RELIGIOUS SUPPORT IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING CULTURE

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2018

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	**2. REPORT TYPE**	**3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)*
15-06-2018	Master's Thesis	AUG 2017 – JUN 2018

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

Religious Support in a Rapidly Changing Culture

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)

Major David M. Johnston II

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

This century, our nation has witnessed significant shifts in the religious make-up, beliefs, and practices of her people. The challenge for the U.S. Army Chaplaincy is to understand those changes and provide relevant religious support to soldiers and families within the Army. The purpose of this thesis was to provide a thorough understanding of the influences shaping the religious beliefs and practices of the Army's largest demographic and ascertain the best approaches and methods to provide religious support to them. This demographic is comprised of soldiers from the Millennial Generation and Generation Z, which further complicates the religious support endeavor. The researcher relied on qualitative research methods to accomplish this through a review of civilian-focused studies, professional writings, and semi-structured interviews with participants from the Army's largest demographic.

The author made nine recommendations to provide relevant religious support to the Army's largest demographic based on the analysis of the research data. The recommendations will aide chaplains as they provide religious support to America's sons and daughters.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Religious Support, Chaplaincy, Chaplain, Culture, Millennial, Generation Z

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**	**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**	**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
a. REPORT	**b. ABSTRACT**	**c. THIS PAGE**			**19b. PHONE NUMBER** *(include area code)*
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	150	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

RELIGIOUS SUPPORT IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING CULTURE, by CH (MAJ) David M. Johnston II, 150 pages.

This century, our nation has witnessed significant shifts in the religious make-up, beliefs, and practices of her people. The challenge for the U.S. Army Chaplaincy is to understand those changes and provide relevant religious support to soldiers and families within the Army. The purpose of this thesis was to provide a thorough understanding of the influences shaping the religious beliefs and practices of the Army's largest demographic and ascertain the best approaches and methods to provide religious support to them. This demographic is comprised of soldiers from the Millennial Generation and Generation Z, which further complicates the religious support endeavor. The researcher relied on qualitative research methods to accomplish this through a review of civilian-focused studies, professional writings, and semi-structured interviews with participants form the Army's largest demographic.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my faithful savior Jesus Christ for calling me to serve our nation's sons and daughters. This research has been a labor of love to help me, and hopefully others, carry out the sacred call to bring God to soldiers and soldiers to God. I would also like to thank Erin, my wife, for her support, encouragement, prayers, and countless hours spent reading and editing my thesis. Words cannot begin to express how immensely grateful I am to have her by my side. I also want to thank my amazing children: Emma, David Mark, Patrick, Iain, Anna, and Cora for their patience and support during this process. I am sure they are happier than I am that it is finally complete. In addition, I want to thank my dear friend John Scott for walking this journey with me. I could not have asked for a better traveling companion over the last few months to provide a listening ear and encouraging word.

Next, I would like to thank the members of my committee: CH (MAJ) Shawn Gee, CH (LTC) Jeff McKinney, and CH (MAJ) Josh Gilliam. I am appreciative for the time they invested in me, the helpful criticism along the way, the gentle push to keep me going, and their friendship throughout this process. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Dale Spurlin for helping me to think critically, being a faithful guide through the research process, and for the invaluable feedback on this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my late mentor and friend Dr. Harold O. J. Brown for teaching me to approach the culture with a critical eye and a humble heart.

ACRONYMS

AR	Army Regulation
CH	Chaplain
CSF2	Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness
DoD	Department of Defense
FM	Field Manual
FY	Fiscal Year
LGTB	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered
MTD	Moral Therapeutic Deism
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
RS	Religious Support
USC	United States Code

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the earliest days of the American story, chaplains have played an essential role in the nation's defense. They arrived on the shores of the New World to minister to soldiers and civilians and "long before the Revolution most provincial governments, especially those of New England, considered chaplains a necessary part of their defensive organization."[1] They solidified their role in the Army during the Revolutionary War with chaplains like John Cleaveland who, in days leading up to the battle at Bunker Hill, "preached his whole parish into the Army, then went himself."[2] Just over a month later, on July 29, 1775, the Continental Congress authorized a chaplain for each regiment of the Army. Since then, chaplains have devoted themselves to care for the religious needs of soldiers and their families. Over the years, chaplains have provided religious services in garrison chapels, on makeshift altars in training environments, and on foreign soil during times of war. Chaplains have been present to speak words of hope and encouragement, to provide the sacraments and other means of grace, and to honor those who laid down their lives in defense of our nation. Each generation and every conflict usher in new challenges to the chaplaincy as to how to bring meaningful religious support to the soldiers they serve. The Chaplain Corps has not only tailored religious support to the needs of the times, but also to the changing demographics of the Army.

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[1] Roy J. Honeywell, *Chaplains of the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1958), 10.

[2] Ibid., 33.

The Chaplain Corps began almost exclusively Protestant in America, but over time changed to meet the differing needs within the Army. During the Civil War, the chaplaincy witnessed an increase in Roman Catholic chaplains and the introduction of the first Jewish, Black, and Indian chaplains.[3] Over two centuries later, there are more than 1400 chaplains on active duty comprised of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu chaplains. In March of 2017, the Armed Forces Chaplain Board responded to changing demographics and religious needs within the Armed Services by adding an astonishing 221 religious preferences to the official Department of Defense (DoD) list of faith and belief codes. The rationale behind these changes were "to standardize and better identify religions recognized by the Military Services," by "accurately tracking more faith and belief systems . . . enabling better planning for religious support to the force . . . [and] providing a better assessment of the capabilities and requirements of each Military Service's Chaplain Corps."[4] The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps has a history of contextualizing religious support to meet the needs of the current Generation of soldiers. This has been welcomed and applauded by Army leadership because of the vital contribution religion has regarding the character and well-being of soldiers.

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[3] Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, 2004), 4.

[4] Armed Forces Chaplain Board, Memorandum For: Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Airforce for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Director, Reserve and Military Personnel, U.S. Coast Guard, Director, Defense Manpower Data Center, Subject: Faith and Belief Codes for Reporting Personnel Data of Service Members, 27 March 2017.

Almost a year to the date that the Chaplain Corps was established, General George Washington issued a General Order outlining the pay, scope, and importance of chaplains. The order read, "The blessing and protection of heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger—The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act as becomes a Christian Soldier defending the dearest rights and Liberties of his country."[5] General Washington's views on the importance of religion in the lives of the military members have been shared by leadership throughout Army's history. While it might not be prudent today for a commander to compel their subordinates to "act as becomes a Christian soldier," the Army acknowledges the role that faith and spirituality play in the values, health, and overall resiliency of soldiers. Most recently this can be seen in the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2).

CSF2 was developed in response to the Army's sharp increase of suicides in 2008, along with an increase in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) claims and reports of spousal abuse.[6] The program, based on the positive psychology model developed by Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, is structured around five dimensions of strength: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and family. The spiritual dimension is defined in Army doctrine as:

> Identifying one's purpose, core values, beliefs, identity, and life vision define the spiritual dimension. These elements, which define the essence of a person, enable one to build inner strength, make meaning of experiences, behave ethically,

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[5] HQDA, *Brief History of the Army Chaplaincy,* 2.

[6] Jeremy Roy, "Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) Experiment: Research Biases in the Development of the CSF" (Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2013), 2-3.

> persevere through challenges, and be resilient when faced with adversity. An individual's spirituality draws upon personal, philosophical, psychological, and/or religious teachings or beliefs, and forms the basis of their character.[7]

Although the language of Army Regulation (AR) 350-53 bears little resemblance to that of Washington's General Order, it still affirms the importance of spirituality and religion in shaping the values, health, and overall resiliency of soldiers operating in stressful and complex environments.

The current research on the positive effects of religion is not just relegated to work of Dr. Seligman and CSF2, but far-reaching and well documented. One of most prominent voices this century on the relationship between religion and overall health is Dr. Harold Koenig. In the Handbook of Religion and Health, he presents a review and synthesis of over 2,800 original quantitative studies produced between 2000 and 2010 concerning the relationship between religion and health. The findings of the research reveal how religious involvement is related to less depression and faster recovery from depression in 61percent of the studies, less suicide and negative attitudes toward suicide in 75 percent of the studies, less alcohol use, abuse, and dependence in 86 percent of the studies, less drug use, abuse, and dependence in 84 percent of the studies, greater well-being and happiness in 79 percent of the studies, greater meaning and purpose in 93 percent of the studies, greater hope in 73 percent of the studies, greater social support in 82 percent of the studies, and greater marital stability in 86 percent of the studies.[8] While

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[7] Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Regulation (AR) 350-53, *Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 19 June 2014), 8.

[8] Harold G. Koenig, Dana E. King, and Verna Benner Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Some of the statistics above have been updated since they were published in the *Handbook of Religion*

there is substantial research backing the positive effects of religion, the challenge is how to foster and strengthen that dimension in our current cultural context.

David Kinnaman captured the dynamic of our nation's current cultural context well by stating, "We live in a complex, accelerated culture."[9] Although it was possible to see the currents of change moving, the speed and force with which they now flow make it difficult to keep track of cultural changes and the effect they have on people. The growing sense of individualism and secularism coupled with advances in technology and the rise social media have expedited social changes, which once took generations to manifest, now occur within mere months. In a few short years, sacred institutions such as the family, which have historically been the foundation of societies, have been radically redefined. Also, the religious beliefs that helped to shape this nation are no longer held by many Americans. As one researcher noted, "In the last 50 years rapid technological changes have created a vast difference between the perspectives, values, beliefs, and expectations of the older and younger generations around the globe."[10]

Many have rightfully argued that we are now living, for the first time in our American history, in a post-Christian culture. Considering these cultural changes, James White posits, "the realities of a post-Christian culture for the West have yet to be fully grasped . . . the coming force of Generation Z will inevitably challenge every church to

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and Health in 2012. These statistics were presented by Dr. Koenig at Fort Bragg, NC on 11 May 2017 for a chaplain training event.

[9] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Ventura: Barna, 2018), 9.

[10] Crystal Kadakia, *The Millennial Myth: Transforming Misunderstanding into Workplace Breakthroughs* (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017), 1.

rethink its strategy in light of a cultural landscape that has shifted seismically."[11] This reality not only the challenges churches and religious institutions across the nation, but also the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps as chaplains seek to provide religious support within this rapidly changing culture.

