premise. Jim and Judy Raymo, authors of *Millennials and Mission,* studied the views of millennials toward cross-cultural missions. Part of their research focused on the willingness of millennials to take on missions assignments that may be perceived as dangerous. In their research, they found that recent college students who were surveyed were less interested in the well-being of others than expected.[49] Though the prevalence of equality language may have been less than expected in their research, as I show next, my research continues to point to equality holding a place of prominence in the character traits of millennials.

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[47] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 174. Emphasis in original.

[48] Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 30.

[49] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 11.

Prevalence in Research

In my research, 60% of focus groups and 40% of interviews discussed equality as part of their definition of justice. Equality was the second most discussed definition of justice for both focus groups and interviews. In an interview, when I asked how someone would define justice, the participant said, "I think equality. I would define it as just everyone being treated equally, everyone getting the same opportunities, the same grace."[50] Another interview participant used the phrase "a kingdom ethic" to describe the way they approached ministry. When asked to describe what he meant by that phrase, he explained that the kingdom of God is believing that people will be well fed and taken care of, "in the kingdom of God there is equality."[51] Equality was nuanced in many ways in interviews. In one interview, the participant described justice using derivatives of equality multiple times: "Justice… is about creating a space where everyone is equally represented, where everybody has kind of an equal footing, and nobody's going through undue obstacles. Or more obstacles than another person."[52]

Focus groups were even more vocal about equality. As a part of the focus group process, I asked participants to describe the word justice as if they were explaining it to someone who did not speak English as their first language. In one focus group, the response was simply "equality."[53] Others who may not have seen justice and equality as synonymous, still agreed that "a by-product of justice is equality."[54] In other focus groups, they were careful how they defined equality, leaning on ideas like "equal access" or "opportunity." And though the nuance of equality and fairness was debated in a number of focus groups, many participants utilized a

[50] Interview 21.

[51] Interview 2.

[52] Interview 18.

[53] Focus Group 5.

[54] Focus Group 9.

definition that ultimately connected to treating people fairly or equitably. For instance, in one focus group they discussed equal access and meeting needs. Right after that, another participant added, "I think of justice as fairness."[55]

In another focus group, imagery was used to explain the correlation of justice and equality. The participant explained a common image they saw circulating social media. The image depicts three kids looking over a fence into a baseball field. Each kid is a different height but stands on the same size box. The tallest kid sees clearly, but the other two are unable to see. Under this image is the caption "equality." In the next image, each kid has a different sized box that allows them to see clearly into the baseball field. The smallest kid has the largest box and the tallest kid has the smallest box, but all are able to view the game over the fence. The bottom of this image says, "justice." The picture is to show how equality is not always just. One focus group participant took it a step further, "but my problem with the image itself is these kids are still outside of the baseball game."[56] True equality, true justice, is taking down barriers for people to participate.

Though it was rare, more religious imagery was also used. In an interview, I asked the participant about images they think of about justice and they said foot washing. "Foot washing is one that comes to my mind a lot, because, if I'm right, and justice is the restoration of relationships, then some people have to come down to be servants and other people have to be brought up, or come up, to bring that equality."[57] Equality language, though utilized differently,

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[55] Focus Group 2.

[56] Focus Group 19.

[57] Interview 23, May 26, 2017. This coincides with what Walter Houston, Old Testament scholar, has written on justice and equality. "Equality must mean the restriction… of my liberty to dominate others." Walter Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 428 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 188. Also, it is helpful to note that the participant expressing this was part of the Church of God (Anderson) which holds foot-washing as a sacramental practice.

was a primary lens to understand justice. Now that a foundation of equality within millennial research and a sketch of equality discussions within my research have been expressed, I want to look at two themes that emerged from conversations of equality: diversity and community.

Diversity and Community

One of the ways the conversation of equality was approached was through the issue of race and racism. American millennials are the most ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history.[58] Thom and Jess Rainer write that millennials are diverse and do not fit neatly into categories; for millennials, diversity is normal.[59] Of non-white millennials, 8 out of 10 will grow up in racially and ethnically diverse communities.[60] Though certainly not all communities where millennials live are diverse, millennials are learning to function in a world where they must navigate ethnic diversity. And with access to technology, though possibly not in their immediate physical community, diversity exists in their online relationships.

As I mentioned, racism was a major issue of conversation for both focus groups and interviews and much of the language of equality could be understood through the lens of racial inequality. Millennials are bothered by what they consider racial misconceptions of older generations.[61] In one focus group a participant said, "I think equality is treating each other as equals, no one's below one another. And that's not necessarily talking about economically or money or lower in that kind of stuff, but in value and respect toward someone."[62] The prevalence

[58] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 4; Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 28; Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 96.

[59] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 96.

[60] Rainer and Rainer, 86.

[61] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 218 This represents the ideology of millennials and not necessarily how race relations play out in real life.

of discussions of race may have been precipitated by current events this generation faces. The Black Lives Matter movement was brought up, by name, in four focus groups. Many other focus groups discussed the issue of racism, especially in terms of issues between black and white America, though they did not discuss the BLM movement specifically.

A second outflow of equality that can be seen in millennials is their communal mindset. I discussed this in-depth in the previous chapter connected to the role of family. Howe and Strauss note that millennials are team-oriented.[63] This desire for equality is manifest in their team-oriented, community mindset. In terms of community, millennials do not wish to grow up in a way that puts themselves over their community.[64] A community mindset presents itself in the ways they understand their faith as well. One interview participants brought the conversation of salvation into communal language. "I think the biggest disconnect is when churches consider salvation specifically as a personal thing rather than as a community thing."[65] As I explore in the next section, even faith is being re-examined through the lens of community. This growth in language and desire for community is increasing the importance of equality. Millennials want to live and work within community, a community where people are treated fairly and equitably.

One final issue that arose through conversations in both focus groups and interviews was the issue of LGBTQ individuals and the response of the church. Within justice-related issues, 24% of interviews and 26% percent of focus groups mentioned the rights of LGBTQ persons. Interestingly, I had participants on many sides of the issue from desiring that their denomination approves full acceptance, to what is often referred to as "welcoming, but not affirming." What

[62] Focus Group 8.

[63] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 43–44.

[64] Howe and Strauss, 237.

[65] Interview 8.

was intriguing to me about the conversation was that regardless of where a person landed on the church's response, they expressed a need to treat LGBTQ people fairly and to welcome them into community. One interview participant said, "I think we need to be talking more about the LGBTQ [community] and kind of their place in the church as well. And recognizing their identity."[66]

Though not every participant would connect their view of equality to a theological concept, some did point to the concept of the image of God, which ties this view back to the justice of being concept presented in chapter one. One participant made the connection this way, "So whether we are doing it in the name of Christ or not our heart beat for justice comes from the image of God in us and that again is rooted in the person of God."[67] Interview participants more quickly related justice to their faith than did focus group participants, but as I show in the next section, they rarely felt their churches offered language for justice.

The Role of the Bible and Church

The final theme I want to explore in terms of defining justice among millennials is the role of the Bible and the church. One of the key questions for my research was what, if any, impact the church has in speaking into Wesleyan-Holiness millennials' views of justice. In the last chapter, I offered a preliminary view of the role of the church looking specifically at how it was perceived as absent as a source for justice understandings. As a continuation to that information, I offer a more robust look at the church, narrowing to see it in light of how millennials define justice. In this section, I look at the research that has already been done about millennials and the church. Next, I explore how millennials perceived the church did not seem to

[66] Interview 18.

[67] Interview 2.

give a voice to justice and, instead, focused more on personal piety. With that, I share how my research shows that millennials did not immediately think of the Bible or church as places to gain an understanding of justice. Though the research is not promising in terms of the church's involvement with justice, I close the section showing how some millennials do see hope that the church can be a place for learning about and engaging in justice and how justice is intimately tied to their faith.

Prevalence in Scholarship

Research about millennials and their lack of church involvement could fill libraries. Much of the research agonizes over trends away from organized religion, though there are discrepancies even in the analysis of the data. For instance, the research of Rainer and Rainer shows that only 13% of U.S. millennials considered any type of spirituality to be important in their lives.[68] And, to affirm that more, in a list of top ten things that millennials say are really important in their life, church, religion, spirituality, or anything related to faith was not listed.[69] But Howe and Strauss have challenged this notion from the beginning, saying that "teens cited religion as the second-strongest influence in their lives, just behind parents, but ahead of teachers, boy/girlfriends, peers, and the media."[70] Regardless, most researchers agree that the institutional church does not hold the same status with millennials that it has held with generations prior. In the last chapter, I focused on the foundations that millennials ground justice, sadly the church was not a prominent one.

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[68] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 21.

[69] Rainer and Rainer, 229.

[70] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 234; Some might challenge this as research shows millennials abandoning the church after their teens, which may account for this discrepancy. Pontier and DeVries, *Reimagining Young Adult Ministry*, 12.

Part of the reason the church may have lost traction is that it focused on personal piety over giving voice to issues of justice. As the last section expressed, justice as equality is built on a communal foundation which seems to have been lost in the evangelical church conversations where the millennials I researched were involved. Rainer and Rainer point to the fact that millennials view the church as a divisive force rather than a uniting one.[71] Dan Kimball in his book, *They Like Jesus but not the Church*, expresses much of the same. The church is "known for what we're against, not what we're for."[72] Other research shows millennials see the church as exclusive, contradicting their view of equality.[73]

The sentiment of a divisive church is something I heard in my research as well. My research was with a subset of millennials who consider themselves Christians and, for the most part, are continuing to stay engaged with the church. Sadly, though, some of their feedback mirrors those who have left the church. One interview participant discussed how she feels the church picks political issues in very partisan ways.[74] She mentions the church cares about abortion and prayer in schools, but then has stopped short of addressing other important issues.[75]

If divisiveness is one issue causing pause for millennials in terms of church engagement, silence is another one. When tough questions are asked in church, millennials sense there is

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[71] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 171.

[72] Dan Kimball, *They like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007), 78.

[73] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 171. Italics in original.

[74] Notice how, though there may be an increased emphasis in political action among millennials, it must be done in ways that affirm their values. In this instance, equality-based engagement.

[75] Interview 22. The same sentiment was expressed to Jim and Judy Raymo in their research on millennials. "Growing up in the American church, we have seen a lot of people talk about Jesus and His love for the hurting, but we failed to see it lived out in our families or in the community. Christians are known for talking, for their political opinions, for their stance on abortion and marriage (which are important issues), but not for taking tangible steps outside their comfort zones to minister to actual people with real pain and real needs." Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 80.

rarely space for them. Kinnaman found in his research that young Christians did not see the churches where they grew up as safe places to express doubt.[76] "Most young Christians are struggling less with their faith in Christ than with their experience of church."[77] I found this to be true in nearly every interview and focus group I conducted. In one focus group, they were discussing the sources they use to learn about justice. They named social media, classes at their university, and friends. I asked whether the church was a place they learned about justice. The answer, "No." There was no explanation, just extended silence. I pressed in after a moment, "Has it ever been? Or is it just not now?" A different person added, "It's never been."[78]

The perceived silence of the church on issues of justice was one place there was agreement across focus groups and interviews. An interview participant pointed to questions about inequality as a place the church avoided justice:

> For me, I think the biggest issue, and one that I was aware of since I was a little kid and never got any good answer for, is why are things so unequal? Why? Why are they? And I just feel like even from a young age I was asking that question and the church never gave me a good answer except to say, well, this is God's will. And I don't think it is. I just don't think it is.[79]

Here again, justice is tied to equality, but the church is silent. This is one reason research finds 70% of millennials agree with the statement that the church is irrelevant today.[80]

As I expressed previously, millennials are not against the church, as is sometimes expressed, they simply do not see it as a meaningful place for growth. In an online article for *Plough*, millennial D.L. Mayfield writes:

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[76] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church-- and Rethinking Faith*, 11.

[77] Kinnaman and Hawkins, 27.

[78] Focus Group 15.

[79] Interview 12.

[80] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 244.

> I grew up in a conservative church that emphasized personal piety and correct doctrine, but at some point those no longer seemed sufficient as guidelines for life lived in community. Living and working with refugees, the challenges that the poor face soon overwhelmed me – they were the splash of cold water that woke me from my stupor.[81]

Howe and Strauss state that millennials are too often told to behave rather than believe.[82] To clarify, millennials experience the church as a place of rules and not a place of learning and growth. This is true to some extent, but I would argue that the church has been strong on both behaving (telling millennials what they should and should not do) and believing (telling millennials how they should think) and lacking practice (teaching millennials how what they think affects the way they interact in the world). Taking Mayfield's quote as an example, she points to the emphasis on personal piety (behavior) and correct doctrine (belief) in her church growing up, but that neither of those were relevant for her work with refugees. The church was irrelevant to a life lived for justice. It did not offer a practical theology that spoke to deeper issues of suffering in the world. In the next chapter, I explore practices among millennials involved in justice and engage these themes more.

Prevalence in Research

Next, I want to look at how the lack of justice discussion within the church influenced millennial's definitions of justice. Within focus groups, justice definitions did not commonly use overtly Christian terms at first. As expressed earlier, their definitions focused on punishment and consequences. In my focus groups, as with my interviews, I started by asking the group to define justice. After getting an initial definition, I then asked whether their definition would change if I

[81] D.L. Mayfield, "Confronted by Dorothy A Christian Activist Reckons with a Modern-Day Saint," *Plough Quaterly*, Spring 2017, https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/social-justice/economic-justice/confronted-by-dorothy-day.

[82] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 234.

added the modifier biblical and instead asked them to define biblical justice. Though some exchanged their definition for a more restorative view of justice (talking about Jesus' life, salvation, etc.), many maintained their punitive view of justice and instead thought about justice in terms of Old Testament law.