Problem

There are three key challenges chaplains face while providing religious support in our rapidly changing culture: age disparity, tenure, and theological diversity. The most substantial challenge is the age disparity between chaplains and the soldiers they serve. The average age for a chaplain entering active duty in Fiscal Year (FY) 17 was 35.5 and half-way through FY 18 it is 36.5,[12] while the average age of a soldier entering the U.S. Army is in FY17 was 21 years-old.[13] With well over a decade of separation, chaplains may not completely understand the differing needs of younger soldiers and subsequently the most effective ways to provide religious support to them. The next challenge can be seen by comparing the chaplain and civilian pastoral tenure.

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[11] James W. White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017) 11.

[12] CH (MAJ) Dave Dice, Accessions Officer, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, email with author, 9 April 2017.

[13] Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, *2016 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2016).

The median pastoral tenure in America is six years. [14] This provides a pastor time to build relationships within the congregation, the broader community, and cast and implement a vision. The Army chaplain will typically stay in an assignment for two to three years as the sole means of religious support to a diverse and transient group of soldiers in a particular unit and possibly serve the broader garrison community with a group of chaplains on a pastoral staff in a chapel setting. The amount of turnover of soldiers within units, families moving in and out of congregations, and chaplains moving to different assignments converge to create a challenging environment in which to establish ministries to address the needs of the Army's largest demographic. If a chaplain develops a specific ministry to reach a demographic, it is possible that the program will leave the post with him when he changes duty stations. This leads to the third challenge which is diversity among theological traditions. Since different chaplains hold to varying theological convictions and approaches to ministry, transferring programs from one chaplain to another can prove cumbersome at best.

Research Question

The primary research question the researcher will attempt to answer is: What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic? To answer this question, there are several secondary research questions that need to be addressed. The first set of questions deal with the Army's demographics. What is the disposition of the current force? What is the Army's largest demographic by

[14] Thom M. Rainer, "Six Reasons Pastoral Tenure May Be Increasing," March 15, 2017, accessed 12 February 2018, http://thomrainer.com/2017/03/six-reasons-pastoral-tenure-may-be-increasing/.

age? The next set of questions open the aperture to examine the broader cultural trends. What influences are shaping the religious views and practices of the same age demographic in the broader culture? How are soldiers shaped by those same cultural influences? Lastly, what approaches are civilian organizations using to engage this demographic and provide meaningful ministry?

Assumptions

The first assumption that I will seek to validate is that largest demographic in the Army has the same religious needs, unique distinctives, and outlooks as that of the civilian population. Although the two groups have chosen different professions, they were still raised in the same cultural milieu. This leads to the next assumption to validate. Ministry approaches and programs that are inviting, engaging, and relevant in the civilian church community can be applied in the military unit and chapel context with success. The last assumption is soldiers interviewed during this research will answer all questions honestly and have a sincere interest in participating in the study.

Definitions

Chaplains work to bring two different realms together: the realm of theology and the realm of combat. Each of these realms comes equipped with an extensive and nuanced lexicon. For that reason, I have several definitions to ensure there is a common understanding among military leaders and religious support providers.

Religious Support: This is a unique term tied to the primary mission of the Army Chaplain Corp "that has no civilian equivalent."[15] Since their establishment in 1775 by the Continental Congress, chaplains have "contributed to Soldiers' religious freedom, moral development, and spiritual well-being."[16] While it is the commander's responsibility to uphold and provide for soldiers' exercise of their freedom of religion, the chaplain assists him or her in the discharge of those duties. The Army is a pluralistic setting with many religions and religious needs represented. Chaplains either directly provide for those religious needs or indirectly facilitate them. Soldiers' religious needs can include rights, ordinances, sacraments, observing religious holy days, practicing dietary laws, and engaging in the sacred act of worship. The actions chaplains take to perform those duties or provide for them, fall under the broad term of religious support. Under this overarching concept, chaplains may provide less formal means of religious support such as ministry of presence, hospital visitation, spiritual fitness events, or prayers before combat operations. To ensure the needs of every soldier are met, "Chaplains cooperate with each other, without compromising their religious tradition or ecclesiastical endorsement requirements, to ensure the most comprehensive religious support opportunities possible within the unique military environment."[17]

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[15] Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Field Manual (FM) 1-05, *Religious Support* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 5 October 2012),1-3, 1-4.

[16] Ibid., 1-3.

[17] Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Regulation (AR) 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 23 June 2015), 1.

Religion: Trying to simply define the word religion can be challenging to say the least. A cursory glance through the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) shows eight definitions for the term. The OED suggests that later authors seem to agree the etymology of religion is *religàre* which means "to bind."[18] The idea of binding is in the first definition, "A state of life bound by monastic vows; the condition of one who is a member of a religious order, esp. in the Roman Catholic Church."[19] Religion binds people to God, to others with similar beliefs, to certain practices, and acts of worship. According to *World Religions Today*, "whatever powers we believe govern our destiny will elicit a religious response from us and inspire us to wish to 'tie or bind' ourselves to these powers in relations of ritual obligation."[20]

While there are thousands of religious sects throughout the world, there are twelve world religions that are well established and have been practiced throughout history across the globe: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Bhai. These are the twelve major recognized religions, and each has internal distinctives and sects. There are also many other religious ideologies that have spread with globalization, and most have in common a belief in God, some form of salvation, a view of death and the afterlife, forms of prayer and worship, sacred writings, and specific practices. In this study, religion will

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[18] "Religion," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 13 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 568.

[19] Ibid.

[20] John L. Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd Thornton Lewis, *World Religions Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7.

be used to refer sacred beliefs and practices that bring humans into relationship with God. This distinguishes religion from the everyday use of the term "spiritual" which often has no established beliefs, ethical norms, or practices associated with it.

Spiritual: Spiritual is defined in the OED as "pertaining to, affecting or concerning, the spirit or higher moral qualities, esp. as regarded in a religious aspect."[21] Spiritual encompasses a much broader semantic domain than religion. People who consider themselves spiritual may not have any religious practices. The definition in Army Regulation (AR) 350-53 upholds this very broad concept of spirituality, "An individual's spirituality draws upon personal, philosophical, psychological, and/or religious teachings or beliefs, and forms the basis of their character."[22] For the purpose of this research, the term spiritual will be used in the same manner as is found in AR 350-53 to differentiate it from religion.

Generational Cohort: A generational group, often referred to as a cohort, is a group that shares social and historical life experiences together which tend to give them an identity different from cohorts preceding and following them. A cohort "develops a personality that influences a person's feeling towards authority and organizations, what they desire from work, and how they plan to satisfy those desires."[23] The generational cohorts are: The Greatest Generation (1914-1927), the Silent Generation (1928-1945), the

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[21] "Spiritual," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 16 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 257.

[22] HQDA, AR 350-53, 8.

[23] Karen Smola and Charlotte Sutton, "Generational Differences: Revisiting Generational Work Values for the New Millennium," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23, no. 4 (2002): 364.

Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), the Millennial Generation (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2014). While there are dates and experiences that define certain cohorts, researchers often differ on the exact years. After over a decade of study on the Millennial Generation, the Pew Research Center, after noting "Generational cutoff points are not an exact science," suggests the adoption of the dates mentioned above for the Millennials.[24] The following chart from the same study shows the different cohorts and their ages in the year 2018.

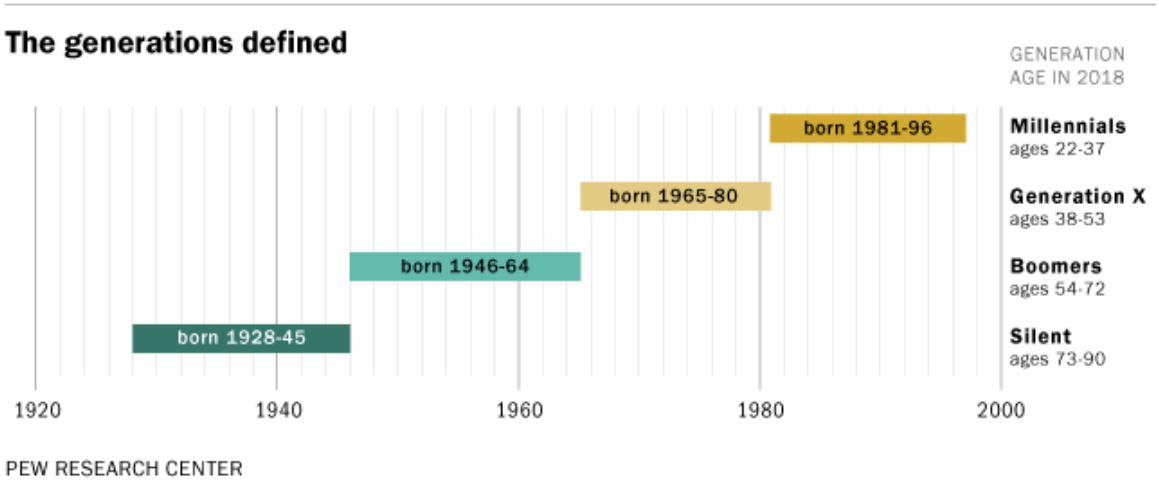

Figure 1. Generations Defined

Source: Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials end and post-Millennials begin," Pew Research Center, 1 March 2018, accessed 3 March 2018, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/defining-Generations-where-millennials-end-and-post-millennials-begin/.

[24] Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials end and post-Millennials begin." Pew Research Center, 1 March 2018, accessed 22 March 2018, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/defining-Generations-where-millennials-end-and-post-millennials-begin/.

Generation Z: While the Millennial generation is widely known their successors are not. This generation is comprised of those born around 1997 and it is still too early to determine when it will end and the next Generation will begin, or if it has not already done so. Researchers have labeled this generation as Z (following Generation X, the Millennials as Generation Y), i-Gen, Homelanders, and the App Generation. With most generations, the cohort itself will adopt the name they feel best suits them, and that hasn't happened yet for Generation Z. Earlier this year, the New York Times invited members of this group to pick a name they felt represented their generation and the results ranged from "Don't call us anything. The whole notion of cohesive Generations is nonsense" to "I wouldn't mind being called Generation Scapegoat," to the most popular name with four votes, "Delta." The rationale given by one participant was, "Delta is used to denote change and uncertainty in mathematics and the sciences, and my generation was shaped by change and uncertainty."[25] For this research, and to the dismay of some in this generational cohort, I will refer to them as Generation Z.