In focus groups, there are two factors I propose as contributing to this view of justice as punitive and connected to the Old Testament. One, the absence of justice language in the New Testament and two, a perceived lack of justice language in churches. First, as I noted in chapter one, for those reading the Bible in English the word justice seems to be missing from the New Testament.[83] The two Hebrew terms used for justice and righteousness in the Old Testament (*sedaqa* and *mispat*) are incorporated into one term in New Testament Greek (*dikaiosune)*. William Willimon looked at the usages of justice in the New Testament and found in the NRSV translation of the New Testament, *dikaiosune* is translated as *righteousness* seventy-four times and as *justice* only three times.[84] And, as Wolterstorff points out, in current English parlance justice and righteousness are not the same.[85]

Many of the focus groups participants did not have a biblical reference point for justice outside of a vengeful God in the Old Testament. When I asked one focus group the difference between justice and biblical justice, one participant said, "Well, in my mind it goes from being something about fairness or equality to like harsh… Yeah, I mean like the Old Testament, I'm just picturing wars and we will smite thee."[86] Later in the same focus group, I asked another student about how he viewed New Testament justice, as opposed to the wrath-based justice he

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[83] Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice*, 92.

[84] Weaver-Zercher and Willimon, *Vital Christianity*, 18. Willimon's chapter in this text focuses on the lack of justice language in the New Testament because of translation choices.

[85] Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice*, 93.

[86] Focus Group 3.

perceived in the Old Testament, he responded, “I guess I would say that I don't have as many points of reference in the context of New Testament justice.”[87] This coincides with Willimon and Wolterstorff’s statements on the lack of justice language in the New Testament.

For focus groups, they wished their view of equality and fairness coincided with the picture of justice in the Bible, but their initial reaction to scripture was more likely to see biblical justice in negative terms, identified by God’s retribution. “When I think of biblical justice I think more of like the justice of God as he's dealing with Israel or something like that, where they've transgressed the covenant, so they get punished or they pay the consequence for that action.”[88] In another focus group one participant wrestled with her view of biblical justice as vengeance compared to her view of Jesus as loving. She saw these views as competing, an Old Testament view of a vengeful justice which was incongruent with her view of Jesus who cared for the vulnerable. “I mean, that's not the way it is in the New Testament, that's not what Jesus sought at all, so I know that's not true but that's the thing that came to my mind. I guess that says something about the way I was raised.”[89] This quote points to the next factor I see playing a role in views of justice, the church.

Second, and even more prominent, is that millennials perceived that their churches of origin did not have language for justice comprised from positive Christian theology. Again, it is important to clarify that this is their perception. None of this information was corroborated with the churches they were raised in. Nonetheless, this how millennials perceived their church experience. One way of affirming the theory, though, is by the lack of consistency in the definition of a common theological term (justice) across a small, denominational subset of

[87] Focus Group 3.

[88] Focus Group 6.

[89] Focus Group 3.

evangelical Christianity (Wesleyan-Holiness tradition). Said another way, one might rightfully question, why are there so many differing views of justice within such a small subset of millennial Christians? Many of the millennials I interviewed grew up in relatively similar situations. They were mostly white, raised in mostly Wesleyan-Holiness Christian homes, lived in the Midwest, and attended Christian universities.[90] Why, even in similar traditions, are there so many incomplete views?

I received a helpful explanation from one participant that aids in answering this question. The participant discussed her church growing up and how she was very involved in what, in her church, was categorized as mercy or compassion-related work. She shared about the motivation of those from her church. "If people don't have what they need, that matters, you should do something about that. That has a claim on you because of the gospel and you can't ignore that." She was raised with a clear view that Christians were expected to care for those in need. Years later, she moved into a different denominational tradition that framed these same mercy or compassion-related activities as justice. In these settings, it was not simply practice, but language that was embraced around justice. She remarked that in that moment, she was able to put together things that had not been expressed in the church she was raised in. "Oh, the pieces finally fit together because I heard an articulation of something that I had been seeing in practice but hadn't necessarily had the whole language for what that was."[91]

There is a theme with those who participated in interviews and focus groups, that their churches (both those that they grew up in and, in many cases, those they currently attend) do not have a language for discussing justice. For many, this does not mean that they are not involved in justice-related practices, but those practices are framed outside of justice (in terms of something

[90] This is obviously not true of all, but certainly a majority.

[91] Interview 14.

like mercy or compassion). Instead, justice is found, as expressed earlier, in more individual terms. For millennials, then, when there is a lack of language around justice found within the church, they lean on justice definitions that emerge from outside the Christian tradition.[92] I found this to be true for those in focus groups, who had not spent time engaged in justice-related work.

Though focus groups did not see justice through biblical terms, interview participants did. When asked about the difference in definition between biblical justice over simply justice, interview participants rarely changed their definition. Most of the interview participants began their definitions of justice by framing it in Christian terms so the modifier biblical did not change their view. More than 90% of those I interviewed did not express a change in their view of justice when I added the modifier biblical. For interviews, justice and biblical justice were almost always synonymous. When I asked one participant if adding the modifier biblical to justice would change his definition he answered, "No. Not really. It would almost be the other way around. You'd have to ask me about non-biblical justice."[93] The interview participant's starting point in terms of defining justice was from a biblical perspective.

As I conclude this section on the role of the Bible and the church, I want to offer a few ways the millennials I interviewed framed justice within those two realms. First, I look at whether millennials see the church as a place for justice discussions and practices to emerge. Then, I explore two specific biblical concepts: compassion and shalom. Those that I interviewed take their faith seriously; and though they do not feel they have found a language for justice within the church, many believe the church is the location for engagement of justice issues and are advocating for the church to move toward that vision. I explore the specific practices of these millennials in the final chapter of my research, but it is important at this juncture to close by

[92] Or, said another way, though many of their views come from Christian tradition, they don't recognize the connection between their faith and their view of justice.

[93] Interview 23.

locating the role of the church. Millennials I met through research have not lost faith in the role of the church to engage justice issues. Yet, there is mixed opinions about the church's current role in the conversation.

As expressed in the first chapter, there is a strand of Christian justice discourse that centers on action and for some, like Miroslav Volf, Emmanuel Katongole, and others, the church is the foundation for engagement in justice. Bethany Hoang works at International Justice Mission and has written a number of books on justice. In one she states, "Justice is a manifestation of Christ's *body* working at its very best. Just as we need to intentionally open ourselves to God and God's leading, we need to open ourselves to doing justice in *community*."[94] Hoang employs both the need for Christ's body to be engaged, but also more broadly, for it to be done in community (with others).

Millennials I researched, on the whole, would resonate with this assessment from Hoang. They would also appreciate the communal approach, especially in connection to the local congregation. One way this can be seen is in the fact that at least eleven of the interview participants were currently, or had been recently, a pastor in a local congregation. For some, their role at the church was not their primary source of income, but was on top of the social service ministry they were engaged in. Regardless, they see the role of the church as vital and that there is a need to move the church toward engagement in justice. One example of this, one participant had even worked at a church which was specifically designed to engage people experiencing homelessness.[95] In this way, millennials are working to move the church toward a justice orientation.

Other millennials have less hope that the church is able to speak into issues of justice.

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[94] Hoang, *Deepening the Soul for Justice*, 24. Emphasis in original.

[95] Interview 17, May 19, 2017.

This is not to say that they think the church could never speak into it, but that the church in its current form has lost its ability to be a prophetic voice. One interview participant pointed to the affluence of the church as what keeps the church for being able to truly engage, "I think that affluence warps our morality. And it has totally warped the morality of the white, American church."[96] And yet, for many millennials, including the participant I just quoted, they continue to be a part of the local church and work to encourage it toward a reality that views justice-related issues as part of an outflow of the church's faithfulness to God.

Finally, I look at two biblical concepts: compassion and shalom. In one of my early interviews, the participant used the term compassion often. I asked if he saw the words compassion and justice as similar or different. "Compassion has been a termed used, at least within the church circles I have grown up in and served in, in lieu of justice, just because of the baggage it [justice] has carried the last 100 or 125 years."[97] He talked about the way the term justice was seen, in churches he grew up in, as liberal, not evangelism focused, and primarily about good works. Because of this, churches did not talk about or frame their work in justice terms. And yet, he believes that "we live out justice biblically, and like Christ, when we are helping meet the temporal needs and the eternal needs simultaneously."[98] Though the church did not seem to produce language for justice, this millennial was able to develop a Christian view of justice. This is an important distinction to make: though interview participants used biblical imagery to discuss justice (a contrast to focus groups), they did not say their foundation for this was received from their church. The biblical foundation of justice for the millennials I researched was reached through other sources (relationships, experiences, education, books, blogs, etc.)

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[96] Interview 12.

[97] Interview 1, July 27, 2016.

[98] Interview 1.

Millennials care about action and especially action on behalf of the vulnerable. They care about equality and that all are given fair access and opportunity and they see these as integral to their faith. These realities have led some to see the millennial generation as a generation that "adds" care for the vulnerable as part of their faith. Fritz Kling, writer and missions leader, talks about millennials as the Mercy Generation:

> A defining characteristic of the Mercy Generation, and a departure from previous approaches that were strictly proclamation oriented, is what I call an 'evangelism too' approach. The Mercy Generation seeks to serve Jesus by doing justice and helping the poor… and proclaiming the gospel *too*. They serve others not just to convert them, but *because* they themselves have been converted.[99]

I think there is great merit to Kling's assessment. I think one revision to his statement is that millennials do not so much see themselves as adding to the gospel, as if it is an addendum to their work, but that care for the vulnerable is integrally interconnected in such a way that by doing works of mercy they are sharing the good news, the gospel, with those they encounter.[100] This ability to hold two ideas within a single vision that, to some may seem to be competing, is a part of the millennial mindset. It is the reason, as I expressed in the last chapter, Tim Elmore describes millennials as paradoxical.[101] And it is what makes them challenging to understand to older generations. This view of justice as holistic is explored in more depth in the stories of practice in the final chapter.

For millennials, justice is not liberal, it is not anti-evangelism, or simply about doing good works.[102] Justice is not the same as compassion. And justice is certainly not simply an

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[99] Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 45–46. Emphasis in original.

[100] For those familiar with John Wesley's theology, the name sake of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, Wesley's view of works of mercy is much more connected to the millennial view of mercy (integrally connected to faith) than the dichotomous view of mercy of the previous generation.

[101] Elmore, *Generation IY*.

[102] These three descriptors are lifted directly from a quote a participant gave me as to why he believed older generations were opposed to the term justice. Interview 1.

addition to evangelism. Instead, justice intimately ties the spiritual and physical together. The most concise definition I heard, that incorporates much of what others expressed in the interview process, was simply, shalom:

> Shalom. That would be my one-word definition. I think the more and more I've investigated justice the more I'm convinced that it's really all about an attempt to do our best to restore the kind of harmony of God's original relational design, so that our relationship to the land is a matter of justice. Our relationship with one another is a matter of justice. Our relationships within ourselves, so that when we have an addiction and that internal conflict with the addiction, it is a threat to justice within that relationship, internal relationship. And then our relationship with God, seeking that harmony there, too. So that's kind of my basis for justice.[103]

Justice, as expressed in this paragraph, is not an addition to evangelism, but integrally connected. One of the most striking aspects of millennial theology is their holistic expression of the gospel.[104] The challenge for many in the older generation is that engaging justice in this way may be different than in the churches of their past, but that does not mean that the spiritual fervor or foundation of past generations is lost with the millennial generation. In fact, Howe and Strauss, not writing for Christian audiences or, necessarily, from a Christian perspective, picked up this theme in their research: "The Boomer spiritual seed has taken root with Millennials. But it may not be their parents' religion in how it grows, and in what it does."[105]

Conclusion

Within this chapter on definitions I explored three key factors that emerged from my research. First, there were two views of justice as "righting wrongs" that emerged. My research suggested that engagement in justice-related work led to definitions that focused on the victim over the perpetrator, restorative justice over a punitive view of justice. The restorative justice that

[103] Interview 23.

[104] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 24.

[105] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 237.

was expressed through the interviews also incorporated a view of justice that was founded in an understanding of systemic and structural issues. Second, equality was a major factor in millennial's definition of justice, which was manifest in their community mindset and openness to diversity. They discussed it not only in their definitions, but through issues, like racism, which was one of the most prominent justice-related issues. Finally, I presented the fact that the church has been perceived as absent in discussions about justice. And, when it has been involved, it has not engaged in a way that resonated with millennial's systemic views of injustice. This has led millennials to create their own spaces, in churches and non-profits, that engage in justice the way they think the church should. They do not see separation in evangelism and social action, but that they are part of the whole call as Christians to care for those around them.

Together, these definitions coupled with the source and foundational information I shared in the previous chapter, led me to view millennial justice as lived theology. As I looked at the sources of millennials, I expected to find experience at the center. Prior to my research, I hypothesized a highly humanistic definition of justice. I expected millennials to place human experience at the center of their decision-making and that human suffering would become the fulcrum definition from which justice would move. Starting from injustice is common when connecting to human experience, but if done devoid of a theological lens it can lead to a view of justice that loses any reference to faith.[106] James K.A. Smith noted this in a blog about shifts in justice, that "even believers, in the name of affirming 'this world,' can unwittingly end up capitulating to a social imaginary that really values *only* this world."[107]

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[106] George Marsden authored the afterword to Mark Noll's book on religion and American politics. In it, he quotes Martin Marty talking about the American pattern of secularization. Marsden writes, "Secularization in America took place not by a developing hostility between religion and the dominant culture, but by a blending of their goals." Noll, *Religion and American Politics*, 385.

[107] James K.A. Smith, "Naturalizing 'Shalom': Confessions of a Kuyperian Secularist," *Comment: Public Theology for the Common Good* (blog), June 28, 2013, https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/naturalizing-shalom-confessions-of-a-kuyperian-secularist/. Emphasis in original.

What surprised me about my research is that, though experience was a primary source through which millennials viewed and learned about justice, justice was not defined by experience devoid of faith. Rather, the views of justice I heard from millennials I interviewed were wrapped in a lived experience that incorporated their faith. *Justice is lived theology for millennials*. In my final chapter, I begin to piece together these different elements of millennial justice, drawing on definitions and epistemological foundations from the previous chapters, to express a view of millennial justice through Christian practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

Practicing Justice

Introduction

In the opening pages of Elizabeth Phillips' chapter about justice in the book *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views*, she gives a poignant example of why one must practice justice to understand it. Phillips discusses how practices are like learning piano. She writes that someone could learn about the piano by studying the history of it and how it has physically changed through centuries of use. They could learn about composers and study music theory. They could gain knowledge of how a piano works, things like the physics behind key-action and how different materials in the construction of a piano create unique sounds. But even with all this information, if one were asked to play the piano, if they had not yet practiced, it would be nearly impossible. Theories of justice which ignore practice can never fully express justice:

> Such approaches can lead to endless fine-tuning of theories of justice which neglect both the bi-picture question of what it means to *be* people of justice – central to which is the question of the ultimate end or goal of justice – and the practical questions of what practices and habits will cultivate in us the instincts and skills we need in order to act justly in our day-to-day dealings with one another.[1]

Practices, whether practices related to justice or worship, have had historical significance in the Christian tradition and have received increased attention in recent years.

In this chapter, I share stories of millennials practicing justice, building on the source foundations (chapter three) and definitions (chapter four) of the previous chapters through the lens of lived theology. Prior to that, I lay a foundation of the concept of practices within the Christian, and then specifically, Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Then, I look at the concept of lived

[1] McCracken, *Christian Faith and Social Justice*, 141. Emphasis in original.

religion and lived theology and how they aid in understanding the justice-related activities of millennials. Finally, I close with five stories that act as examples of the kinds of practices of justice found among millennials.

Practices in the Christian Tradition

Dorothy Bass and Miroslav Volf edited a book titled, *Practicing Theology,* that worked to bring a clarified understanding of practices and their connection to Christian theology. In it, Bass offers this definition of Christian practice, "things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world."[2] The definition is purposefully broad to incorporate things from communal worship to prayer to social action. Though practices have been a part of the Christian faith tradition since its inception, the academic pursuit to understand those practices in light of theology is more recent.

I begin this chapter by looking at the concept of practices within the Christian tradition for two reasons: one, to locate practices within the Wesleyan-Holiness framework and two, because practices are the foundation for lived theology. As I move into stories of millennials engaging in justice, I want to ground those actions within a Wesleyan-Holiness framework of practices and connect that to lived theology. I first present a view of practices in recent Christian scholarship before exploring the specific theological significance of practices within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

[2] Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 18.

Practices in Christian Scholarship

One of the most prominent voices in current discourses around Christian practice is Christine Pohl. Pohl's primary focus has been on the practice of hospitality through her Ph.D. research that led to the book, *Making Room. Making Room* is required reading for many of the Christian community-based organizations I have encountered. Her work has been accepted across theological traditions though her roots are in the United Methodist church.

Though *Making Room* is Pohl's most recognized book, her book *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us,* tackles the concept of practices on a much broader scale. The book focuses on four primary practices: gratitude, making and keeping promises, truthfulness and truth-telling, and hospitality. Pohl draws on the works of other theologians, like Dorothy Bass and Stanley Hauerwas. In the book, she suggests that it can be challenging to build community from a set of individual virtues (truth, love, etc.) or feelings, and that instead, communities are built on shared practices. "Our lives are knit together not so much by intense feelings as by shared history, tasks, commitments, stories, and sacrifices."[3] In Pohl's text she begins to look at virtues through the lens of practices that can be enacted by a community. For instance, rather than saying a community must be built on honesty, Pohl suggests implementing truth-telling as a practice of the community.[4] Communities form as common practices are lived out together. And, as I look at next, the practices one engages in are not empty actions, but form and reform one's thinking.

Within the Christian tradition there are a number of prominent theologians who discuss the importance of practices as the foundation of community and attempt to explain how they influence and shape people. James K.A. Smith in *Imagining the Kingdom* says that practices are

[3] Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2012), 4.

[4] Pohl, 111.

"not just something we do but that they also do something to us."[5] When one engages in practices, it is not simply an action devoid of meaning, but these actions are meaning-making. Practices are symbolic, not just in that they are markers one looks back on, but they shape humanity. N.T. Wright says it this way:

> What we *do* in the present – by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself – *will last in God's future.* These activities are not simply ways of making the present a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day we leave it behind altogether.[6]

The idea that our practices, as Smith writes, are more than just actions, but that they do something to us is not a new reflection for theology. The significance of practices has roots that reach back into Christian history, but also includes recent theological traditions outside of western theology. Latin American theologians, especially those from the Liberation Theology tradition, have made the claim that Christians should focus, and even begin with, orthopraxy (right action) over orthodoxy (right belief).[7] Liberation theologians, such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff, choose first to engage in justice and then to reflect. If the priority is on orthodoxy one can spend energy determining what is orthodox and never act on those beliefs. But as theologians have pointed out, this inaction is in itself action.[8] Understood this way, one's beliefs do not dictate one's actions, but in acting for justice one's beliefs can emerge.

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[5] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies, v. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013), 167.

[6] N. T Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*, 2015, 163.

[7] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells : The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 50.

[8] Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*, 1st ed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 22.

Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition and Practice

Though practices have a significant place in the history of Christianity, they also hold a vitally important role in some Wesleyan-Holiness traditions. Wesleyan theology is filled with writings on action-oriented theology. Many of the major Wesleyan-Holiness traditions grew out of communities who were seeking a solution to a social issue (for instance, slavery or prohibition). With this history, an action-orientation to faith is foundational for many of them. And the view that our actions are more than just symbolic gestures reaches back to John Wesley.

John Wesley believed that engagement in works of mercy were paramount to the life of the Christian. Some scholars, such as Theodore Jennings, say that Wesley would put visiting the poor and sick alongside the sacraments and other means of grace.[9] Wesley, throughout his life, even expanded what he considered a "means of grace." At first, Wesley defined a means of grace as: "outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end – to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to [humanity] preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."[10] In the 1746 sermon from which this quote is taken, given early in his ministry, Wesley focused on more common means of grace: prayer, the Lord's Supper, and the reading of scripture. In a later sermon (1765), Wesley discussed works of mercy as a practice of sanctification: "all works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of [humanity]… are necessary to full sanctification. This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation."[11] Wesley believed Christians were to engage in works of mercy not only for the sake of those they were serving, but for the sake of their own salvation.[12] Theodore

[9] Theodore W. Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 54.

[10] John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 160. Emphasis in original.

[11] Wesley, 378.

Jennings captures Wesley's view when he writes, "In visiting the marginalized, we invite them to transform us, to transform our hearts, to transform our understanding, to transform us into instruments of the divine mercy and justice."[13]

Though expressed differently throughout the centuries, practices have remained a major component of a number of Wesleyan-Holiness tradition churches. Merle Strege, a Church of God (Anderson) theologian and historical scholar, writes about the prominence of practice as the belief system for non-creedal expressions of faith, such as the Church of God (Anderson). Strege writes that in these traditions, practices trump creedal statements. "Thus, the Bible is certainly a book to be believed, but, even more, it is to be performed, practiced, lived."[14] Strege continues, "In ecclesial traditions like the Church of God, formal beliefs must be practiced, and the latter is the proof of the former. In a real sense, the practice is the doctrine. So, we aim at more than propositional understanding; we hope to form the church's practice."[15] The Church of God (Anderson), because of its non-creedal stance, has leaned heavily on practices, and especially ecclesial practices, in its expression of theology and faith.

Though the Church of God (Anderson) is part of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is not monolithic. There are a number of denominations that are part of this tradition that maintain creedal statements. Even so, practices, and especially practices related to social reform, have historically played a major role in their understanding of their faith.

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[12] Some in Wesley's time argued that there was no need to help those whose souls would eventually end up in fire. Wesley, in his strong response, ties the salvation of the person imparting mercy on the act itself: "Whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire." Sermon 24: "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse, IV," III:7 (*Works,* I: 546).Wesley, 204.

[13] Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 57–58.

[14] Merle D. Strege, "'The Union Heaven Gave Us': The Doctrinal Practice of Christian Unity in the Church of God (Anderson)," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 115.

[15] Strege, 115.

Donald Dayton explores this phenomenon in evangelicalism in general, but uses a number of Wesleyan-Holiness tradition churches as examples.[16] Dayton writes that "earlier generations of Evangelicals understood that repentance involved turning from apathy into the heart of struggles for social reform."[17] In this way, they practiced social reform as part of their faith rather than an addition, disconnected from spiritual concerns.

Practices have an important place in the Christian tradition, but they are an especially prominent foundation of theological grounding within Wesleyan-Holiness traditions. As Strege noted, practice is doctrine for many Wesley-Holiness traditions; at least in a historical sense. As I researched millennials, especially those I interviewed, I saw how practices were paramount to theological groundings in terms of justice. As a way to express and understand that, I wanted to engage an anthropological framework that embraced practices as a holistic part of religious understanding which is why I utilize the concept of "lived religion," or "lived theology." In the next section, I explore lived religion and how I frame it as lived theology among Wesleyan-Holiness millennials.

Integrating Practice: Lived Theology

A way practices can be expressed in anthropological terms is by utilizing the concept of lived religion, or what I will later express as "lived theology." Lived religion is a growing field of study within anthropology. Robert Orsi, prominent scholar of lived religion, discusses it as a holistic view of beliefs and practices. "Rethinking religion as a form of cultural work, the study of lived religion directs attention to institutions *and* persons, texts *and* rituals, practice *and*

[16] For example: Nazarenes, Salvation Army, Wesleyans, Free Methodists.

[17] Dayton and Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 8.

theology, things *and* ideas – all as media of making and unmaking worlds."[18] Lived religion recognizes that faith traditions cannot solely be understood through their propositional truth, but the ways in which people in those traditions live their faith. This allows researchers to see religious conviction, both theology and practice, as an integrated part of a person's identity. I begin this section looking at James Bielo's work with lived religion. Next, I look at two elements of lived religion that relate directly to millennials: paradox and experience. Finally, I move from a lived religion perspective to engage lived theology.

Anthropologist James Bielo utilizes a lived religion approach in his research. Before exploring how Bielo utilized lived religion, it is important to understand the background of his research, especially as it is interrelated with the research I am doing. Bielo's work, *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity,* studied a subset of North American evangelical Christianity he called emerging evangelicals. He authored two books prior to this work, the first, *Words Upon the Word,* looked at evangelical Christian Bible study and the second, *The Social Life of Scripture,* focused on Biblicism in evangelicalism. Both of these books helped lay a research foundation for conservative, American evangelicalism and connected him with the emerging evangelical movement. Bielo says emerging evangelicals "materialized in the mid-1990's with initial voicings from white, male, middle-class, well-educated, urban, Gen-X pastors, church planters, church consultants, and concerned laity."[19] Though emerging evangelicals is not the subset I am studying, a number of prominent, emerging evangelical thinkers and writers were cited as important thinkers in the lives of the millennials I studied.

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[18] Orsi, "Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live In? Special Presidential Plenary Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Salt Lake City, November 2, 2002," 172. Emphasis in original.

[19] Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity*, 5.

In his work, *Emerging Evangelicals,* Bielo used the lived religion frame to look at new monasticism, a subset of the emerging evangelical community. Bielo notes the importance of a framework that embraced the post/late-modern paradigm, stating that the consultants he interviewed did not enter with the same bifurcations that had once been prevalent in Christianity.[20] In order to offer a foundation for his use of lived religion, Bielo uses Max Weber's distinction of *weltablehnende Askese* (world-rejecting ascetism) and *inner-weltliche Askese* (inner-worldly asceticism). The distinction Weber makes is that the latter (which Bielo relates to new monasticism) engages the religious, spiritual life as a part of everyday life, in contrast to the former which attempts to escape the world.[21] New monastics bring their faith to the public sphere as they see it as foundational to all aspects of their life, not relegated to religious experience. As Bielo later notes, "for new monastics, no experience is too banal to be spiritual."[22] A lived religion approach allows actors to create their own meaning of their entire life, not relegating religious beliefs and actions to those areas that seem to bear religious significance.

Next, I want to explore elements of a lived religion approach which integrates with millennial perspectives on the world. First, lived religion makes space for paradox. A lived religion approach aids in the study of millennials because of how it approaches the modernist worldview. As I expressed in the first chapter of this research, a lived religion framework challenges the bifurcations of modernist paradigms like sacred/profane, religious/secular, and physical/metaphysical.[23] As I explored in the third chapter, millennials live in a paradoxical world and are more likely to hold these realities (sacred/profane, religious/secular,

[20] Bielo, 102.

[21] Bielo, 101.

[22] Bielo, 102.

[23] Hall, *Lived Religion in America*, 5–6.

physical/metaphysical) in tension rather than fully dichotomize them. Many of the participants I engaged emerged from a post/late-modern paradigm and speak about these realities (sacred/profane, etc.) in ways different from generations prior.

Second, lived religion gives spaces for the experiential nature of practices. As I mentioned in chapter three, experience is the foundation on which millennials understand their world. Other scholars have noted this as well. Robert Wuthnow says that for Christians today, truth is not founded in institutions or tradition, it is experiential.[24] Robert Webber, a scholar who did significant research on emerging generational trends said that for this generation, their faith is action-oriented.[25] Scholarship shows this to be true and I witnessed it in my research. Experience and practice are vital to faith, and especially to a faith that sees justice as a primary calling. Lived religion allows for authentic study of these experiences and practices.

Finally, I want to make the shift from a primarily anthropological approach, lived religion, to one that intersects with theology, lived theology. My focus is on Christian aspects of religious life and the theological lenses through which adherents understand the work in which they participate. For this reason, I am choosing to discuss "lived religion" as "lived theology." This clarification enables me to focus on the theology behind the religious lives of those I interviewed. I want to not only understand the religious lives of millennials, but the ways they understand, or sacralize, or theologize about, their religious lives.