Limitations

There are two limitations of this research. The first limitation, as mentioned in the definition of Generational Cohort above, is the standardization of generational categories. There are variations within research on the years each cohort begins and ends and a significant amount of overlap during those periods of perspectives, values, and identities.

[25] Jonah Engel Bromwich, "We Asked Generation Z to Pick a Name. It Wasn't Generation Z." *The New York Times*, 31 January 2018, accessed 6 March 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/31/style/Generation-z-name.html.

The second limitation was the small sample size and qualitative nature of the study prevents generalizability to the larger population.

Scope and Delimitations

To narrow the focus of the information and time available, the research will focus on the religious needs and expectations of soldiers between the ages of 20 and 30. This is the largest age demographic in the Army and includes both Millennials and Generation Z soldiers. This is based on the U.S. Army Demographic Profiles for 2016 and 2017 prepared by Department of the Army Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Strength Analysis and Forecasting Division[26] and the 2016 Profile of the Military Community report compiled by the Department of Defense (DoD), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.[27] The researcher will explore these reports in more detail in chapter 2. Also, the interviews for this research were only conducted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The final delimitation was the researcher only focused on the active component of the U.S. Army.

Significance of the Research

The goal of this research is to contribute directly to the mission and practice of the U. S. Army Chaplain Corps by first providing an understanding of the two generations that comprise the Army' largest age demographic. Also revealing the influences that have

[26] Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, "Army Demographics: FY17 Army Profile," accessed 4 March 18, http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/docs/demographics/FY17_Army_Profile.pdf.

[27] Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, *2016 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*.

shaped their views on religious beliefs and practices and finally allowing soldiers in that age demographic, through interviews, to describe their religious needs in their own words. Through this process, the researcher hopes to provide the best approaches and practices to provide relevant religious support to our 20 to 30-year-old soldiers. There has been a substantial amount of research done on the spiritual tendencies and needs of the Millennial Generation, and the work is starting to amass for Generation Z, but most of it is focused on the local church. While the Army chapels are like civilian churches, the chaplain's mandate to provide religious support includes both the chapel and unit settings.

The Millennial Generation comprises the largest demographic in the Army, so chaplains need to ensure programs and methodologies are relevant and engaging to them. However, Generation Z is currently filling the junior leader positions and will lead Army in years to come. The desire of the researcher is to see if there are approaches or programs that engage both demographics. The Army has historically considered religion to be a significant source of moral and mental strength for our force, contributing to the overall readiness of our soldiers and families. In our growing secular culture, the Army, with the rest of society, has struggled to discover effective ways to encourage religious participation and spiritual resiliency. The goal of this research is to provide some approaches and methods to forge a path through that struggle and to identify the most efficient approaches to provide religious support in our force for numerous years to come.

Conclusion

This study embraces the challenge that chaplains have faced in every generation and conflict in our nation's history. Through this research, the author will examine the

influences that are shaping the religious views and practices of the Army's largest demographic to discover the best approaches and methods to provide them with meaningful religious support. Chapter 2 explores the roles of the chaplain, the demographics of the current active duty force, the influences that are shaping the religious landscape of our nation, and civilian ministry approaches. Chapter 3 describes the quantitative methodology utilized to answer the primary research question. Chapter 4 analyzes interviews conducted with soldiers seeking to understand their unique religious views, practices, and needs. This study will conclude in chapter 5 offering the researcher's findings, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature related to the research topic, answer four secondary research questions, and provide the understanding and framework necessary for chapters 4 and 5. This chapter is divided into eight sections beginning with a review of the authorities and regulations that define the role of the chaplain. The second section, "The Current Active Duty Force," will answer two of the secondary research questions: "What is the disposition of the current force?" and "What is the Army's largest demographic by age?" The next five sections will answer the next secondary question, "What influences are shaping the religious views and practices of the same age demographic in the broader culture?" beginning with a broad overview of the two Generational cohorts that are part of the Army's largest demographic.

The next four sections consist of the influences that have emerged in the literature that have the most significant impact on the religious lives and practices of both groups. These influences are individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family, and technology. These four categories will serve as the framework in chapter 4 to compare against the Army population and answer the primary research question. The next section will look at approaches and programs civilian religious leaders and organizations are using to reach the Millennials and Generation Z. This description will answer the secondary research question, "What approaches are civilian organizations using to engage this demographic and provide meaningful ministry?" This chapter will conclude with a review of literature focused on the Army chaplaincy.

Role of the U.S. Army Chaplain

The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps, according to AR 165-1, "is a product of the nation's commitment to religious freedom and its recognition that religion plays an integral role in the lives of many of its Soldiers."[28] The Chaplain Corps exists to support the Constitution of the United States, primarily the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Title 10 of the U.S. Code (Title 10 USC) provides the legal basis for chaplains, their roles and responsibilities, and the scope of their authority. Title 10 USC, section 3073 states "There are chaplains in the Army. The Chaplains include-(1) the Chief of Chaplains; (2) commissioned officers of the Regular Army appointed as chaplains; and (3) other officers of the Army appointed as chaplains in the Army."[29]

Title 10 USC in Section 3547 provides the legal authority for the duties of a chaplain stating, "Each chaplain shall, when practicable, hold appropriate religious services at least once each Sunday for the command to which he is assigned, and shall perform appropriate religious burial services for members of the Army who die while in that command."[30] This section also prescribes the commander's role in supporting the chaplain in this endeavor, "Each commanding officer shall furnish facilities, including necessary transportation, to any chaplain assigned to his command, to assist the chaplain in performing his duties."[31] The last legal requirement in Title 10 USC, Section 3581,

[28] HQDA, AR 165-1, 2015, 23.

[29] *Title 10, United States Code, Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1714.

[30] Ibid., 1730.

[31] Ibid.

limits the authority of chaplains by stating, "A chaplain has rank without command."[32] Title 10 USC is the legal authority for the Army to appoint chaplains, without command authority, to conduct appropriate weekly services and burials.

The Department of Defense (DoD) provides more specific guidance on the appointment of chaplains based on the authorities granted in Title 10 USC and the roles in which they serve. DoD Directive 1304.19 states that chaplaincies:

> Are established to advise and assist commanders in the discharge of their responsibilities to provide for the free exercise of religion in the context of military service as guaranteed by the Constitution, to assist commanders in managing Religious Affairs . . . and to serve as the principal advisors to commanders for all issues regarding the impact of religion on military operations.[33]

The Directive 1304.19 also recognizes the diversity of religious beliefs represented within the Army and possible tensions that exist in providing religious support. It states, "Within the military, commanders are required to provide comprehensive religious support to all authorized individuals within their areas of responsibility."[34] The Directive establishes the two roles chaplains must fulfill to ensure the free exercise of religion in the Military, advise and assist. These roles are defined with greater specificity in AR 165-1, Army Chaplain Corps Activities and Field Manual (FM) 1-05, *Religious Support*.

AR 165-1 "establishes the policies, duties, and responsibilities of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps in meeting the Army's religious and moral requirements in support of

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[32] *Title 10, United States Code* 1732.

[33] Department of Defense, Department of Defense Directive 1304.19, Appointment of Chaplains, 11 June 2004, accessed 22 February 2018, http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130419p.pdf, 2.

[34] Ibid.

Title 10, Unites States Code." The regulation expands on the two roles of advise and assist outlined in DoD Directive 1304.19 in the following manner: "chaplain as professional military religious leader" and "chaplain as professional military religious advisor."[35] As religious leaders chaplains, "provide for the nurture and practice of religious beliefs, traditions, and customs in a pluralistic environment to strengthen the religious lives of Soldiers and their Families."[36] This includes worship services, burials, counseling, facilitating the religious needs of all soldiers, (although not performing any activities that would violate the chaplain's beliefs), managing ecclesiastical supplies, and training other chaplains and religious affairs specialists.

The role of advisor describes the role of a chaplain as a staff officer. As a religious advisor to the commander, a chaplain is responsible for advision the commander and staff "on matters of religion, morals, and morale."[37] To discharge this role a chaplain should advise on the religious needs of assigned personnel, the spiritual and ethical climate of the organization, and the impact of leadership and policies on soldiers. Chaplains should also advise commanders by showcasing programs available to strengthen the Army values and spiritual resiliency, maintaining chapels, and analyzing of the indigenous religion on military operations. These two roles, of religious leader and advisor, explain how chaplains provide religious support to the soldiers they serve.

[35] HQDA, AR 165-1, 2015, 23-24.

[36] Ibid., 23.

[37] Ibid.

Current Active Army Force

Since religious support is based on the current needs of soldiers and families, it is imperative to understand the makeup of the current force that Army chaplains serve. As of September 2017, the current active duty force was 476, 254. This has increased by over 5,000 from the statistics published a year before with an active duty end strength of 471, 271 and is expected to continue to grow.[38] The goal for FY 17 recruiting was 62,500 soldiers which the Army exceeded by more than 6,000 soldiers. The proposed goal for FY 18, according to Army Recruiting Command, is 80,000.

FY18 is the Army's most ambitious recruiting year in its history as the force rebounds from the drawdown that ended in December 2016. There are concerns as to whether the pressure to meet such a mission will lead to lower standards, to which the Command Sergeant Major of the Army, Daniel Dailey, replied, "Numbers are important, end strength is important, but quality and standards are paramount, and they will not be violated."[39] As the Army population grows, it is important to understand its disposition in order to provide relevant religious support to the entire population. According to the available demographic data, several categories help towards this end. The categories are as follows: officer to enlisted ration, race, marital status, and age.

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[38] HQDA Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, "Army Demographics: FY17 Army Profile."

[39] C. Todd Lopes, "Army Chief: No Reduction of Standards to Meet Recruiting Goals," Department of Defense, 16 November 2017, accessed 18 March 2018, https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/ Article/1374213/army-chief-no-reduction-of-standards-to-Meet-recruiting-goals/.

The first is the officer to enlisted ratio. Of the 471, 271 soldiers on active duty 80.4 percent serve in the enlisted ranks with almost half, 44.6 percent, of the Army serving in the ranks of E-4 and below. Officers compose the remaining 19.6 percent of the active duty force which includes warrant officers who make up 3.1 percent. The largest group of officers are by far captains who make up 6.1 percent of the force. Chaplains provide religious support to soldiers regardless of their rank, but the ratio between officers and enlisted soldiers helps to understand dynamics, experience, and education level of the force.