In the introduction to a book about the lived theology of John Perkins, editor Peter Slade writes that a lived theology approach takes into account social location, cultural context, and historical background in reflection on praxis. "Lived Theology provides a contextual theological

[24] Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 16.

[25] Webber also suggests that the social activism of millennials arises out of a reaction to the early anti-social action fundamentalism of the twentieth-century. Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2002), 26–30, 94.

paradigm to engage with the performative character of people and faith communities that interpret Scripture and work for social justice."[26] Charles Marsh discusses lived theology as an interdisciplinary approach to theology that takes into account the "patterns and practices of Christian conviction."[27] Later, Marsh writes, "Lived religion examines practices, beliefs, and objects to understand more clearly the human phenomenon of religion, while lived theology examines practices, objects, and beliefs in order to understand God's presence in human experience."[28] In this way, lived theology recognizes the ability of those being researched to express the ways they think about their faith and brings a praxis-based approach to theology that will aid in analyzing the actions of participants.

For those I interviewed, their faith was not relegated to church experiences or things classified as religious, but infiltrated all aspects of their life, vocation, relationships, etc. James Bielo writes of emerging evangelicals, "Awash in their cultural critique of conservative Evangelicalism, [emerging evangelicals] are confronted with a decision: remain discontented in a faith they bemoan, change to an alternative faith tradition, create an altogether new expression of faith, or remember."[29] A lived theology approach that prioritizes practices in understanding theology resonates with the historical foundation of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition; and a lived theology approach to faith continues to resonate, though in a nuanced way, with millennials today. In the final section of my research, I look at five stories of millennials who are engaged in

[26] Peter Slade, Charles Marsh, and Peter Heltzel, eds., *Mobilizing for the Common Good: The Lived Theology of John M. Perkins* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), xv.

[27] Charles Marsh, ed., *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), vii.

[28] Marsh cites Ainsley Quiros' doctoral dissertation in helping to clarify between the two concepts. Marsh, 7; Ainsley Quiros, "'God's on Our Side, Today': Lived Theology in the Civil Rights Movement in Americus, Georgia, 1942-1976" (Vanderbilt University, 2014).

[29] Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity*, 117.

justice-related activities and explore how their lives encapsulate a lived theology of justice that is impacting how they express their faith.

Five Stories

Neil Howe and William Strauss were key interlocutors in chapter three as I set the context for the world that millennials inhabit. Though Howe and Strauss were not primarily focused on the religious lives of millennials, or how their faith is expressed through practices, they make an important observation about millennial's engagement in service. Howe and Strauss write, "a new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of collegial (rather than individual) action, support for (rather than resistance against) civic institutions, and the tangible doing of good deeds."[30] Howe and Strauss observe three components of millennial social engagement: *it is communal*, *engages civic institutions*, *is about doing good*.

James Bielo, though not looking only at millennials, connects elements of lived religion with practices he witnessed. Bielo discusses five distinct areas of discourse for emerging evangelicals: *theology, missiology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and political action*. Bielo says that in terms of *theology*, emerging evangelicals are decisively anti-modern.[31] In terms of *missiology*, he suggests emerging evangelicals see themselves as missionaries within their own context.[32] A third area is the role of *ecclesiology* which is viewed in the emerging evangelical movement as tied to church planting and house churches. *Liturgy* for emerging evangelicals is connected to church history and tradition. The final area, and one that is less developed in the book, is the

[30] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 216.

[31] Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity*, 10–11.

[32] Bielo, 118.

theme of *political action*. Bielo writes that emerging evangelicals are active in politics but not in the ways that their "religious right" counterparts are.

The three concepts Howe and Strauss offer in terms of engagement in service (communal, engages civic institutions, and about doing good), coupled with the five areas of engagement that Bielo cites (theology, missiology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and political action) give a picture of important aspects of justice that emerged in my research. In each of the following five stories, I introduce one component of millennial justice evident in their lives and practice: life is meant to serve others, justice is holistic, justice is done within community, justice is done for/with a specific community, and justice encompasses advocacy and political action. Though these components can be found across all of the stories, I highlight a prominent one with each story and connect it back to the frameworks given by Howe, Strauss, and Bielo. These stories are from millennials who are engaged in justice-related activities; they are practicing justice. All the information presented in the following five sections is from interviews I did with each of these participants, unless otherwise stated with a citation.[33]

Gena Thomas, Life is Service

Gena Thomas is a mother of two young children, a wife, an author, and a co-founder of a coffee shop ministry. She currently lives in North Carolina but spent four and a half years with her husband and son as missionaries in Monterrey, Mexico. She maintains an active life. Even while serving in Mexico with her husband and young son, she was working on a master's degree and later writing a book. Gena views her life as a means of serving those around her. Justice is not a singular action, but a life that is lived for the betterment of others.

[33] I will not be citing each of these interview participants separately. To do so would give enough information for someone to locate other comments they made throughout my research. I have received permission to share the names and stories in this section (or changed their name for those who preferred to remain anonymous).

Gena grew up in a Christian home in a small town in southern New York. Her mother is Italian and was raised in a Catholic home before joining a charismatic, evangelical church. Her father grew up in an evangelical church and Gena was raised in a number of non-denominational churches. In a tweet, Gena offers this chronological sketch of her church involvement by age:

> 0-12 Pentecostal
> 13-17 Foursquare
> 18-21 Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, Reformed
> 22-23 Metodista
> 24 Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God
> 25-29 Centro de Fe
> 30-32 Assemblies of God
> 33- present I DONT KNOW WHAT I AM but I really love Jesus, & I'm really, really OK w/ that.[34]

Gena follows the winding denominational path of many millennials, finding herself in churches with local expressions that connect with her theologically, rather than maintaining loyalty to one denominational affiliation.

The churches she grew up in did not engage in conversations around the topic of justice, so her foundation was not built in the church. Her passion for justice emerged during her time in college. Gena shared about starting to work at the newspaper at the university she attended in North Carolina. In 2004, Indonesia was hit by a catastrophic tsunami and Gena was tasked with covering the story. But it was the background research on Indonesia that startled her. She read that Indonesia was a hub of sex trafficking in East Asia and that one of the avenues that created demand for this industry was European and American soldiers. Researching about sex trafficking compelled her to learn more about global issues.

Gena traveled regularly in Latin America, spending time in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico. During college she took a semester off and lived with a missionary family serving in

[34] Gena Thomas, May 17, 2018, https://twitter.com/genaLthomas. In Spanish, "Metodista" mean Methodist and "Centro de Fe" means Center of Faith. Gena is a Spanish-speaker and spent time in Nicaragua while she was 22-23.

Nicaragua. She stayed with them for a semester and then returned to Nicaragua two more times, after she finished college. This missionary couple eventually moved to Mexico and invited Gena and her husband, Andrew, to join them and teach at a middle school the local church was starting. When they first moved to Mexico, they taught at the school, but eventually, moved into their own ministry.

In November 2010, Gena and Andrew opened El Búho (The Owl), a coffee shop located just over a mile from the base of El Potrero Chico, a rock-climbing location that draws international visitors. Gena describes El Búho as a social business, non-profit ministry. Those who work there raise their own support and the profits go to a local church that is in the process of building a second middle school. The coffee shop also serves as a hub for visiting climbers who could get coffee and learn about the community at the base of where they were climbing. El Búho is an asset to the local community that not only brought in local revenue but is able to serve the community as well. Gena applied skills she had learned from her master's studies in international development from Eastern University, which she had done remotely from Mexico, to create a ministry that used international development standards of best practice.

Just over four years in to their time in Mexico, Gena and Andrew returned to the United States; a difficult decision. The purpose was multi-faceted, an opportunity to grow their family through fostering and adoption and financial needs related to student loan repayment. But even as they returned, Gena and Andrew have continued to manage the coffee shop in Monterrey and have a goal of opening another coffee shop in North Carolina as a training base for those going to Mexico. Though they are working with the coffee shop at a distance, moving to the states has given Gena and her family the opportunity to explore justice through service in other ways.

First, she wrote a book, *A Smoldering Wick: Igniting Missions Work with Sustainable Practices*, which takes the idea of justice and uses it as the framework for international

development. She tells stories of her work in Mexico and dialogues with relevant international development and theological partners.[35] The book is robust, covering missiological topics, issues with short-term missions, fostering care in the U.S. and abroad, marketing for short-term trips, participatory development models, and project cycles. The end of the book includes resources and surveys in English and Spanish that can be used when doing missions trips. Her goal in this was to resource churches and individuals who desire to do short-term missions experiences in healthy and holistic ways. She writes, "My desire is to see short-term missions, a smoldering wick, become a strong fire that brings light and heat to a dark and cold world."[36]

Second, her family is now part of the foster care system, with the intention of adopting in the future, a reality that was not possible when they were living in Mexico. At the time of the interview, she was working through the process, but since then she has welcomed a number of kids into her house. Fostering is such an important part of the way that Gena views justice that she devoted an entire chapter to it in her book. The goal of the chapter is to challenge Americans to view their work globally as having impact on them locally; for instance, if you are going to work at an orphanage in Guatemala, you should also be willing to care for orphans in your own city. And one avenue to do that is through the foster care system.

Gena recently wrote an article for Christianity Today sharing the story of fostering a child separated from her mother at the border. The article shares the joys and challenges that come

[35] For instance, a number of the most prominent references included: Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor-- and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012); Jayakumar Christian, *God of the Empty-Handed: Poverty, Power, and the Kingdom of God* (Monrovia, Calif: MARC, 1999); Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, Rev. and updated ed (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2011); Shane Claiborne and Accessible Publishing Systems, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010); Keller, *Generous Justice*; Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*.

[36] Thomas, *A Smoldering Wick: Igniting Missions Work with Sustainable Practices*, 146.

with caring for another person's child, especially in the midst of political turmoil. In the article, Gena talks about the tension in seeking justice on behalf of another:

> The murky path toward justice (right relationship) requires us to live in the midst of tensions that stem from the gospel itself: The coming of the kingdom of God is already in our midst (Luke 17:21) but not entirely here, yet. Although we are called to answer injustice, we are not called to be saviors of the world, our neighbors, or ourselves.[37]

Gena's life is grounded in a view of justice. She frames all that she does within the concept of justice, right relationship. In *Naming the Powers,* Walter Wink writes specifically about justice-related actions saying, "Acts of justice cannot then simply be an optional movement at the fringe, but the very stuff of existence before God."[38] For Gena, acts of justice are not optional, they are the foundation of her faith and the very core of her existence.

When I asked Gena about how she engages in justice since returning from Mexico, how she practices justice, she admitted feeling convicted about that at this point in her life. She talked about when she was in Mexico, ministry was her family's life. Now, attempting to juggle family and work expectations, she did not feel like she was engaged in justice-related issues as she felt she should be. But, after processing that more, she talked about how being a mother is also a part of bringing justice to the world. She discussed a friend of hers who is involved in rescuing women from sex trafficking. She admitted her desire to be involved at that kind of grassroots

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[37] Gena Thomas, "My Foster Daughter Was Separated from Her Family at the Border," *Christianity Today* (blog), August 2, 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2018/august/immigration-border-foster-daughter-separated-from-family.html; For more information about Gena's experience with fostering a child removed from her family at the border: Gena Thomas, "'Te Quiero, Te Quiero.' The Story Of A Mother And Daughter Reunited" (Charlotte, NC: WFAE, August 20, 2018), http://www.wfae.org/post/te-quiero-te-quiero-story-mother-and-daughter-reunited#stream/0.

[38] Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, The Powers, v. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 125; Others have expressed this as well. In The Open Secret, Lesslie Newbigin ties theology and practice together. In a chapter entitled, "Mission as Action for God's Justice," Newbigin says that, "You cannot know the truth except by doing the truth." Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret : An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 98.

level. Then one day she realized that her role as a mother, raising a son that would treat women well, was a form of justice:

> Being a good mom in this moment is still producing justice in the world as much as maybe later on in life when I can actually go help, specifically, people who are being rescued from sex trafficking… But creating a healthy family and building a relationship with a child, who knows what that child will end up doing in life. It's hard to, in the midst of it, practically think these are connected, but I do believe that they are.

The more Gena shared, the more I realized that justice was not a specific category of activities that she participated in. Justice was not a once-a-week, volunteering opportunity. For Gena, and many millennials like her, justice is a lifestyle. Gena exudes the desire to do good, a characteristic of millennials Howe and Strauss referenced. Justice is about living in a way that changes the trajectory of life, that challenges systemic issues.

Gena lives out justice in her work with the coffee shop that supports community development in an impoverished part of Mexico. But she also lives out justice through fostering kids and in the way she teaches her kids (all that enter her family) to experience the world. Justice infiltrates every aspect of life. Gena exemplifies what Rainer and Rainer say about millennials, they believe it is their role in life to serve others.[39] For Gena, life is service, life is *doing good* for the betterment of others. Gena's view of justice is one that cares for the whole person, in the next story I share about a millennial who expresses that in his pastoral role.

Matthew Ingalls, Justice is Holistic

Matthew Ingalls has a pastor's heart. When I interviewed him, he had been pastoring a church in Newberg, Oregon for seven years that he described as a neighborhood church dedicated to its neighborhood. The church itself was modest in size, around 70 people on a

[39] 75% of millennials responded that they believed it was their role in life to serve others. Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 37.

Sunday morning, but they have a Wednesday night meal that serves between 100 and 120 people from their neighborhood. The Wednesday night meal is the church's only program, an intentional choice so that the congregation can focus on relationships with one another rather than being overly engaged in weekly programming at the church. The passion for neighborhood ministry, or community building, that Matthew developed was something he found captivating from a young age and is why he sought out pastoring the church in Newberg. It drives him towards a view of justice through pastoral ministry that is holistic in outlook.

In high school, Matthew had a friend who attended a Church of God (Anderson) congregation in a nearby city in Indiana who shared a desire to see young Christians care about their city and engage in relational ministry. Matthew remembers walking around on Saturday afternoons, meeting people in their yards, praying for them, and planning work projects for needs they learned about through these interactions. The ministry paradigm they started together ended as Matthew went off to college, but the concept of neighborhood ministry followed him. He remembers telling people when he got to Anderson University that, "God put me here to work here. This is my post of ministry." And he took that post seriously.

Matthew, with the help of another friend, began "Neighbors," a ministry at Anderson University where college students walked around the neighborhood near the campus, knocked on doors, and committed to getting to know their neighbors. There were really only two objectives when meeting a neighbor: ask if there were any needs that the students could help with (yard work, building ramps for houses that needed to be handicap accessible, wash windows, etc.) and ask if there was anything for which their neighbor needed prayer. Though simple, they were systematic in approach, using a map and marking what houses they visited and promising that they would be back in no longer than two weeks. Their commitment was sincere, and they began to build relationships over time. Eventually, as Matthew took a position

at a church in the neighborhood where the campus was located, the church took on the responsibilities of the Neighbors program. Matthew admits that Neighbors started out more as a calling he felt he needed to do rather than something he was excited to do. But as time went on, he found this to be a passion and a paradigm of ministry, what he would call parish ministry, he would carry on from his time at Anderson University.

Feeling a call to a location, as Matthew expressed it, is not uncommon among the millennials I engaged. One can find that desire to understand and engage their location throughout the five stories. One way to understand this may be as a "spirit of rootedness" within the millennial generation. I say "spirit," rather than simply calling it rootedness, because millennials continue to be one of the most mobile generations in history. They live and move to new locations, and they find new circles of influence more readily than past generations.[40] Technology and travel make this mobility possible. For some millennials, they even live in a different location (or even a different continent) than where their work is located because of the accessibility and ease of remote offices. And yet, when millennials, like Matthew, plant themselves in a location, they do it with a sense and desire to be rooted. Location matters. They seek to fully understand the culture, they research to learn the history, and they work to be a part of change for a better future for their community. A "parish" mentality is one way to understand the spirit of rootedness within millennials. As Bielo has noted, in terms of *missiology*, millennials see themselves as missionaries within their own context.

At the church he pastored in Newberg, he brought this same intentionality for parish ministry. Matthew believes that churches must be places where authentic relationships,

[40] "The United States Census Bureau found that, between 2007 and 2012, Millennials accounted for about 24 percent of the total population of the U.S., but they made up over 43 percent of all movers." Neale Godfrey, "The Young And The Restless: Millennials On The Move," *Forbes* (blog), October 2, 2016, https://www.forbes.com/sites/nealegodfrey/2016/10/02/the-young-and-the-restless-millennials-on-the-move/#19a9cf233ba8.

relationships that can transform, are formed. He shared about a frustrating situation he experienced that exemplifies how churches still fall short on this. The denomination (Church of God, Anderson) he is part of was encouraging churches to participate in a Freedom Sunday to raise awareness of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in the United States and around the world. They pushed it at a conference held in Portland and discussed ways that the church could partner with non-profit organizations in the city to assist in the fight against trafficking. Later that day, in a different workshop, a participant started a conversation about some of the challenges they were facing around the issue of prostitution in Portland. Prostitution was a current topic of frustration for some people because of recent political events. The language quickly turned dehumanizing toward those in the sex industry. This seemed a stark contrast to the tenor earlier in the day when they were raising money for organizations that work closely with prostitutes.

Matthew senses this disconnect in churches often: churches are willing to give money towards something for somebody else to take care of it, but they are unwilling to make space in their churches for people who are different than them. “It's like there's this cognitive dissonance of, ‘I care about this, but I don't care about it in a way that's going to be personal to me or to my congregation.’” In contrast, Matthew wants his church to be a place for people from all walks of life. He hopes that even in doing ordinary pastoral duties, like praying with somebody or trying to help people have healthier relationships with God and others, that he is pursuing justice. “In the simplest, broadest terms, I would say that the whole gospel story is about justice.”

In simple, tangible ways, Matthew has worked to care for those in his neighborhood. He shared a couple examples of educational disparity in his community and how that affects people. There was a committed volunteer in his congregation who had worked for a company in town for a long time. He was poorly educated and had some cognitive difficulty which made him

susceptible to being taken advantage. The man's boss at work told him that if he did not come to his home every week and mow his lawn that he would fire him. Matthew said, if this person tried to stick up for himself, it would be his word against his bosses. So, Matthew spent time praying with the man and brainstorming ways to talk with his boss. He offered to be an advocate to the boss. Another man in his congregation who had mental disabilities had gotten into minimal debt, but collectors were beginning to contact him relentlessly. Matthew said it took one phone call from him and they stopped calling the man from his congregation. Matthew then worked with a lawyer to relieve the debt. Matthew engages with people past the superficial, Sunday relationships into their personal lives.

Though Matthew has an intense focus on local issues which his neighborhood faces, he also cares deeply about global issues. He described this as a kind of split personality. He is passionate about local issues, but equally passionate about international issues like global disparity in terms of the allocation of wealth, clean water, and the maternal death rate. This is a perspective on justice that millennials seem to handle naturally. The ability to travel and connect through technology to global issues allows them to maintain a dual focus on global and local issues. Millennials may find their home in one place and put their emphasis there, but rarely at the expense of connectivity elsewhere.

The model of ministry that Matthew espouses is what scholars have called a holistic model of ministry. Jim and Judy Raymo mention that millennials are interested in holistic ministry that meets not only spiritual, but physical needs.[41] Though this is an accurate description of the ministry that Matthew, and other justice-oriented millennials, engage in, it may not be the way they would describe it. In the interview, Matthew never used the word "holistic" to describe his ministry. He used the term incarnational a couple times, which is

[41] Raymo and Raymo, *Millennials and Mission*, 30.

associated, but does not carry the dichotomizing assumption that holistic does (as if one could minister to just the spiritual or physical). In the abstract for his recently finished first book, Matthew writes, "A careful look at the Jesus of the Gospels sketches a man completely out of touch with conventional thinking; a man radically devoted to living a shocking life for the sake of the broken and forgotten."[42]

For Matthew, meeting physical needs is not something removed from meeting spiritual needs. There is not a clear separation. When a person, or a church, chooses to care for someone's physical needs they are, in that action, meeting some of their spiritual needs. In that way, the ministry Matthew participates in is not 'holistic' ministry, it is simply what Jesus modeled. Matthew summed up his view this way in the interview:

> I really believe that all theology has to be incarnated. So, justice can't just be an idea, it has to be enfleshed to be a truly held belief. And I think that that is not an idea that the church has often believed in. We like the idea of abstract truth. And I'd say that right now it feels like the church has embraced the abstract truth of justice without allowing it to become an incarnational truth for a lot of our congregations.

Justice is about caring for whole persons, in their local context, and throughout the whole world. Matthew works to create that sense of purpose within his community. In the next story, I share about a millennial who started ministry with community as the foundation.

Brandon Mott, Justice in Community[43]

At a young age, Brandon Mott remembers recognizing the disparity in wealth of those around him. He did not grow up in wealth, but he recalls coming back from a middle school

[42] Matthew Ingalls, *The Upside down Way: Following Jesus through the Gospel of Luke*, 2017.

[43] My connection with Brandon Mott (and Derek Abner) from dathouse started before dathouse was a reality. I met Brandon and Derek during a summer camp in 2004 while they were in high school. In 2008, after I took a role as missions pastor at Church at the Crossing, a church in Indianapolis, I decided to reconnect with them and see the work they were doing on the southside of Indianapolis. My narrative here is taken from conversations, emails, and stories accumulating over those years as well as an interview I conducted with Brandon in 2016.

Christian conference convicted about what he owned with a desire to give it all away, keeping only one pair of sweatpants and a shirt. His mom did not approve. Even so, he remembers this moment vividly as the point at which he realized there was disparity in wealth in the world. But the models of social engagement that his church espoused when he was growing up were tied to rescuing the poor, a model which made Brandon uncomfortable. As he continued to mature in his faith, he began to tie this passion for justice with the concept of community.

One of the outflows of Brandon's passion for justice was the creation of a community called dathouse. It started in 2006 when Brandon's friend Derek and his wife, Laura, bought a house and began remodeling it. They lived in the small, 10' by 10' kitchen as they completely gutted and rebuilt the dilapidated home, which they expressed as an act of bringing new vibrancy and hope to the despairing community. Shortly after, Brandon married his wife, Jenni, and they also bought and rehab-ed a home on the opposite end of the neighborhood, bookending what they saw as their community. Derek and Laura were committed to the community in many ways, not the least of which was welcoming two neighbor kids into their home on a regular basis. The relationships turned into long-term foster care and eventually adoption; a tangible example of their openness to loving their community.

The three-letter acronym *dat* stands for the Greek words *doulos* (servant), *agape* (love), and *tapeino* (humility). These words have deep resonance with Brandon and those that formed the original team. Dathouse serves the Bates-Hendricks neighborhood, a neighborhood of about 5,000 people, on the near southeast side of Indianapolis. Bates-Hendricks is a community marked by job loss in the last few decades as one factory after another moved their operations to places with less expensive labor costs. The economic depression of the community is apparent. Derelict warehouses and vacant, foreclosed homes filled with shattered windows and boarded

doors. Brandon has dedicated his life to long-term community transformation in an impoverished neighborhood through what he sees as the "simple act of being a good neighbor."

As one can quickly see, the value of community, and what it means to live intentionally within community, is apparent in all that the members of dathouse do. Though Derek, Laura, and their kids have since moved on to other ministry roles, dathouse was built with the intention of doing ministry in community and for a community. In terms of doing ministry in community, the two families worked together to create systems of support and encouragement, sharing together in regular meals and times of prayer, and offering family assistance as needs arise. But they also do ministry for a community, participating in neighborhood improvement committees where they voice concerns for the marginalized of their community, engage with the local public-school system as well as other networks of churches, organizations, non-profits, and other civic organizations.

The foundational values of dathouse, determined from the outset, were to push against the American culture of consumerism. Brandon and the other members of dathouse recognize that American consumerism puts pressure on families, and especially on the primary income earner of a family, to work extensive hours to provide for the kind of lifestyle that is expected by the rest of the family. Brandon works part-time, or at least jobs with flexible hours. They have chosen to live simply because fewer hours at an office or in business meetings leaves space for relationships within the community that they would not be able to engage in otherwise. Howe and Strauss mentioned this move toward community in millennials as giving to the world a sense of community that their parents could not achieve.[44] A collegial, rather than individual, approach to action permeates Brandon's ministry. The members of dathouse take community and

[44] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 98.

community formation seriously, not as a tool to be utilized, but as a Christian mandate that has the capacity to transform.

It was from conversations during their time in the neighborhood, learning the location and context, they started to see some places of concern. One concern was a strip club named Sassy Kats located on the main drag just a few blocks from Brandon's home. The building was old and had a sordid history in the neighborhood in regard to violence. Besides alcohol and other issues that come with strip clubs, this was a major thoroughfare for the drug market. And all of this was happening within a few blocks of their local elementary school. The neighborhood grew increasingly uncomfortable with the strip club. Dathouse joined the neighborhood in remonstrating against Sassy Kats in formal hearings which led to the removal of the strip club's liquor license. Up to that point the local government had done nothing about the strip club selling alcohol so close to an elementary school, which is a violation of state laws. Dathouse used their voice to advocate with their neighbors, engaging and urging the government to do what they should have done from the outset. With the loss of the liquor license the strip club was closed down within a few months. The dathouse community saw this as an opportunity to reclaim what had been a blight on the community and transform it into a place of healing.

Dathouse purchased Sassy Kats in January 2012 and began renovations. While working on renovations, Brandon and others organized a plan to help identify what resources would best serve the neighborhood through a modified, asset-mapping strategy. They went house-to-house meeting personally with as many of their neighbors as possible. Accompanying the survey were other demographic studies on the area, levels of drug use and violence, and poverty rates. Through these findings they discovered that the corner where the future community center would be located was the epicenter of violence for the neighborhood.

Sassy Kats became the Lincoln Center, which opened in September 2014 and serves the community as a hub of information for those needing assistance. They have an after-school program that meets every day throughout the week offering educational resources in one of the lowest-performing school systems in the state. On Tuesday evenings, they have a community meal and Thursday evenings they have a small Christian fellowship. They also utilize city grants and maintain ties with the neighborhood association. In describing Christian community development, dathouse writes, "We are active in contributing to our neighborhood's well-being. In this, we use tools such as affordable housing, laundromat parties, dinners, trash pick-up, and simply walking the neighborhood, to connect neighbor to neighbor and promote community values such as giving, sharing, love, and healthy relationships."[45]

The Bates-Hendricks community in Indianapolis has undergone significant change in the time that Brandon has been there. Some of this change is from the positive influence of the dathouse community on the neighborhood. But there is another influence that Brandon notes, gentrification. Brandon has seen how dathouse and other community organizations in his neighborhood support and encourage the lower socio-economic residents, but he has also seen how gentrification pushes out those same residents dathouse and other organizations work to support. D.L. Mayfield, a millennial author I have referenced throughout my dissertation, has called on the church to create a theology of gentrification[46] and written a few blog articles about the issue.[47] She writes, "At the core of Christianity is the call toward love of neighbor. When the

[45] "Dathouse," *Church at the Crossing* (blog), accessed November 12, 2014, golove.org/dathouse. Church at the Crossing is a "local community partner" of dathouse and their work. Brandon and Derek wrote this summary of their work for the members of the church to become familiar with them.

[46] D.L. Mayfield, "Church Planting and the Gospel of Gentrification: Are We Seeking the 'welfare of the City,' or Just Our Own?," *Sojourners Magazine*, July 2017.