Another important category to consider is race. The Millennial generation is the most racially diverse generation to date, and according to the United States Census Bureau, 44.2 percent of its population belongs to a minority group. The same study shows the Millennials will lose that title to Generation Z because 50.2 percent of its population belongs to a minority ethnic or racial group.[40] In FY 16, 43 percent of the Army's force was considered an ethnic minority with the racial breakdown of 57 percent White, 21 percent Black, 14 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian, and 3 percent listed as other. The Army demographic is within one percentage point of the Millennial Generation. The growing diversity in the nation and the Army has religious support implications we will examine later in this chapter.

The next category is marital status. A slight majority of the Army is married with 57 percent falling in this category. Additionally, 37.8 percent have never been married,

[40] United States Census Bureau, "Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse," Census Bureau Reports, 25 June 2015, accessed 18 February 2018, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-113.html.

and 5.2 percent are divorced. The average age of married soldiers is 32.3 years old (30.8 enlisted and 37.2 officers) which is slightly later than the 2015 Census average of 29.2 years. Religious support is for both soldiers and their family members and this will be addressed later in this chapter exploring the view that Millennials and Generation Z have of family. The age of marriage also helps to compare the demographics to see if one population (civilian or military) is pushing life choices off to a later age, which may correlate to decisions about religion.

The last category and the one most pertinent to this study is age. The DoD *Profile of the Military Community* and the Army G-1 data break age down into different groups. The *Profile of the Military Community* reports the largest age demographic in the Army is the 25 and under group which makes up 42% of the force, followed by the 26 to 30 group which makes up 20.5 percent. The Army G-1 data break the groups up into under 20, 20-29, 30-39, and 40 and over. The under 20 years of age category only accounts for 9 percent of the enlisted population. The largest age group looking over both studies is the 20 to 30-year-olds which is 60.2 percent of the active duty force. The average age of an enlisted soldier is 27.1, and the average age of an officer is 34.9. This information is important to this study for two reasons.

The first is that it highlights one of the challenges to provide religious support to 20 to 30-year-old soldiers and that is the age disparity between this demographic and chaplains. There 1438 chaplains on active duty. The average age of all chaplains on active duty is 46.2 and the average age of new accessions chaplains coming into the

Army 36.5.[41] The other point of significance of the age demographic is that it allows the researcher to understand the unique religious needs and views of a specific group that will have the most substantial impact in the present force and for years to come as the junior leaders in the 20 to 30-year-old group progress into more senior leadership positions. This age demographic consists of two distinct generational cohorts that provide a helpful lens to understand their religious views and needs.

Introduction to the Generations

Generational cohorts, as noted earlier are not an exact science, researchers have differing opinions on the years that define the individual cohorts and how to frame the trends represented within the research. The value of generational studies is that they provide, as Gene Twenge notes, "a broad description of cultural influences, not a rigid definition of a set of people."[42] Pew Center researcher Paul Taylor writes, it is a lens "to explore the many ways America is changing."[43] This is especially important in considering differences and similarities between the Millennials and Generation Z. One of the most important works early in the Millennial research was *Millennials Rising* by Howe and Strauss. Based on their work studying generations represented in their books

[41] Statistics were sourced from CH (LTC) Brad Lewis, Army Human Resources Command, Office of the Army Chief of Chaplains on 12 March 2018 and CH (MAJ) Dave Dice, Accessions Officer, Office of the Chief of Chaplains on 09 April 2017 by e-mail.

[42] Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable than Ever Before* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 6.

[43] Paul Taylor, *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 98, Kindle.

Generations, the *13th Generation*, and *The Turning Point*, they present a very hopeful case for a generation that is "more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse," than any in American history.[44] They argue that the Millennials will be a "hero Generation," much like the Greatest Generation, who will usher in the future that "is what America is destined to become."[45]

Since *Millennials Rising* was published thousands of studies have followed and the characteristics researchers tend to agree on that describe Millennials are optimistic, idealistic, future-focused, inclusive and collaborative. Although the literature on Generation Z is in its infancy compared to that of the Millennials, the trends that are emerging are that they are cautious, realistic, private, and competitive. Bruce Tulgan, in Meet Generation Z: The second Generation in the giant "Millennial" cohort," contends that Generation Z is a subset of the Millennials Generation.[46] While this is helpful to accent the continuity and similarities between the two generations, others argue the gap is too large. This tension is reflected in the findings of the Sparks and Honey study, "Generation Z 2025: The Final Generation," "Gen Zers are the opposites or extreme versions of Millennials."[47] The Barna Research Group concludes in their study, *Gen Z*,

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[44] Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 4.

[45] Ibid., 366.

[46] Bruce Tulgan. *Meet Generation Z: The Second Generation within the Giant 'Millennial' Cohort* (New Haven: Rainmaker Thinking, 2013), 2.

[47] Sparks and Honey Culture Forecast, "Gen Z 2025: The Final Generation," 2016, 2, accessed 22 February 2018, https://reports.sparksandhoney.com/campaign/generation-z-2025-the-final-generation.

that "Gen Z teens are not just mini-Millennials."[48] The primary influences responsible for the substantial differences between the Generations are 9/11 and the ensuing Global War on Terrorism, the Great Recession of 2008, and technology.

Both generational cohorts are shaped by these things, but in immensely different ways because of the time they experienced them. Alex Williams in the New York Times article, "Move Over Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z," captures this point well, he writes that Millennials "were raised during the boom times and relative peace of the 1990s, only to see their sunny world dashed by the Sept. 11 attacks and two economic crashes, in 2000 and 2008. Theirs is a story of innocence lost."[49] This story is very different from that of Generation Z who, "had their eyes open from the beginning, coming along in the aftermath of those cataclysms in the era of the war on terror and the Great Recession."[50] Generation Z has yet to see the brighter side of life and because of this, "they are deeply worried about the present."[51] These cultural influences are behind the differences in the two generations' attitudes on work, differing views on the importance of college, success, political, and religious views. The influence that technology has exerted on the two generations is just as powerful.

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[48] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation*, 10.

[49] Alex Williams, "Move Over, Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z," *The New York Times,* 2015, accessed 12 February 2018, https://www.nytimes.com /2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-Generation-z.html, 18.

[50] Ibid.

[51] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 40.

John Palfrey, in *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*, depicts the differences between the generations with his categories: Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives. Digital Immigrants are those who "learned to use e-mail and social networks late in life" while the Digital Natives are those who "only know a world that is digital."[52] While the later Millennials were quicker to declare their digital citizenship than those born in the 1980's, Generation Z "grew up with cell phones, had an Instagram page before they started high school, and do not remember a time before the Internet."[53] James White argues, "The speed by which this technological revolution has taken place is stunning and makes it difficult for older generations to realize the radically different world into which Generation Z has been born."[54] Along these lines, the authors of the Sparks & Honey report suggest that at the rate things are changing in our culture the current Generation could be the last distinguishable cohort, "the very speed of culture will compress the 15-year Generation into a .zip file of a few years, months, or moments."[55]

Understanding the major cultural influences that have shaped these two generations is very important on a number fronts, the one that is of interest to this study is

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[52] John Gorham Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 4.

[53] Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood—and What That Means for the Rest of Us* (New York: Atria Books, 2017), 62, Kindle.

[54] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 42.

[55] Sparks and Honey Culture Forecast, "Gen Z 2025: The Final Generation," 5.

the Millennial and Generation Z outlook on religion. In order to gain a more precise picture this research focuses on the on these two generational cohort's views of themselves (and subsequently the world), diversity and inclusivity, family, and interaction with technology. The first major area in which to discover more about the formation on the two generations' views of religion is their view of themselves.

Individualism

Joel Stein's article, "Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation," highlights the trait and controversy that has branded the Millennial Generation—self-importance. He begins his article stating, "I am about to do what old people have done throughout history: call those younger than me lazy, entitled, selfish and shallow. But I have studies! I have statistics! I have quotes from respected academics! Unlike my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, I have proof."[56] While Stein concludes his article arguing the self-focus of Millennials could be one of their greatest strengths to shape the world stating, "I choose to believe in children. God knows they do,"[57] he highlights the tension that exists between generations on how to view and respond to this aspect of Millennials. This characteristic is not unique to Millennial; it is also shared by Generation Z.

The most prolific researcher and writer on this aspect of the Millennials is the San Diego State professor of psychology, Jean Twenge. The titles of her *Generation Me* and *The Narcissism Epidemic* reveal what she suggests is the overarching characteristic of the

[56] Joel Stein, "Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation," *Time*, May 2013, accessed 17 February 2018, http://time.com/247/millennials-the-Me-Me-Me-Generation/.

[57] Ibid.

Millennials. Twenge, based on data from over 11 million responses, paints a picture of a group that is "self-important" and because of that they have high expectations of what the world should provide for them, "but their high expectations, combined with an increasingly competitive world, have led to a darker flip side, in which they blame other people for their problems and sink into anxiety and depression."[58] Twenge's conclusion on the Millennials view of themselves is in contrast to Stein and most notably Howe and Strauss optimistic views. Millennials Rising announced that the Millennials would be the "Next Great Generation," they would be a cohort of heroes resembling those who filled the streets of America in victory parades at the end of World War II. Twenge picks up on a striking difference between the two generations, "When the World War II Generation was growing up in the 1920's, no one was calling them the Greatest Generation and telling them they were the best kids ever."[59] Twenge concludes Generation Me with a call for parents and institutions to "abandon the obsession with self-esteem," for schools to provide young people with better counselors to help shape expectations, and for companies and the government to offer better health and child care.[60]

Twenge's research findings on the Millennials are in line with the public perception. According to a Reason-Rupe public opinion survey conducted in August 2014, 71 percent of participants responded that the term selfish describes the 18-29-year-

[58] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 9.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 290-299.

old demographic (Millennials).[61] However, Millennials generally do not appreciate the labels of selfish, entitled and narcissistic. The labels placed on Millennials has led to a growing body of research conducted and presented by Millennials themselves. Crystal Kadakia's primary focus in her work, *Millennial Myths*, is to remove, "the disconnect between the characteristics assumed of the Millennial Generation and the reality experienced by actual Millennials."[62] In a TED Talk given by Kadakia, she addresses this idea of self-importance with a distinctive Millennial voice telling the audience, "we don't want to work for you, we want to work for ourselves, and we don't define success by things like time or money, we define it through YOLO experiences."[63] She goes on to say YOLO experiences "mean we don't want to waste our time doing things we don't enjoy, because in today's world with today's tools; we don't have to. We have infinite options to obtain our goals." YOLO, is an acronym for the words "You Only Live Once," a term popularized by Canadian rap artist Drake in his 2011 song, "The Motto"[64] and embraced by many in both the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts.

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[61] Emily Ekins, "65percent of Americans Say Millennials Are "Entitled," 58 percent of Millennials Agree," Reason-Roupe Poll, 19 August 2014, accessed 17 February 2018, https://reason.com/poll/2014/08/19/65-of-americans-say-millennials-are-enti.

[62] Kadakia, *The Millennial Myth*, 4.

[63] Crystal Kadakia, "Corporate Fail: Millennials & Gen Z Entrepreneurial," YouTube, 16 July 2015, accessed 12 April 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VkVz1lVciE.

[64] This term has become so widely used that it was added to the Oxford Online Dictionary, as "You only live once (expressing the view that one should make the most of the present moment without worrying about the future, and often used as a rationale for impulsive or reckless behavior)." Oxford Living Dictionaries, "YOLO," accessed 10 May 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/yolo.

YOLO seems to be the natural outcome of the advice both generations were inculcated with since they were young: "just be yourself," "be true to yourself," don't worry about what anyone else thinks, do what you feel is right," and "follow your dreams and pursue happiness above all else." Because of this, Twenge argues that they are less likely to follow existing cultural and institutional rules and norms and are instead driven "by individual needs and desires."[65] She goes on to point out many of the changes this has caused in society "are not clearly good or clearly bad, but they do indicate a strong shift towards individualism."[66]

This individualism is also a defining part of Generation Z. In the Barna Research Group study, *Gen Z*, they report that the "the worldview (and, in turn, their moral code) is highly inclusive and individualistic" which is tied to their desire "to create 'safe space' where each person can be herself or himself without feeling judged or threatened."[67] Researchers, like Anjali Singh, believe that individualism will only increase with Generation Z. Singh argues, "As a result of shrinking family sizes, attention, affection and money being lavished on this young Generation like none before. There are early indications of a self-centered individualism among Gen Z that eclipse anything we have seen in Gen Y [Millennials]. It should be no great surprise when concepts such as compromise, team playing, and sharing are seen as foreign to Gen Z."[68]

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[65] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 24.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 12.

[68] Anjali Singh, "Challenges and Issues of Generation Z," *Journal of Business and Management* 16, no. 7 (2014): 60.

The individualism that characterizes the Millennials and Generation Z is very evident in every sphere of life. In*, The Trophy Kids Grow Up*, Roger Alsup, along with most researchers on Millennials, observes it in the workplace, "What millennials want most is control over their lives . . . Although millennials need structure and clear directions for their projects and other assignments, they want to be able to perform work where they like and when they like."[69] Bruce Tulgan writes that Millennials, "have very high expectations, first for themselves, but also for their employers."[70] The demand they place on employers and others in society is what often provokes the label "entitled." This is the same outlook that shapes many of their religious beliefs. Before we turn our attention to religion, it is important to consider the philosophical underpinnings of the shift towards individualism.

In the *Benedict Option*, Rod Dreher surveys the significant people and events of the last Millenia to track the roots of the current thinking about the self and religion. He suggests that in centuries past the Christian faith held Western society together. He says that now the "loss of the Christian religion is why the West has been fragmenting for some time now, a process that is accelerating."[71] He links the current trends to five landmark events that transpired over the course of seven centuries: the "loss of belief in the integral connection between God and Creation . . . [or] transcendent reality and

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[69] Ron Alsop, *The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking Up the Workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 166.

[70] Bruce Tulgan, *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation* (Hoboken: Y. John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 10.

[71] Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 22.

material reality" in the fourteenth century, "the collapse of religious unity and authority" that was a result of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Enlightenment, "which displaced the Christian religion with the cult of Reason . . . the growth of capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" which were the product of the Industrial Revolution, and lastly, the Sexual Revolution that began in the 1960's and continues to this day.[72] These landmark events, and the many people who contributed to them have brought us to "the end point of modernity: the autonomous, freely choosing individual, finding meaning in no one but himself."[73] For Dreher, this is the prevailing mindset in post-Christian America and, he is in good company with his description of the current mindset.

In his 1992 work, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Charles Taylor's description of the cultural mindset is as timely as it has ever been. He writes:

> Everyone has a right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment. What this consists of, each must, in the last instance, determine for him or herself. No one else can or should try to dictate its content.[74]

The authors of *Habits of the Heart* label this phenomenon as "expressive individualism" and note that "Its Genius is that it enables an individual to think of his commitments—from marriage to work to social and religious involvement—as enhancements of the

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[72] Dreher, *The Benedict Option*, 22.

[73] Ibid., 44.

[74] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 14.

sense of individual well-being rather than as moral imperatives."[75] Expressive individualism's partners in shaping the spirit of the age are the postmodern epistemology and secularism.

Postmodernism is "a comprehensive philosophical and cultural movement" that is a reaction against many of the perceived failures of modernism and "it mounts powerful arguments against all of the essential elements of modernism."[76] Timothy Phillips and Dennis Okholm, in their book *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, capture both the heart of this reaction and the movement's pioneers:

> Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud not only demonstrated, each in their own way, the illusoriness of modernity's claim to a universally accessible and defensible ground for knowledge; more importantly, they also demonstrated the way in which these privileged claims to reality have been employed oppressively. For modernity beget colonialism, Nazi atrocities and urban decay, not its utopian goal, unless one mistakes the artificial construct of Disneyland for reality.[77]

One of the characteristics of this reaction is the rejection of the Enlightenment's pursuit of objective and universal truths. As Stanley Grenz articulates in *A Primer on Postmodernism*, "postmodern truth is relative to the community in which a person participates. And since there are many human communities, there are necessarily many

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[75] Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2007), 47.

[76] Stephen R.C. Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (Loves Park: Ockham's Razor, 2011), 794, Kindle.

[77] Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, eds., *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 1995), 14.

different truths."[78] Grenz goes on to say that, "Most postmoderns make the leap of believing this plurality of truths can exist alongside one another. The postmodern consciousness, therefore, entails a radical kind of relativism and pluralism."[79]

David Wells in *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World*, distills the influence of the relationship between expressive individualism and postmodernism's relativism, "This emancipation from all authorities external to ourselves gives us the freedom to fashion our lives the way we want and develop our beliefs the way we want. Thoughts about a truth that might be objective to us have become quite remote."[80]

The third influence in American culture leading to an increase in individualism is secularism. As Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests, "Whatever is meant by secularization, few will dispute that in this century the public culture has become less religious."[81] Charles Taylor, in *A Secular Age,* begins identifying three ways in which to view secularity: institutions and practices, public spaces, and beliefs. The first is the separation of political and religious structures and institutions. This is different from times past, "whereas the political organization of all pre-modern societies was in some way connected to, based

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[78] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 14.

[79] Ibid.

[80] David F. Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 927-928, Kindle.

[81] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "How to Think about Secularism," *First Things*, June 1996, accessed 17 April 2018, https://www.firstthings.com/article/1996/06/002-how-to-think-about-secularism.

on, guaranteed by some faith in, or adherence to God, or some notion of ultimate reality, the modern Western state is free from this connection."[82] Religion, in the current American context, is seen as a private matter and one's religious preference is separated from one's political views.

The second way Taylor looks at secularism is in public places. He notes, "These have been allegedly emptied of God, or any reference to ultimate reality."[83] Secularism now expands beyond physical locations to every sphere of life and vastly different to premodern times, "the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don't refer us to God or to any religious beliefs." Taylor continues this line of thought writing, "secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain vestigial pubic reference to God in public space."[84] The third area, which he spends the preponderance of his book working through, is belief. Taylors goal is to understand the dramatic changes in belief in our culture. He states, "the change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer is one human possibility among others."[85] Taylor goes on to say that "Secularism in this sense is a matter of the

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[82] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), 1.

[83] Ibid., 2.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 3.

whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual, or religious experience and search take place."[86]

America was one of the first societies to advocate for the separation of Church and state, however, this separation did not in any way discourage or prevent people from practicing their faith. America has a very strong religious history and was even considered a Christian nation up through the turn of the century. As the nation grows more secular the tensions rise between the Church and the state. Jonathan Leeman, in *How the Nations Rage*, captures the conflict between these two entities:

> Church and state are distinct God-given institutions, and they must remain separate. But every church is political all the way down and all the way through. And every government is a deeply religious battleground of gods. No one separates their politics and religion—not the Christian, not the agnostic, not the secular progressive. It's impossible.[87]

James White, working with the data from the Pew's "American Religious Landscape Study," posits that 25 percent of Americans are secularists and 25 percent are believers. The 50 percent in the center make up what he describes as "the squishy middle . . . [which] is squishy because those in its midst tend to be soft and pliable in terms of being shaped. Their individual beliefs have little definition and even less conviction."[88] This squishy middle is easily influenced by the prevailing cultural norms and trends. Historically they have identified with Christian beliefs, but that has changed. White argues, "Now virtually everything in culture is moving the squishy center to the

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[86] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

[87] Jonathan Leeman, *How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2018), 13.

[88] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 30.

secularists' side. Today, if asked about their religion, people in the center say they're nothing, because that is the cultural thing to say. And they don't go to church because that's also the cultural thing not to do."[89] The growing influence of secularism is redefining the religious view of many Americans.

Expressive individualism, the postmodern epistemology, and the rise of secularism are the three primary influences that have strengthened the individualism of the Millennials and Generation Z, and their views on religion. The fingerprints of these ideas and movements can be seen everywhere.

The first way this manifest is the anti-institutional mindset that is part and parcel of the postmodern movement and individualism that values personal desires over institutional rules. Robert Putnam commented on this trend as the last century ended in his book, Bowling Alone, "without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century."[90] This pulling apart has resulted in the decline in American participation in religious organizations, as well as, many other social and civic organizations. Gene Twenge comments on Millennial church attendance that, "Young people would rather do their own thing than join a group."[91] Thom Rainer found the same to be true in his research, "the Millennial Generation is largely anti-institutional in its attitude. An amazing 70 percent of these young adults agree that American churches are irrelevant today. This skepticism is not limited to non-

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[89] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 31.

[90] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 27.

[91] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 47.

Christians. Even Millennial Christians express doubts about the effectiveness of local churches around our nation."[92] The other way in which we see individualism shaping the religious attitudes of the 20 to 30-year-old crowd has more to do with the content of religion than the institutional.