[47] Here are two examples: D.L. Mayfield, "Signs Your Neighborhood Might Be Gentrifying," *Living in the Upside-Down Kingdom* (blog), October 16, 2014, https://www.dlmayfield.com/dl-mayfield/2014/10/16/signs-your-neighborhood-might-be-gentrifying; D.L. Mayfield, "Gentrification: A Love Story," *Living in the Upside-Down Kingdom* (blog), June 8, 2015, http://www.dlmayfield.com/dl-mayfield/2015/6/8/gentrification-a-love-story.

poorest of your neighbors continually face the brunt of a system designed not to care about them, gentrification becomes a church issue."[48] The more millennials dedicate themselves to a place and become rooted, the more they will have to learn to navigate the challenging waters of gentrification and create a language and theology that helps them do so.

Bielo noted that in terms of *theology*, emerging evangelicals tend to be anti-modern, and Brandon exemplifies this in a few ways. For one, his challenge of consumer capitalism is evidence to this, but even more so, it can be found in the way he processes and expresses his theology. He is ardently non-dualistic. Brandon shared that, for him, "there is no distinction between sacred and profane or natural and supernatural." He found new life in the writings of Richard Rohr. "When I read Richard Rohr I am like," he takes a deep breath, "I am a Christian. I knew it. I knew I was, I just didn't feel like it for a while because of the way a lot people talk about it. [Rohr] uses the scripture and tradition and brings language to it that's so good."[49] In discussing Rohr, Brandon expresses appreciation for church tradition, or *liturgy*, another component that Bielo notes is prevalent in emerging evangelicals.

Another important interlocutor in terms of theology and action for Brandon is John Perkins. Perkins' view of community development has played an important role in shaping the way Brandon engages in and understands his community. In *With Justice for All*, he outlines his

[48] D.L. Mayfield and Keith Negley, "Loving Our Neighbors (and Doing Something about It): How Churches Are Confronting Gentrification," *Sojourners Magazine*, May 2018.

[49] Rohr's theology engages both action and contemplation in a way that puts theology into daily practice and life. This resonates with young Christians wanting their faith to speak to the situations they face in the world. In a recent blogpost, his practice-driven approach to faith is exemplified:

> If Christianity is to survive and stay relevant, we must welcome new songs, new expressions of the sacred through beauty, celebration, lament, defiance, and calls to repentance and action. To do so requires bringing contemplative practice beyond pews and prayer mats to the ways we engage on social media, the streets, and the evening news. Contemplation is not only for so-called sacred spaces; it can touch and change all of life. (Richard Rohr, "Perplexed into Contemplation," *Center for Action and Contemplation* (blog), May 16, 2018, https://cac.org/perplexed-into-contemplation-2018-05-16/.)

three steps of community development: relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution.[50] Perkins' development work is largely confined to urban centers, but his influence in regard to justice within the community development world in North America is significant. The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), which he founded, is a connecting point for communities in North America seeking justice and has a following that encompasses both older and younger communities.[51]

Though literature has been helpful in his maturation, Brandon has learned most by doing. Brandon epitomizes Howe and Strauss' view of millennial social engagement as *communal*. By living in community, within a neighborhood that has become his community, he has been able to seek justice in more than just short-term fixes but in a daily, living out of justice. It is this expression of justice for a community that is exemplified in the next story.

Zach Szmara, Justice for Communities

Zach Szmara grew up caring deeply about serving God, but he always envisioned himself serving outside of his home culture. Zach was raised in Youngstown, Ohio, a city inundated with political promises after declining steel industry jobs left major portions of the population unemployed. This decline was heightened when, in 1977, a major steel company closed its doors and over 5,000 jobs were lost in one day, a day still known as "Black Monday." Zach grew up in this economically depressed landscape of the Midwest. But at the age of four, he already had plans for his life; Zach wanted to be a missionary, like his hero Jim Elliot.

From a young age, Zach wanted to travel to a foreign land and experience the trials and travails of missionary work. He went to Indiana Wesleyan and graduated in three years. Instead

[50] Perkins, *With Justice for All*.

[51] Perkins' practice, coupled with the new monastic theology of writers like Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, have been major influencers on the views of justice that encompass the work of dathouse.

of immediately starting graduate studies, he decided to experience his dream of being a missionary, so he spent a year preparing and then went to Papua New Guinea, ending up in Bougainville Island. In his short time there, he taught church planting at a recently opened Wesleyan Methodist Bible College. The experience in Papua New Guinea mimicked his childhood vision of missionary work, living and working in places where there was little to no electricity and running water. His time in Papua New Guinea would end abruptly. After six months, another missionary couple was expecting a baby and the missions agency only had a certain number of visas allotted for their staff, so Zach's visa was revoked. Within a few months, Zach was deported.

Returning to the United States, Zach went to Asbury Theological Seminary and got married to Lyndy, who he had met at Indiana Wesleyan. Together they began planning to serve overseas. After seminary, Zach and his wife moved with their son to Mozambique to serve with the Wesleyan Church, another attempt to serve internationally. But their first year ended up being one of the most challenging seasons of their life and one year into their four-year term they returned home. Deflated, exhausted, and not sure what was next, Zach took an interim pastorate at a declining church in northern Indiana. His plan was to be there for two weeks to fill in while they found a new pastor. He has been on that "second week" for over 6 years now. In my interview with him, he shared that he found comfort in taking the role at the church because, if it did not end up working out, he would not feel too terrible as the church was about to close anyway. But what he found in the church would breathe life into his family and create a new perspective on ministry that would influence nearly every part of the church.

A few years before Zach arrived at what was then called Riverview Wesleyan Church, later renamed The Bridge, the declining white congregation planted a Spanish-speaking church. These two congregations functioned separately, and by the time Zach arrived, the Spanish-

speaking pastor had left because funding for the church from the district was no longer available. Zach joked that even when choosing a place for his family to serve overseas, he was not interested in serving in Latin America. He had imbibed the rhetoric of his employment-depleted hometown that Latinos were stealing jobs from hard-working Americans. But as he started work at this church in Logansport, Indiana, he said that for the first time he *met* Latinos. For the first time, he heard their stories and got to know Latinos in his community. He became friends with them. He had, what he called, refrigerator rights; where someone can walk into your house and open the refrigerator without asking. He developed deep, intentional community with the Latinos in his congregation.

Zach was now the pastor of both an English and Spanish-speaking church, which he combined rather than having separate services. His goal was to create a truly multi-cultural church where both Latinos and non-Latinos were equally uncomfortable, but still chose to worship together. Zach had seen what he called multi-color churches, or multi-lingual churches, but not churches that truly embraced and accepted each other's cultural differences. Zach's cross-cultural training made him a perfect candidate to walk the congregation through this kind of transition.

Shortly after starting he began hearing about needs of people in his congregation. Zach realized there were issues with the immigration system through firsthand stories from people in his congregation. He learned about how Latinos in his community were being taken advantage of by people called *notarios.* In Latin America, *notarios* are people who have law degrees and can help with legal issues. In the United States, the term *notario* is used to describe a notary public. People were using the term *notario* in ways that caused Latinos to think the person they were working with had a law degree when they did not. Zach shared that he had even heard of sums

ranging up to $22,000 that were given to *notarios* who did nothing to help the person's immigration case and, in some situations, actually hurt their case.

Logansport, his new home, had an immigrant community that comprised 30% of its population. People in his congregation needed help and he did not have a solution for them. Zach began researching and found that the Department of Justice offered a program, started during President Reagan's time in office, that allowed non-profit organizations to become accredited for immigration legal purposes. Zach became the first Wesleyan Church in the U.S. to open an immigration assistance office in their church and one of the first churches in the entire country to do something similar. As of 2017, the office at The Bridge has served over 1,230 immigrants from 72 nations. On a national level, Zach has trained 147 other churches and in the fall of 2018, he led the 4th Annual Immigrant Connection National Conference.

Zach has been passionate about pairing this ministry with the church. "There's something about the local church," he said in our interview. Some other denominations separate out these services or have different locations where they serve, but Zach wanted the church to be the fulcrum of this assistance. Zach shared that even the location of the office in the church can be important, "I want them to walk where it says pastor's office or pastor's study because I want them to know I'm doing this because Jesus would. I'm doing it because this is his heart for immigrants. I'm doing this because he stands for you in this… We want to do it in our church. We want people to see the living body of Christ in action." Zach sees the church as primary is his vision for the city. "I think God has a version of this city and that's what I'm fighting for. I want his version of Logansport."

Action on behalf of his community did not stop there. Zach saw a need for a "third place"[52] within his city where people could gather. He mentioned that their local grocery store had a coffee shop, but outside of that there were no other options. His church turned their lobby into a coffee shop that is open every day but Sunday to offer another location for the community to gather. His church utilizes their facility for community events on a regular basis, integrating themselves with their community throughout the week, not simply on Sunday.

Like Matthew, in the story above, Zach engages his community like a missionary within his own context. This corresponds with Bielo's concept of *missiology*. And, also like Matthew, he sees the church as a primary actor in community engagement. Bielo discusses church planting and house churches as the way emerging evangelicals engage in *ecclesiology*. I think there is certainly a rise in church planting and house churches within the millennial generation. At the same time, both Zach and Matthew exemplify another way in which *ecclesiology* is expressed in practice, church revitalization. For Zach, though he did not plant a church or start a house church, he completely reshaped the ethos and practices of the congregation. They went from being two separate congregations to being one. They began engaging the immigrant population. They started a coffee shop. Zach took a church disconnected from its community and envisioned a new way for them to connect.

As I asked Zach about what justice looks like for him and his church, he wove in linguistic elements that help paint the picture. Zach shared that in Spanish, the words for justice and righteousness are both translated *justicia*. And he defined justice as making things right again. Justice, then, is not simply about righting spiritual wrongs, but also speaking out against social wrongs. In a moment that defines the kind of justice that Zach imbues, he said, "I mean, I

[52] Third place is a concept utilized to distinguish a place other than the home (first place) and work (second place) where people can gather and have conversation and meaningful social interaction.

celebrate baptisms, but I celebrate immigration approvals almost on the same level because I see them both as so redemptive." Zach also pointed out that often his town, and towns like it with strong immigrant populations, are like a modern-day version of what Samaria represented in the New Testament. They are the places that people avoid. But justice is about engaging these places. Even in the way he described justice it is connected to community, and specifically, the community he serves.

One challenging aspect for Zach in his work is what he sees as a superficial divide in the church in terms of politics. He admitted that in the past year, he has changed his sermon eleven times because of news stories people have been talking about. He says that it is a mandate for the church to speak into current issues that affect their community or that their community is concerned about. For his community, one of those major issues is immigration. But older generations he engages sometimes feel like that is simply a political issue, not a biblical one. And yet, Zach sees immigration as a fully biblical issue and pushes against those who frame it as political. He says that the "political is secondary to it being a biblical call too; if you don't think God is a God of justice, you're obviously not reading your Bible." Because of Zach's deep call and passion for the community where God placed him, he is developing new ways to serve and care for his community, new ways to seek justice on their behalf. And Zach does that, even when it means crossing boundaries that others might say step outside the role of the church. In the next story, I share about another millennial crossing boundaries into the political realm.

Jessica Wayne, Justice and Political Advocacy

Jessica Wayne was born in Michigan, moved to Indiana at a young age before moving to Portland, Oregon when she was twelve. Jessica spent her growing up years in Portland before

returning to Indiana to study at Anderson University for her undergraduate education. Jessica's engagement with justice has been marked by experiences and her faith.

At Anderson University, Jessica had the opportunity to travel on a short-term experience to Washington, D.C. to work with the Church of the Savior, an experience which would shape her life dramatically. The trip was originally supposed to go to Toronto, a place Jessica was interested in visiting, but it got cancelled. The organizer said that if the team still wanted to travel, participants could go to D.C. instead. She admits she was not really excited about the shift in location, but she chose to go anyway. Though the trip as a whole was a powerful experience, one specific instance she recalls as particularly transformative. While visiting a ministry site called Samaritan Inn, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center that grew out of the Church of the Savior, the host showing them the work said, "you really can't help us because you're only here a week, but we'll tell you what we do." The leader went on to say that sometimes you have to "get in the shit with people," which takes time. This call to intentional, personal, long-term walking with people dealing with significant life issues resonated with Jessica.

After returning to college, Jessica sought out an opportunity to return to the Church of the Savior the following summer. She spent the entire summer between her junior and senior year working with the recovery program. Because of the make-up of the city at that time, Jessica was the only white person in many of the spaces she lived and worked. This shaped her as well, causing her to look seriously at her whiteness and how that shaped and continues to shape her life.

When she finished school, she was hired by Jubilee Jobs, another ministry that grew out of the Church of the Savior and was started to help get people on a path toward living-wage work. Hearing the stories of people, week in and week out, who could not get a job because they had a felony, or had been in the prison system, opened her to issues she was not aware of before.

She realized that she did not want to simply help people get a job, she wanted to deal with the root issues of why people were unable to get a job in the first place. Jessica saw the issue was rooted in an unfair legal system that marked people with a record that kept them from fully engaging in society. After working with the Church of the Savior and a number of other organizations in the city, Jessica continued her education, getting her M.Div. at Princeton which included a practical ministry internship with a church plant in Philadelphia. Once again, this experience shaped her view of ministry and the church, working in an ethnically and socio-economically diverse community.

For the last four years, Jessica has been the director of the U.S. prison policy and program work of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, an interfaith membership organization made up of more than three hundred religious members from around the country. Members in the group range from national denominational offices, religious groups, and local houses of worship. She says she lives between working with people from different faith traditions and working with policy advisors and prison officials. Her work also puts her in contact with mental health professionals and formerly and currently incarcerated people and their families. A lot of her work is "solidarity and bearing witness of abuses that have happened or are happening and finding ways to respond that actually lead to change." In her work, she coordinates and supports the members of the interfaith organization to be engaged in efforts to end prison torture and to support restorative justice initiatives. Jessica broke down her work into three categories: legislative, practice, and programmatic.

In terms of legislative work, Jessica works on policy and lobbying of political leaders. Recently, the organization has found the most traction with state legislators and has been working to end prolonged solitary confinement in the U.S. prison system. They have done this in a number of ways, including bringing awareness of the reality of solitary confinement and the

trauma it inflicts. Jessica's work also connects her with other major policy entities including the U.N. Special Rapporteurs on Torture, though her work is primarily in the U.S. The second category of work she engages is practice, working with prison officials on implementation. In this way, Jessica's work does not simply work toward legislative agendas that end torture, but also engages those who work in the prison system.

The third category is programmatic. This category includes hosting creative, culture-shifting programs and events. For instance, for the last two years the organization has been touring a replica of a solitary prison cell which allows people to experience, physically, the confinement of prisoners. The replica was built in a sanctuary in D.C. during Lent to be a modern-day tomb in their worship space. The cell has been taken to places such as the Connecticut State House where legislators were invited to spend time in it. They also have a nine-minute virtual reality experience of a solitary prison cell. These programs are used across the spectrum of locations, from state houses to churches, to engage society in a broader conversation about the inhumanity of solitary prison cells.

Though it may seem that many of Jessica's views on justice emerge from her experience, and they certainly do, her faith is an equally important component. During her interview I asked whether, for her, there was a difference between justice and biblical justice. Jessica shared, "my understanding of justice is so deeply shaped by thinking about biblical themes of justice that I don't think I can untangle them." Her theological perspective shapes her view of justice.

One of the ways this can be seen is the in the way Jessica views sin and salvation. She shared about the shift she has made from an individual versus a collective view of spiritual life, a shift I heard expressed by other millennials.[53] For Jessica, when we minimize sin to only include individual sin, we miss the opportunity to name and call out communal or collective sin. In turn,

[53] I make reference to this in the fourth chapter.

we miss out on the opportunity to engage in collective responses to injustice, like, especially for Jessica, challenging political structures.

Jessica cares about affecting change, but she does not limit her engagement to individual actions, she believes that collective action should be taken. That is what has led her to engage in political advocacy and activism. Bielo discusses the engagement of *political action* among emerging evangelicals and Howe and Strauss suggest that millennials *support civic institutions* more than past generations. Both are evident in millennial's pursuit of justice as well. Though some research mentioned a skepticism about institutions among millennials, there are recent studies that show less skepticism and more engagement with institutions, and specifically political institutions.[54] When I asked Jessica about why she engaged in politics, she said, "It's interesting, I hate politics. For me, there are laws that are allowing really bad things to happen. And how you change those practices, you have to change those laws that allow those things to continue… The political is a vehicle for making part of that change. But it's not the whole thing." For Jessica, it is practical. She does not lean on the political process solely, but she knows the church has missed incredible opportunities to make change by not engaging on a larger scale.

Conclusion

Justice for millennials is practiced; it is experienced. But it is not devoid of theological grounding. In fact, theology and practice are often pieced together in a way that creates a mosaic reflective of their experience; a lived theology of justice, practiced through presence. They engage in justice in the ways Howe and Strauss assessed (*communally, engaging civic*

[54] "The Power of Voice: A New Era of Cause Activation and Social Issue Adoption"; Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 14.

institutions, and focusing on doing good). And they are driven to practices that embrace the five components Bielo expressed (*theology, missiology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and political action*).

When I first began my research, I hypothesized that, even within the Christian tradition, justice emerged as a humanistic endeavor rather than a robust theological concept. I thought this for a number of reasons, two which were prominent. First, from my personal experience and the stories of peers, I knew the church had largely failed at equipping millennials to ground their views of justice in faith. Second, I knew from research millennials were experientially driven and many gained interest in justice out of their experiences. I feared my generation was passionate about a topic that they could only superficially relate back to their faith. From my research, I have found that for those not engaged in justice on a regular basis that, indeed, justice was not grounded in faith in a substantial way. In fact, as my research has shown, many interpreted justice in retributive terms when they related it to scripture. But the same was not true for those who engaged and practiced justice regularly. For those I interviewed, their justice was intimately connected to their faith. Many of those I interviewed even expressed an inability to talk about justice outside of their faith. Not that it was impossible, but that their views of justice were so shaped by their faith that, as Jessica expressed, they cannot untangle the two.

Though experience was the primary factor in developing views of justice, one can see from the five stories I highlighted in this chapter that education played an important role as well. Four of the five stories I shared included individuals who were seminary educated and all five had bachelor's degrees from Christian institutions. What is interesting to note is that the language of justice that emerged from these interviews often imbibed the theology of evangelical left authors of the 1970s and 80s, though they were rarely named. One might attribute this to the fact that the professors these millennials sat under in school were influenced by the writings of these authors. So, though Wallis, Perkins, Sider, and Mott may not have name recognition, their

thoughts have found residence in the theology of millennials. But, as I have mentioned, these thoughts were not shared through the church, but through Christian educational institutions.

Justice, especially in terms of righting wrongs on behalf of the vulnerable, has a rich Christian heritage. It was the Hebrew writings of the Old Testament that first included the immigrant as a part of those considered vulnerable in a community, a practice not common in other kingdoms during that time.[55] And it was Jesus who consistently expressed in word and action, the mandate to love our neighbor. As millennials begin to take on roles of leadership in church and society, I hope their fervor for justice will remain grounded in faith and that they lead us to new expressions of justice in our nation and around the world.

[55] Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 89.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Summary of Research and Further Study

Not all millennials are created equal. One of the challenging aspects of writing about a generation is the often-quoted statement, "but not all millennials are the same." This is, obviously, true. My goal in this research was not to prove otherwise. At a recent doctor visit the nurse asked about the book I was reading, Howe and Strauss' *Millennials Rising.* She asked about the age range of millennials. After giving the range, she mentioned that her eldest son, born in 1987 was not the characteristic millennial. As a researcher, and a curious person in general, I asked why. She explained that he was a hard worker and, at 30 years old, was "already making over six figures." Her second son, she said, was definitely a millennial. He was born in 1994, had trouble getting through school, and though he was living with his girlfriend he still had all of his clothes at her home. I asked whether the difference between her kids was less of a generational one and more of a question of birth-order. "Isn't it common for the oldest in a family to be more independent, self-starting and the youngest to be less so?" She agreed that maybe that was the case. Millennials are a diverse generation. Ethnically, they are the most diverse generation in U.S. history.[1] But it is also true that much more goes into shaping a person's perspective or worldview (birth order, for instance) than just the year they were born.

In this research, I attempted to stay away from exaggerative facts about millennials or leaning on overused generalizations. Instead, I looked at contextual factors, like technology, travel, and family systems, that affect the ways millennials have grown up. I discussed their views of justice and how they were influenced by both experience and the church. And I looked at how their context and definitions of justice affect the ways they engage in justice. But, even

[1] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 4; Clark, "An Exploratory Study of the Millennial Generation's Acceptance of Others: A Case Study of Business Students at a Private University," 28; Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 96.

these factors have their limits as not every U.S. millennial grew up with the same access to technology, travel, or identical family systems. So, though this research offers a foundation for justice studies within the millennial generation, there is still much research to do in order to understand more fully the ways they are engaging. In this conclusion, I summarize the research thus far, offer the main contributions of my research to the larger scope of millennial and justice research, and close with two ways to further engage the topic of justice within the millennial generation.

Summary of Research

In chapter one, I laid out the methodology I chose for my research. I began by sharing some stories from my life that centered around the concept of justice while presenting the prevalence of justice engagement within the millennial generation. Next, I laid out my specific research framework offering terminology, currents in justice, and methodological groundings for my research.

In chapter two, I focused on ways justice has been viewed in the past century to show how the term justice seems to have fallen out of theological use in evangelical churches. I traced the theological concept of justice through conversations of early evangelicals to the present time. This historical background showed how justice seemed to be either absent or relegated to mainly spiritual definitions during the early maturation years of the millennial generation.

In chapter three, I began looking at the contextual factors that contributed to the views of justice I heard from millennials. These contextual factors were explored through the lens of millennial research and engagement with the interviews and focus groups I conducted. The primary contextual factor for millennials is experience. They understand and engage their world through their unique experience. Within the framework of experience, I looked at three

generational factors from Neil Howe and William Strauss: common location in history, shared beliefs, and shared behavior. Through these three filters I explored the interplay of technology, including travel, the paradoxical relationship with postmodernism and optimism, and the influence of families and the church.

In chapter four, I constructed a definition of justice that emerged from the research I did on Wesleyan-Holiness millennials. The meanings of justice that emerged had three characteristics, it showed: nuance in the phrase "righting wrongs" including where focus was placed (on victim or perpetrator), a prevalence of language around equality, and the perceived absence, for those not engaged in justice, of the church or the Bible in defining justice.

In chapter five, I took the ideas and context of the earlier chapters and shared narratives of millennials who practice justice. I started the chapter looking at current research on practices and how that relates to the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. From there, I offered a theoretical framework of lived theology, using the concept of lived religion as expressed through the work of James Bielo. Finally, I utilized three components of millennial social engagement from Howe and Strauss (*communal, engages civic institutions, and focused on doing good*), coupled with five areas of engagement that Bielo cites (*theology, missiology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and political action*) to examine millennial justice practice. I engaged five millennials who are practicing justice in different ways showing components of Wesleyan-Holiness, millennial justice practice like: life is meant to serve others, justice is holistic, justice is done within community, justice is done for/with a specific community, and justice encompasses advocacy and political action.

Main Contributions

Through my research there are a number of contributions that are adding to the discussion of millennials, specifically tied to issues of justice. I will focus on one contribution from each of the final three chapters. In chapter three, I connected scholarship about family systems with my research, affirming that, indeed, families are being affected by the change in views on justice of their children. Research on millennials suggested they looked to their parents for views on right and wrong.[2] In contrast, I found that millennials respected their parents, but that they did not always accept the views of their parents. Though this has been speculated, my research bears out that, at least from the millennial's perspective, millennial's views of justice are different than those of their parents. One unique aspect of this discovery is that as millennials discuss their views of justice with their parents, a number of millennials noted a change in their parent's perspective. The rise in conversations around issues like human trafficking that seem to expand outside of millennial circles may be, to some extent, attributed to the engagement in conversations of justice between millennials and their parents.

In chapter four, I shared what I believe to be the most important contribution of my research. Millennials seemed to draw the same definition of justice across the spectrum, "righting wrongs." This included both millennials with whom I conducted focus groups (millennials not engaged in justice-related issues) and those with whom I did interviews (millennials engaged in justice-related issues). But, upon further discussion, the way that each group defined "righting wrongs" was quite different. Those with whom I conducted focus groups (non-justice engaged millennials) focused on the perpetrator in terms of defining justice, leaning on language of punishment and consequence. Those with whom I did interviews (justice engaged millennials) focused on the victim in terms of defining justice, leaning on language of restoration

[2] Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 185.

and care for the vulnerable. The difference in definition was dramatic. The difficulty to this differentiation is that both definitions are valid and important to understanding justice. In many ways, those engaged in justice simply swung the pendulum away from retributive or punitive justice toward restorative justice rather than finding the balance of both within their view of justice.

The primary factor that was different between focus groups and interviews was engagement in justice-related issues. Even a person's age or their level of education was less of an indicator on how they defined justice than was their engagement. From this, I concluded that engagement in justice frames the way a person defines justice, offering a perspective through experience that cannot be attained other ways. And, at least for my participants, their definition was significantly intertwined with their faith.

In the final chapter of my research, I looked at five elements of millennial's views of justice. Though these elements may be found in part in other writings, their specific use in terms of justice, and how they are expressed through the millennial context, has not been noted. The first element is that life was meant to serve others. Millennial justice is not a program, it is intermingled as part of their life; and life is about doing good for the betterment of others. The second element is that justice is holistic. As opposed to other generations who may bifurcate things like evangelism and social action, millennials see these as part of the same movement toward justice. Even in serving physical needs, spiritual needs are met. Third, justice is done within community. Millennials are more communal than generations prior and they do not simply want to seek justice, they want to seek justice within a likeminded community. Fourth, justice is done for/with a specific community. Millennials often find resonance in seeking justice on behalf of a specific demographic or with a specific focus (immigration, human trafficking, socio-economically depressed communities). They seek justice in holistic, but yet specific, ways.

Fifth, and finally, for some, justice incorporates advocacy and political action. Millennials are not afraid to engage political means to seek justice on behalf of others. If a need is dire, they find a way to rally others and create movement that challenges the status quo. Political action is viewed as one avenue in their goal to see a world free from injustice.

Further Study

As justice continues to be an important social and theological construct within the millennial generation, more study of the concept is necessary. My suggestions for further study emerge from two categories: social and theological.

First, socially, this research was of a small subset of Christians who identify with the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. There are a number of ways that more expansive research could be done. First, expanding research within Christian circles. For instance, justice has different meanings and engagement in Calvinist circles (especially with strong theological leaders like Abraham Kuyper). The Catholic church has an extensive history of engaging in justice dialogue (including liberation theologians mentioned in chapters one, two, and five). Pope Francis has also made justice a foundation of his life and ministry, so there is important comparative research that could be done within the broader Christian realm. Also, though justice is prominent in Christian circles, it would be important to compare its use and engagement outside of those circles as well. Do non-Christian millennials talk about justice in the same ways that Christian millennials do? Do they engage more or less than Christian millennials? These are all important to the on-going understanding of justice within this demographic.

Included in an expanding social scope, is research within non-white demographics. Though I did not seek a predominately white demographic, the schools that I worked with and the communities I engaged were heavily white communities. The "Millennial Impact Report" did

some research on how race and ethnicity determine what issues rise to the surface in terms of social issues. For instance, white respondents put their top three social issues as healthcare, employment, and civil rights/racial discrimination. Latino respondents had immigration as the primary issue with civil rights/racial discrimination as their second. African American respondents began with civil rights/racial discrimination followed by employment. Interestingly, Asian respondents put climate change as their top area followed by employment, civil rights/racial discrimination, and healthcare reform.[3] Certainly, one's view of justice is shaped by the communities they grow up in. In this way, extending research to a more diverse millennial demographic is necessary for truly understanding the millennial Christian view of justice.