Both Millennials and Generation Z are perfectly comfortable custom tailoring religious beliefs that fit their individual needs. Derek Rishmawy, in a chapter written in *Our Secular Age,* writes, "There are no more singular, monolithic, obvious takes on the world. Belief has become less of an on/off switch, and more of a series of dials you can set in various degrees (post-secular, humanist, Romantic, libertarian, eco-feminist, and on and on)."[93] As these dials have turned, we have seen the rise of two religious groups unique to these cohorts: Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD) and the Religious Nones.

Christian Smith and his colleagues coined the term Moral Therapeutic Deism to describe what they discovered in their research. In Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers, they provide the analysis and interpretation of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NYSR) which focused on the religious beliefs of 13-17-year-olds. This study was followed-up on the same participants four years later resulting in, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. In this study, they compare how this group's religious beliefs had developed as they moved

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[92] Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 45.

[93] Derek Rishmawy, "Millennial Belief in the Super-Nova," in Collin Hansen, Derek Rishmawy, Alastair Roberts, John Starke, Carl Trueman, Bruce Riley Ashford, Mike Cosper, Bob Cutillo, Greg Forster, Michael Horton, Brett McCracken, Jen Pollock Michel, and Alan Noble, *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor* (Deerfield: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 51.

into adulthood as this group was now 18 to 23-years-old. Based on the data analyzed in Soul Searching Smith writes, the "de facto religion of the majority of American teenagers is not any of the many historic religious faiths one usually thinks of when one thinks of religion, but is a new, de facto religion: moralistic therapeutic deism."[94] MTD has five fundamental beliefs that Smith defines as:

> First, a God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth. Second, God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most religions. Third, the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. Fourth, God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. Fifth, good people go to heaven when they die.[95]

In the follow-up study, *Souls in Transition*, the findings show "that MTD is still alive and well among 18 to 23-year-old American youth."[96]

According to Smith and his colleagues' interpretation of the data, individualism is the driving force behind emerging adult's beliefs on religion, "What or who gets to determine what is true or good or right in or about religion for most emerging adults is each person for himself or herself . . . Each individual knows best for himself or herself what ideas or help he or she might need."[97] This mindset has also led to one of the fastest growing religious groups in our current society, the Religious Nones.

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[94] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 154.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., 155.

[97] Ibid., 156.

The term "Nones" refers to the preference of a growing number of Americans who select "none of the above," on religious affiliation surveys, or in the military the select "no religious preference." Elizabeth Drescher, in *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones*, defines this group as "people who do not identify as belonging to a specific group, who are not affiliated with one institutional religion or another."[98] According to a Pew Center study, 35 percent of Americans between the age of 18 and 29 identify as religiously unaffiliated.[99] James White, who has done extensive research on the Nones in his books *The Rise of the Nones* and *Meet Generation Z*, comments that in this growing group, "there is no shift from Christianity to another religious brand. Instead, there is simply an abandonment of a defined religion altogether."[100] White's distinction is important because the abandonment of defined religion does not mean they are in no way religious. Drescher says of this phenomenon "the None-ing of America is not a turn away from religion, but rather the emergence of multiple, sometimes overlapping, sometimes diverging narratives of religious and spiritual experience that move through more diverse conceptions of what it means to be human and to be citizens of the nation and the world."[101] The Nones are similar to those

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[98] Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

[99] Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow," The Pew Research Center, 12 May 2015, accessed 10 May 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape, 4.

[100] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 24.

[101] Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion*, 251.

whose views are aligned with MTD because they are shaped much more by individualistic preferences than by traditionally defined norms and doctrines. The individualism that is central to the Millennials and Generation Z mindset has a direct impact on the way they view and interact with religious institutions and the truths they espouse.

Diversity and Inclusivity

While individualism exerts the most influence on their views, it is not the only factor. The second significant influence is diversity and the inclusion shared by both generations. As noted in the Army demographics previously, the Census Bureau found that 48 percent of those that comprise Generation Z are part of a minority race or ethnic group (a group other than non-Hispanic, single-race white).[102] The next most-diverse generation is the Millennials, 44 percent of whom are part of a minority race or ethnic group. One of the most telling findings in the study showed that 50.2 percent of children younger than 5 years old belong to a minority race or ethnic group.[103] The growing ethnic and racial diversity in America will continue with the youngest members of Generation Z and whatever generational cohort follows them.

This diversity is not just descriptive of the nation at large but is also reflected in the personal relationships of the two cohorts. In the Generation Nation Study, where 747 participants were presented the statement "I have one or more friends who are of a

[102] United States Census Bureau, "Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse."

[103] Ibid.

different race than me," here are the percentages of respondents who agreed, by Generation: 81 percent of Generation Z, 69 percent of Millennials, 67 percent of Gen X, and 71 percent of Baby Boomers.[104] This diversity is also reflected in in multi-racial marriages. Paul Taylor, analyzing the Pew Research data, writes, "in today's America, our old racial labels are having trouble keeping up with our new weddings. About a quarter of recent Hispanic and Asian newlyweds married someone of a different race or ethnicity, so did 1 in 5 black and 1 in 10 white newlyweds."[105] Both cohorts embrace diversity among races and ethnic groups, but the area that has caused tension in relation to religion is their embrace of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) movement.

The twenty-first century has witnessed an enormous shift in public opinion of gays and lesbians. Since the turn of the century, "those supporting gay and lesbian rights have become the majority: 50% of Americans supported same-sex in 2013, up from 27% in 1996."[106] Twenge considers this to be a Generational "sea change" since 66 percent of people born after 1981 (i.e. Millennials) supported same sex marriage in 2013.[107] There is a great continuity between the two cohorts on this issue. As James White notes, "The accepting nature of Generation Z leads to strong support for such things as gay marriage

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[104] Libby Kane, "Meet Generation Z, The 'Millennials on Steroids' Who Could Lead the Charge for Change in the US," *Business Insider*, 4 December 2017, accessed 5 March 2018, http://www.businessinsider.com/generation-z-profile-2017-9.

[105] Taylor, *The Next America*, 790, Kindle.

[106] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 255.

[107] Ibid.

and transgender rights."[108] In many ways, Generation Z has surpassed the Millennials embrace of LGBT issues. Twenge suggests that for them, "LGBT issues are tightly linked to their innate individualism."[109] White argues that this individualism has led to a generation that is "sexually and relationally amorphous," citing popular figures such as Miley Cyrus who said that she doesn't "relate to being a boy or girl, and I don't have to have my partner relate to boy or girl." [110]

One reason for the increasingly sexually fluid views of Generation Z has to do with their experience compared to that of the Millennials. Commenting in this Twenge writes:

> iGen teens grew up watching *Glee*, which featured several gay, lesbian, and transgendered characters, and they saw numerous celebrities come out. Compare that to . . . Millennials who were adolescents when President Bill Clinton signed the bill outlawing same-sex marriage and Ellen DeGeneres found her sitcom abruptly canceled after she came out. In contrast, iGeners will barely recall a time before same-sex marriage was legal, and they will remember Ellen as a popular talk show host married to the actress from *Arrested Development*, which they watch on Netflix.[111]

While both Generations are inclusive of the LGBT movement, not everyone is on board. Twenge found that "one in four question same-sex marriage," she goes to say that, "These young people often struggle to reconcile their iGen upbringing with their religion's viewpoint that homosexuality is wrong."[112] This stuggle is very real for many

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[108] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 46.

[109] Twenge*, iGen*, 3277, Kindle.

[110] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 47.

[111] Twenge, *iGen*, 3249, Kindle.

[112] Ibid., 3249, Kindle.

people and religious institutions across our nation as this is a polarizing issue.

In David Kinnaman's *UnChristian*, he quotes a research participant that showcases this struggle, "Many people in the gay community don't seem to have an issue with Jesus, but rather those claiming to represent him today. It is very much an 'us-versus-them mentality, as if a war had been declared. Of course, each side thinks the other fired the opening shot."[113] Jean Twenge also picks up on this, "many Millennials and iGen'ers distrust religion because they believe it promotes antigay attitudes."[114] One of the reasons for the war-like interactions on either side of this issue is our lack of true pluralism in America.

Tim Keller, in a discussion with Jonathan Haidt entitled "The Closing of the Modern Mind," makes a compelling case that though we claim to be a pluralistic society we have never actually been one. Keller argues that the moral framework of mainline Protestant denominations was the predominate moral outlook in the nation and those groups with non-traditional morality were looked on with disdain (secularists, gays, Muslims, etc.). In the 60s and 70s as the mainline denominations declined, the predominantly white evangelical church moved into the dominant position, but their attitude towards those of other religious and differing views of morality were unfortunately more of the same. Keller contends that over the last ten years the secular-cultural-left is has ascended to the dominate group and they are acting consistently with

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[113] David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 89.

[114] Twenge, *iGen*, 1972-1973, Kindle.

the cultural elites in the past towards those with differing viewpoints. Because of this Keller says, "we have never had, and we don't seem about to have, a truly pluralistic perspective diverse society in which people with completely different moral visions can speak respectfully to each other, believe and practice and express their particular understanding of things without being ostracized and marginalized."[115]

Twenge also sees this as the dark side of tolerance which "begins with good intentions of including everyone and not offending anyone but ends (at best) with a reluctance to explore deep issues and (at worst) with careers destroyed by a comment someone found offensive and the silencing of all alternative viewpoints."[116] The other phenomena that makes it difficult to work through cultural differences is very unique Generation Z.

In the Barna Groups study, *Gen Z*, they found the Generation stood out "as the most racially, religiously and sexually diverse Generation in American history, Gen Z expects people to have different beliefs and experiences, and they seem to have a greater appreciation for social inclusiveness compared to Generations before them."[117] Generation Z's inclusiveness can be a great burden for them to carry. There is a strong aversion to anything that might make people feel bad or come across as judgmental. Two examples of this are "trigger warning (written notices that content could provoke negative emotions such as fear or anger) and safe spaces (designated areas where such content is

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[115] Jonathan Haidt and Tim Keller, "The Closing of the Modern Mind," YouTube Video, 1:25:26, 1 March 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFD5odFv36k.

[116] Twenge, *iGen*, 3567, Kindle.

[117] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 12.

banned, either online or in a physical space)."[118] While safe spaces and trigger warning provide certain protections for some, they come at a great cost. In, "How Trigger Warnings Silence Religious Students," Alan Levinovitz suggests:

> There is a very real danger that these efforts [trigger warnings and safe spaces] will become overzealous and render opposing opinions taboo. Instead of dialogues in which everyone is fairly represented, campus conversations about race, gender, and religion will devolve into monologues about the virtues of tolerance and diversity. Even though academic debate takes place in a community, it is also combat. Combat can hurt. It is literally offensive. Without offense there is no antagonistic dialogue, no competitive marketplace, and no chance to change your mind.[119]

This makes it increasingly difficult for members of Generation Z to discuss difficult and dividing issues and for those outside of the cohort to discuss issues such as religion with them.

The diversity and inclusivity of both Generations help those outside to better understand why they would support religious diversity and at the same time have tension with certain religious beliefs. It also highlights the difficulty of engaging in meaningful, honest conversation about religion.

Family

Thirdly, Millennials and Generation Z are influenced greatly by family. Thom Rainer notes that, "Many of today's families are complicated and, sadly disconnected."[120]

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[118] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute*, Gen Z*, 27.

[119] Alan Levinovitz, "How Trigger Warnings Silence Religious Students," *The Atlantic*, 30 August 2016, accessed 1 March 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/silencing-religious-students-on-campus/497951/.

[120] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 564, Kindle.

According to Taylor, working with the Pew Center research, "a teenager has less chance of being raised by both biological parents in America than anywhere else in the world."[121] Despite these trends family is very important to Millennials who "want a connected family, no matter how that family may look." A Barna Research study shows that when asked, "My, fill in the blank, is very important to me," and given several options to choose from 40 percent of Millennials chose family which was the highest in any category. In contrast, only 34 percent of Generation Z chose family whereas the highest category for them at 43 percent was professional/educational achievement. In order to understand the differences in family perception between the two cohorts it is important to understand the parent's relationship to their children and then the way in which the children, even in their emerging adult years, view the role of their parents and family. To this end, Seemiller and Grace make a helpful distinction between the two groups of parents in *Generation Z Goes to College*. The Millennial's parents have earned the title of "helicopter parent" by continually hovering over their children, whereas the role of the parent of Generation Z is that of co-pilot.[122]

In reaction to the latch-key-kids of Generation X that had very little parental supervision, the Millennials, for the most part, were raised by helicopter parents. These parents in contrast have been closely involved in every facet of their children's lives encouraging, supporting, and protecting them at every turn. Bruce Tulgan, in *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy*, describing the parental relationship says, "Millennials have

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[121] Taylor, *The Next America*, 723, Kindle.

[122] Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 194.

been respected, nurtured, scheduled, measured, discussed, diagnosed, medicated, programmed, accommodated, included, awarded, and rewarded as long as they can remember. Their parents determined to create a Generation of superchildren."[123] The hovering doesn't stop in high school but continues into college as parents of Millennials are "often highly involved in decision making for their students, even sometimes in lieu of the students themselves, and have been known to sign their students up for clubs and even pick out their classes."[124] This is also a common trend as they enter the workplace. Roger Alsup, in the *Trophy Kids Grow Up*, says the reality is, "helicopter parents are whirring into the workplace. They could show up at any time, and they're butting into everything from job interviews to performance evaluations."[125] As the level of parental involvement has changed, so has the level of authority they exert in the family.

Jean Twenge notes that "parental authority also isn't what it used to be," because of the trend for parents "love and guide their children as a trusted friend."[126] As a result of this dynamic, children are empowered at an earlier age to make decisions for themselves and for the family. Twenge says, "The kids who chose their own outfits as preschoolers have grown into teenagers who help their parents choose which car to buy

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[123] Tulgan, *Not Everyone Gets A Trophy*, 8.

[124] Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College,* 194.

[125] Alsop, *The Trophy Kids Grow Up*, 75.

[126] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 37.

or even where to live."[127] While the rise in parental involvement and empowerment of parents has many benefits, it also has some negative side effects.

Joel Young, in "The Effects of 'Helicopter Parenting,'" conducted a study by having children assemble challenging puzzles while with their parents present. The study group consisted of children who suffer from anxiety and a control group who did not. Parents could assist their children but were not encouraged to do so. The findings of the study were, "the parents of children with social anxiety touched the puzzles significantly more often than other parents."[128] In the article he pulls in other research to show the correlation between overly involved parents and anxiety and depression in their children. Simon Sinek also draws this connection in an interview with Tom Bilyeu where he was asked, "What is the Millennial question?"[129] Sinek says that:

> misguided parenting strategies that continually told children how special they were, that they could have anything they wanted just because they wanted it and receiving participations medals not based at all on performance . . . has created a Generation growing up with lower self-esteem that doesn't have the coping mechanisms to deal with stress growing up in a world of instant gratification.[130]

It is a reaction to these side-effects that has encouraged the parents of Generation Z to take a different approach with their children.

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[127] Twenge, *Generation Me,* 38.

[128] Joel Young, "The Effects of 'Helicopter Parenting'," *Psychology Today*, 25 January 2017, accessed 12 February 2018, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/when-your-adult-child-breaks-your-heart/201701/the-effects-helicopter-parenting.

[129] Simon Sinek, "Simon Sinek on Millennials in the Workplace," YouTube, 29 October 2016, accessed 4 March 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hER0Qp6QJNU&t=709s.

[130] Ibid.

The parenting style of Generation Z is best described in the Barna Study, *Gen Z* , as "double-minded."[131] On one hand they are very involved and over-protective much like the parents of Millennials, but in other areas, possibly to avoid the "helicopter" label, they are underprotective. Barna leans on the findings of Hannah Rosen in her article, "The Overprotected Kid," who contributes the former to a preoccupation with parents on the safety of their children for which she argues, "has stripped childhood of independence, risk taking, and discovery—without making it much safer."[132] Generation Z, even if they go out with friends, are likely to have parents come along. Twenge, based on her studies, says "teens are not just less likely to go out without their parents; they are also less likely to be at home without their parents."[133] However, there are areas where many of these parents are not very protective.

James White contends that parents are underprotective in the areas that could matter most for their children, media consumption. He sees a great danger for a Generation with an increased amount of screen-time in "an environment in a day of sexting and Facebook, bullying and internet porn, cutting and hooking up. When children need to be protected as never before, they are met with a parenting culture that is less protective than at any time in recent history."[134] He goes on to argue that in many ways

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[131] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 34.

[132] Hanna Rosin, "The Overprotected Kid," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2014, accessed 24 March 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/ magazine/archive/2014/04/hey-parents-leave-those-kids-alone/358631/.

[133] Twenge, *iGen*, 486, Kindle.

[134] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 53.

this is forcing children to grow up prematurely. Heavily influenced by the work Neil Postman he writes, "having access to the previously hidden fruit of adult information, the child is expelled from the garden of childhood."[135] It is possible that the parents of Generation Z may err on one side or the other of protection. The real danger is if they are overinvolved in the wrong areas too detached in the areas that matter most.[136]

While there are similarities between the parenting styles of both generations, there are also some considerable differences. One commonality they share is that the close relationships both cohorts have with their parents has a direct impact on their religious views. One of the primary reasons that Twenge found the Millennials to be "the least religious Generation in American history," is because they are being raised by non-religious parents.[137] She cites that four times as many colleges students in 2010, compared to the early 1970s, said their mother had no religious affiliation.[138] White makes the same case for Generation Z based on the current trends. Both generations lean very heavily on their parents for advice and guidance and it naturally follows what is not important to the parents will likely not to be important to them.

This in conjunction with emerging adulthood, the prolongation of adolescence well into their 20s, means that they are not turning to religion during what has historically

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[135] White, *Meet Generation Z,* 54.

[136] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 35.

[137] Twenge, *Gen Me*, 43.

[138] Ibid., 43

been called the family building years, 18 to 24, where there was an increase in religious participation for the Boomers and Generation Z.[139]

Technology

These generations spoken of here are immensely affected by their view of self, diversity and inclusion, and family. Finally, the increase in technology has also influenced these two cohorts in their views on religion. Nicholas Carr in his book, *The Shallows*, contends that technology does not just change how people do things, it changes people. Clarifying Marshall McLuhan's thoughts on the relationship between content and the medium it is transmitted through he writes:

> in the long run a medium's content matters less than the medium itself in influencing how we think and act. As our window onto the world, and onto ourselves, a popular medium molds what we see and how we see it—and eventually, if we use it enough, it changes who we are, as individuals and as a society.[140]

Processing the changes in his own life that took place from the medium of the internet he writes:

> what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. Whether I'm online or not, my mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.

Howard Gardner and Katie Davis argue in their study, *The App Generation*, that "young people growing up in our time are not only immersed in apps: they've come to think of

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[139] Twenge, *iGen*, 1759, Kindle.

[140] Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 2.

the world as an ensemble of apps, to see their lives as a string of ordered apps, or perhaps, in many cases a single, extended cradle-to-grace app."[141] So what mediums are the Millennials and Generation Z using and how are they being shaped by them?

Thom and Jess Rainer, in *The Millennials*, place the Millennials in the "Early Adopters" category of the technology adoption life cycle. Early adopters are the first in line to try a new idea, process, or product. They are "young, educated and socially active."[142] Their embrace of technology has led to what Barry Wellman and Lee Rainie describe as a "new world of networked individualism [that] is oriented around looser, more fragmented networks that provide succor."[143] Networked individualism is juxtaposed with the traditional village model that is based on a strong central community. Because of the internet and mobile devices, Millennials can build social networks to meet their different needs whether it is finding someone to pet-sit or help with a project. One of the primary ways they construct or join these networks is using social media. It is no surprise that "more than 80% of Millennials create content through social networking sites [and] other social media."[144] Since 2008 the most popular platform for Millennials has been Facebook. They genuinely want connectedness, and this is evident in their

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[141] Howard Gardner and Katie Davis, *The App Generation: How Today's Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) 7.

[142] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 2707, Kindle.

[143] Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked: The New Social Operating System* (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 2012), 8.

[144] Taylor, *The Next America*, 3581, Kindle.

tendency to be very transparent and put it all out there, or as Taylor refers to it "overshare."[145]

Although Millennials look to social media for connectedness, the research shows that it may not deliver what it promises. Twenge comments on this, "Although several studies have found that social networking sites improve the perception of social connectedness, they seem to do little to increase deeper involvement or engender actual help."[146] She also notes a correlation between narcissism and social media. Twenge acknowledges that social media is not the cause of narcissism, which according to her research was on the rise before the popularity of social media, but "at least five studies have found a correlation between Narcissistic Personality Inventory scores and number of friends on Facebook—in other words, narcissists thrive on social network sites."[147] Technology and social media are powerful agents shaping Millennials in positive and negative ways. It is important to note that not all Millennials interact with technology the same way.