Second, there are theological concepts that should be engaged in future research. One of the most astounding findings of my research was what I did not find. In all the research, focus groups, and interviews I did, I found very little about the concept of justice shared by participants that was uniquely Wesleyan-Holiness. My intention in research was to find a definition of justice within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, and though I found definitions, none offered distinctly Wesleyan-Holiness theological characteristics. Justice, at least within the subset I studied, does not have Wesleyan-Holiness theological points of engagement. Definitions were more mainstream, socially constructed, and broad. This does not mean that there were not correlations. For instance, John Wesley's view of works of mercy aligns with the way millennials view mercy. But it was not expressed by them as a uniquely Wesleyan trait that they were emulating, simply a cultural shift in how works of mercy are viewed that connects back to Wesley's ideas. With that, I believe further study must be done at the intersection of Wesleyan-Holiness theology and justice to offer handles that might create language of justice that is uniquely Wesleyan-Holiness in nature.

[3] "The Power of Voice: A New Era of Cause Activation and Social Issue Adoption."

One concept that could be a starting point is the intersection of justice and holiness. Miranda Zapor Cruz, a professor of theology at Indiana Wesleyan and a millennial herself, presented a paper titled "Methodists, Millennials, and the Means of Grace" at the 2017 Wesleyan Theological Society Meeting. In her presentation she suggested a more robust soteriology, and, specifically, more engagement with entire sanctification as one place of resonance among millennials. Interestingly, in my research, the concept of holiness was nearly non-existent. In addition, the only mention of the concept of entire sanctification came from those who struggled with the rigid theological definition that many in their denomination held. I believe, in light of this, though the participants certainly grew up within traditions that would have stressed holiness, they did not seem to see holiness as something that connected to their view of justice.

The incongruence of holiness mirrors many of the theological challenges presented by millennials, for instance, that Christianity is individualistic and disconnected from experience and physical reality. For millennials, holiness may have been understood as an individualistic endeavor focusing more on personal choice (abstinence from a list of ills). Second, holiness is viewed through a spiritualized lens. When it is not connected to the do's and don'ts of faith, it is viewed as primarily spiritual, in such a way that it is not conversant with physical and social realities. Holiness has a robust history and, if linked to John Wesley, certainly entails much more than a spiritualized individualism. I see further research working to link the Wesleyan distinctive of holiness with a theology of justice as a powerful corrective to a humanist-leaning justice.

Another theological element that I think could use more research is in terms of a theology of gentrification. I noted that one millennial, D.L. Mayfield, has written about the challenges of gentrification for her community,[4] but other millennials shared similar concerns about the

[4] Mayfield, "Church Planting and the Gospel of Gentrification: Are We Seeking the 'welfare of the City,' or Just Our Own?"; Mayfield and Negley, "Loving Our Neighbors (and Doing Something about It): How Churches Are Confronting Gentrification"; Mayfield, "Signs Your Neighborhood Might Be Gentrifying"; Mayfield, "Gentrification: A Love Story."

communities they are working in. I think a more robust theology of gentrification would assist the kind of localized, rooted ministry that millennials engage in and give language and theology for their work.

The goal of this research was to bring to light the ways Wesleyan-Holiness millennials are defining and practicing justice. In each chapter, I have shown contextual uniqueness of the millennial generation and the way they approach justice. In the final chapter, I offered stories that connect to those views of justice. As millennials continue to climb into seats of influence and power over the coming decades within both the church and societal spheres, I believe we will see a growing interest and engagement in justice-related ventures in the U.S. and around the world. It will not be the same kind of engagement that was modeled for them, but it will hopefully reclaim some of the biblical tenets that for centuries have encouraged Christians, and society as a whole, to care for the most vulnerable in the world.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Research Title

Practicing Justice: *Justice in a Millennial Wesleyan-Holiness Context*

To Potential Participant:

Thank you for your willingness to consider participating in this PhD dissertation research study through Asbury Theological Seminary conducted by M. Andrew Gale. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a millennial who is part of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The goal of the study is to shed light on the concept of justice held by millennials within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

If you agree to participate, your role may include a focus group and/or interview. The focus group and interview sessions will be recorded, but the researcher will be the only person able to access the recordings. The recordings are used for transcription purposes and deleted once that process is complete.

If there are concerns regarding any aspect of the study, please make those concerns known to the researcher so that the issue may be resolved. If, *at any time* in the process, you no longer wish to participate you have the freedom to end your participation.

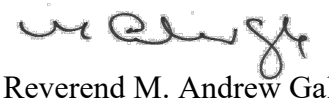
Your identity, or that of your organization/community, will be left anonymous and pseudonyms will be used unless you indicate otherwise. A copy of the final research will be available for your review, if you wish, by emailing me your contact information.

There will be no financial compensation for participation in this study.

Any questions, concerns, or comments can be directed to the researcher, Andrew, for further clarification. You can reach him at (317) 250-2769 or andrew.gale@asburyseminary.edu and he will promptly reply.

By signing below, you are authorizing that you understand the information presented in this letter and agree to your participation in the research study.

Thanks for your consideration,



Reverend M. Andrew Gale
PhD Candidate, Asbury Theological Seminary

Signature of Participant Date

Printed Name of Participant

Demographic Information

Birthdate: _____

Highest Level of Education: [ ] High School [ ] College [ ] Graduate School

Ethnicity:

[ ] Hispanic or Latino
[ ] Asian
[ ] Black or African American
[ ] American Indian
[ ] White
[ ] Other

Denomination you most closely affiliate with:

[ ] Assemblies of God
[ ] Brethren in Christ Church
[ ] Christian and Missionary Alliance
[ ] Church of God (Anderson)
[ ] Church of God (Cleveland)
[ ] Church of the Nazarene
[ ] Free Methodist Church
[ ] The Salvation Army
[ ] The United Methodist Church
[ ] Wesleyan Church
[ ] Non-Denominational/Unaffiliated
[ ] Other: _____

May I contact you for follow-up? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Email: _____

Phone: _____

[ ] *By placing an X in this box, you give the researcher permission to use your name in the publication of this research.*

[ ] *By placing an X in this box, you give the researcher permission to quote you as part of the research.*

Appendix B

Ethnographic Interview Questions

Opening background questions

- What's your name? Age? Are you married? Kids?
- Tell me about your family of origin, what was their religious background, what was home life like?
- Do you work? If so, where?
- Do you attend a local church? What's the affiliation of your church? How closely do you know or align with the theological beliefs of the church you attend?

Justice intro questions

- How do you define justice? How would you define *biblical* justice?
- When you think about justice, what specific issues come to mind?
- What images come to mind when you think of the word justice?
- Any songs/phrases/words that describe your view of justice.

Doing justice

- Describe a justice-related activities you participate in. How did you get involved in that work?
- How often do you participate in actions to bring about justice?
- How long have you been a part of justice-related activities?
- How important are issues of justice/injustice to your daily life?
- How is justice related to action? Is justice always action oriented?

Justice sources

- Tell me about when you first realized there was injustice in the world.
- What sources inform you about current justice-related issues?
- What role has your educational background played in your participation in justice-related activities?
- How has your local church influenced your view of justice?
- Does justice relate to you? How does justice relate to you?
- How is justice related to political action?

Experience questions

- Could you describe one of the most challenging moments you've encountered thus far related to an issue of justice?
- Could you describe one of the most joyful moments you've encountered thus far related to an issue of justice?
- When you think about justice, what specific issues come to mind?
- Taking one of those issues, how do we solve it?

Native language question

- If you were invited to share in a Sunday school class at a church (college class, friends, family), how would you talk about justice?

Mini tour questions

- You mentioned that you (insert practice). Tell me more about that activity. What would it be like if I joined that activity?
- Has your church ever discussed justice? If so, tell me about how they approached the discussion. Did you resonate with the way they approached it?
- Are any of the justice-related activities you participate in organized or related to your church involvement?

Decision questions

- If a church offered you $500 to be used for a practice of justice you were involved in, but the church has a reputation as a place where big-business executives go who perpetuate injustice, would you accept it? Why or why not?
- Now the same church is offering you $1,000,000. Do you accept it? Why or why not?

Who else should I contact to discuss this with?

Appendix C

Focus Group Discussion Topics

Definition

- How would you define justice?
- How would you define *biblical* justice?
- What images come to mind when you think of the word justice? If you have a smartphone, feel free to pull them up on there and show us. Then, if you could send those images to my email.
- When you think about justice, what specific issues come to mind?
- Assume I have never heard of the word justice. How would you explain it to me?
- If you were invited to share in a Sunday school class at a church (college class, friends, family), how would you talk about justice?
- Any songs/phrases/words that describe your view of justice.

Involvement

- What activities do you participate in that work to bring about justice?
- How is justice related to action? Is justice always action oriented?
- How important are issues of justice/injustice to your daily life?
- How often do you participate in actions to bring about justice?

Sources

- What sources inform you about current justice-related issues?
- Tell me about when you first realized there was injustice in the world.
- Has your church ever discussed justice? If so, tell me about how they approached the discussion. Did you resonate with the way they approached it?
- Does justice relate to you? How does justice relate to you?
- How is justice related to political action?

Who else should I contact to discuss this with?

Appendix D

Asbury Theological Seminary IRB Approval

DISSEMINATION & STORAGE OF RESULTS: Survey results will all be online and they will stored by password protection. The information does not pose any harm as it is anonymous.

49.

Please provide how long will you keep your raw data and describe how you will destroy the raw data at the end of that time. You are free to request an extension of this time period. *

I will keep the raw data for for two years and will destroy it by closing the survey website login I am using.

50.

ATTACHMENTS
- [x] A copy of your training certificate (required for principal investigator)
- [x] Surveys, questionnaires, and/or interview instruments
- [x] Informed consent forms or statements
- [ ] Letters of approval from cooperative agencies, schools, or education boards
- [ ] Debriefing statements or explanation sheet
- [x] Detailed narrative project description

51.

Signature of Principal Investigator* M. Andrew Gale

52.

Signature of Co-Investigator (if applicable)

53.

Signature of Faculty Advisor (if applicable)

54.

Assigned ID 16-15

55.

IRB decision
- (✓) Approve
- ( ) Recommend Revisions
- ( ) Reject

56.

IRB Members Paul Tippey, PhD, Chairperson
Asbury Theological Seminary IRB

Appendix E
Asbury University IRB Approval

SIGNATURE ASSURANCE SHEET

Principal Investigator's Assurance Statement:
I understand the Asbury University policy concerning research involving human subjects, and I agree to the following:

1. to accept responsibility for the scientific and ethical conduct of this research study;
2. to obtain prior approval from the Institutional Review Board before amending or altering the research protocol or implementing changes in the approved consent form;
3. to immediately report to the IRB any serious adverse reactions and/or unanticipated Effects on subjects which may occur as a result of this study;
4. to complete, on request by the IRB, the Continuation/Final Review Form

SIGNATURE [signature] DATE ___8 February 2017___

NAME TYPED ___M. Andrew Gale_____

NOTE: A signature is required from all faculty members involved in the project

Approval by the IRB Committee:
The signature below indicates that this proposal has been reviewed by the IRB Committee, necessary changes have been made by the researcher(s) to protect the research subjects, as determined by the IRB Committee; and the proposal has received the final approval by the IRB Committee.

SIGNATURE [signature] DATE 2/15/17

NAME TYPED Benita Corrie-Secretary
Chairperson of the IRB Committee

Working w/ Esther Todd at Asbury University

Appendix F
Anderson University IRB Approval

M. Gale <andrew.gale@asburyseminary.edu>

HRPC Spring 2017 02 Gale Proposal Approved

Lee Griffith <glgriffith@anderson.edu> Wed, Feb 15, 2017 at 7:59 AM
To: "M. Andrew Gale" <andrew.gale@asburyseminary.edu>, Lee Griffith <glgriffith@anderson.edu>

Andrew,
I am pleased to inform you that your proposal
"Practicing Justice: Justice in the context of Wesleyan Holiness Millennials "
Has been approved by the Anderson University Human Research Participant's Committee.

This approval is good for one year from today.
If there are any changes in the content or procedure these must be approved by the committee.

If you have any comments or concerns about this research always reply to this email or include the information in the Re line.

Best wishes for success in your research
glg

Dr. G Professor | Psychology Department
Anderson University | 1100 E. Fifth St, Anderson, IN 46012
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Appendix G
Indiana Wesleyan University IRB Approval

M. Gale <andrew.gale@asburyseminary.edu>

1058.17 Gale, Andrew IRB Protocol

Bielen, Ken <Ken.Bielen@indwes.edu> Wed, Mar 15, 2017 at 4:44 PM
To: "andrew.gale@asburyseminary.edu" <andrew.gale@asburyseminary.edu>
Cc: "Bledsoe, Tamara" <Tamara.Bledsoe@indwes.edu>, "Davis, Erin" <Erin.M.Davis333@indwes.edu>, "paul.tippey@asburyseminary.edu" <paul.tippey@asburyseminary.edu>

Dear Rev. Gale,

The Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) defers to and relies on Asbury Seminary's IRB's approval and Asbury Seminary's IRB's continuing oversight of your research proposal "Practicing Justice: Justice in the Context of Wesleyan-Holiness Millenials." You may conduct your research as outlined in your Asbury Seminary proposal without further need of coordination with IWU's IRB. However, if there are any changes in the proposal, you must notify IWU's IRB as you would your institution's IRB.

IWU reserves the right to remove its reliance on Asbury Seminary's IRB's determination if there are any violations of 45CFR46 or related guidelines and regulations of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections.

Best wishes on your research,

KEN BIELEN, PH.D.

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH SUPPORT, INTEGRITY AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS

CHAIR, INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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