While "seventy-three percent of all Millennials stated their cell phone is vital to their lives," there is a difference between how younger and older Millennials use the devices. When asked, "In your personal communications (with family and friends), what form of communication do you use most frequently when you're not actually with the other person?" the older Millennials responded with 43% prefer phone and 28% text,

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[145] Taylor, *The Next America*, 3601, Kindle.

[146] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 105.

[147] Ibid., 104.

whereas, the younger Millennials responded with only 34% preferring phone and 47% text."[148] There is also a difference in social media participation. Rainer found that out of the 1200 people interviewed for his study more than 150 stated they did not use Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, or blogs. His suggests, "For a Generation so heavily involved in technology, this percentage may seem high. Some Millennials are making a conscious decision not to use social media."[149] While there are differences within the cohort itself, there are also differences between them and Generation Z.

Whereas the Millennials may not remember a time without computers in their lives, the same can be said of Generation Z's relationship to smartphones. The Barna Research Group's study, *Gen Z*, refers to this group as "Screenagers."[150] This is also reflected in Twenge's suggestion for the cohort name "iGen," because "according to a fall 2015 marketing survey, two out of three teens owned an iPhone, about as complete a market saturation as possible for a product."[151] The smartphone has become the symbol that represents this Generation. This can be seen by the amount of time spent online. To ascertain how much time this Generation spent online Twenge examined several national studies to come up with the answer:

> The short answer is: a lot. iGen high school seniors spent an average of 2¼ hours a day texting on their cell phones, about 2 hours a day on the Internet, 1½ hours a day on electronic gaming, and about a half hour on video chat in the most recent

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[148] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 2780, Kindle.

[149] Ibid., 2842, Kindle.

[150] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 12.

[151] Twenge, *iGen*, 62, Kindle.

> survey. That totals to six hours a day with new media—and that's just during their leisure time[152]

Twenge also breaks it down by category of time spent using different platforms. Of their screen time they spend 28 percent is spent on texting, 24 percent on the internet, 18 percent gaming, 24 percent watching TV, and 5 percent on video chat. Screen time consumes much of Generation Z's waking hours and even cuts into their sleeping ones, "Smartphone use is cutting into teens' sleeping patterns, with many getting less than seven hours a night. Many teens and young adults sleep with their phone and check social media just before they go to sleep, then reach for it the minute they wake in the morning."[153] They are spending more time on technology, but they approach it in different ways than the Millennials.

When it comes to social media, Generation Z has a different approach. They learned from the Millennials penchant to put it all out there for the world may have not been the best approach. This has led "them to gravitate less towards Facebook than anonymous platforms such as Snapchat, Secret, and Whisper."[154] Social media has led Generation Z, and many younger Millennials, to create their curated self. This is the reality they often spend a great amount of time and energy fashioning to brand themselves. Donna Frietas, in a Barna interviews, says "the goal for their social media presence seems to be about appearing happy at every turn—with all profiles that are attached to their real names. Appearing successful, appearing positive, never showing

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[152] Twenge, *iGen*, 768, Kindle.

[153] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15.

[154] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 44.

that you're vulnerable, never showing that you've failed at anything, never showing you're sad."[155]

The mark of success is determined by the amount of 'likes' a person receives on their latest post, which has different effects on those keeping count. One is the lack of autonomy, as Gardner and Davis found in their research, speaking of social media, "these technologies encourage youths to look outside themselves for reassurance, in matters both mundane and existential. Indeed, their thoughts don't seem real until confirmed by others."[156] Frietas, citing multiple studies, posits the constant portrayal of happiness actually leads to people being less happy. The other side-effect of the curated self is the competition it brings into social media. Frietas says "the sad thing is, they like social media when it helps them to stay connected with people. But at the same time, they feel they're competing with those same people."[157] The rise of the curated self, and the apps that encourage it, have created a difficult environment of Generation Z to grow up in and relate to others. One of Twenge's research participants captures this whole dynamic very well:

> When you go on social media you post a status or you post a picture and all of a sudden you get all those likes, you get all those affirmations from people, and it can be addictive because you have the constant pats on the back that, like, 'You're smart, you're funny, you're attractive,'" he says. But, he acknowledges, "I feel like it's also kind of hollow.[158]

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[155] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 22.

[156] Gardner and Davis, *The App Generation*, 85–86.

[157] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute*, Gen Z*, 22.

[158] Twenge, *iGen*, 855, Kindle.

Technology is powerfully shaping every Generation in our nation, but especially the Millennials and Generation Z.

The ability to communicate almost anywhere in the world, to stay connected with family and friends, to obtain information pertaining to any topic at the swipe of a finger or push of a button are all very positive features of today's technology. However, it comes with drawbacks, some that we might not understand for years to come. Nicholas Carr captures this well in the Epilogue of his book, *The Big Switch*, a comparison of the transformation that took place with the rise of electricity and today's digital technology. He writes that, "One of Man's greatest inventions was also one of his modest: the wick."[159] He says that the wick "tamed fire" and as a result it drew people in homes together around candles and lamps. He writes, "Families in the evening would gather around the flickering flame to chat about the day's events or otherwise pass time together."[160] As electricity came to homes it created autonomy, people no longer had to gather around the flame and technology inadvertently changed home life. Carr goes on to say, "We are still attracted to the light at the end of the wick. We light candles to set a romantic or calming mood, to mark a special occasion . . . but we can no longer know what it was like when fire was the source of all light."[161] Technology is altering so many facets of life in our current context, to include how the Millennials and Generation Z approach religion.

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[159] Nicholas Carr, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, from Edison to Google* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013) 231.

[160] Ibid., 232.

[161] Carr, *The Big Switch,* 231.

The first way we see this is in how the medium of the internet and smartphones are changing how we think, not just about religion, but about everything. Nicholas Carr makes the case that, "when we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning." He later concedes, " It's possible to think deeply while surfing the Net, just as it's possible to think shallowly while reading a book, but that's not the type of thinking the technology encourages and rewards."[162] Religion by its very nature forces us to think about deep and weighty matters which becomes increasingly difficult with distracted thinking. It is not just the distracted thinking but the amount of physical distractions that accompany the technology.

In his book *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, Tony Reinke makes the correlation between the constant bombardment of notifications and spirituality. "The smartphone is loaded with prompts, beeps, and allurements. Many of these stimuli (perhaps most of them) are not sinful, but they are pervasive. The more distracted we are digitally, the more displaced we become spiritually."[163] The distracted thinking and smartphone notifications make it difficult to conduct basic religious activities such as prayer, reading, and meditation. While some of these distractions are unintended, sometimes they are very welcomed. Reinke writes, "the human appetite for distraction is high in every age, because distractions give us easy escape from the silence and solitude

[162] Carr, *The Shallows*, 115-116.

[163] Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 51.

whereby we become acquainted with our finitude, our inescapable mortality, and the distance of God from all our desires, hopes, and pleasures."[164]

Technology has also a fostered a more diverse religious landscape. The internet and apps such as Skype or Facetime have made the world a much smaller place. People used to be strongly guided by the communities in which they lived. If a person in a community had values and ideas outside of the norms of the geographic community, they would often be suppressed. The trend of networked individualism is shaping and creating religious communities by bringing people together through digital means. Commenting on this James White notes how this happens, "Through a search engine like Google, you can find not only a community in support of whatever choice you would like to make but also a clear apologetic for making it—and if needed, the people and steps needed to pursue it."[165] White goes on to say that, "people who might otherwise feel isolated by the religious mores in their hometowns have access of people who believe otherwise."[166]

The final way we see technology changing the religious views and practices of the Millennials and Generation Z is the sheer amount of information and apps available to help them understand and practice religion. There is an app for everything from prayer guides, to Bible reading plans, religious music channels, Twitter feeds from religious leaders, and the list goes on. Jonathan Merritt, in his article "Why technology didn't (and won't) destroy the Church," posits that media such as pod casts, social media platforms,

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[164] Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*, 44-45.

[165] White*, Meet Generation Z*, 125.

[166] Ibid., 126.

blogs, and community prayer requests have provided religious leaders many ways to connect with their parishioners as well as reach new audiences. He writes, "Websites in particular have proven to be a powerful tool for churches and ministries. It increases their ability to collect charitable donations for critical community projects and has provided a low-pressure way to connect with potential converts."[167]

Technology exerts a strong influence in the lives of the Millennials and Generation Z spawning many challenges and benefits. While technology might cause more difficulty in the ability to think deeply about religion, because of technology society has more tools, aids, and encouragement to understand, practice, and connect with their religion, communities that believe similar things, and explore different religious beliefs and communities.

Civilian Approaches

Having examined the four main influences that have shaped the Millennials and Generation Z in their religious views, how then are civilian religious leaders and organizations responding to them? Religious leaders and communities have invested a tremendous amount of time and resources to keep the Millennials and Generation Z engaged in church, as well as, reach the unchurched. Thom Rainer, speaking specifically of the Millennials says, "The American church confronts two significant challenges as the Millennials become the dominant generation in our nation. The first challenge is to connect with the Christians who comprise this generation . . . On the other hand, they are

[167] Jonathan Merritt, "Why technology didn't (and won't) destroy the Church," Religion News Service, 27 February 2015, accessed 16 February 2018, https://religion news.com/2015/02/27/technology-hasnt-wont-destroy-church/.

also confronted with the challenge of reaching the larger group of Millennials, some 85 percent who are not Christians."[168] These are the exact same challenges Generation Z brings to the table: discipling and engaging the committed while reaching those who have little if any religious commitment or knowledge. The researcher will examine the current literature based on those two categories, reaching the unchurched and providing effective discipleship for Christians within the church, and finish with some approaches that encompass both by focusing on areas that are common to each generational cohort.

Thom Rainer, based on the responses of 1200 millennials interviewed for his research, concluded, "The unchurched are more uninformed than they are antagonistic."[169] He went on to say in another place, "The challenge we have is that Christianity is not even on their radar."[170] There are those who are definitely antagonistic in their views as well as those that James White, commenting on Generation Z, notes, "[Christians] are seen as hyperpolitical, out of touch, pushy in our beliefs, and arrogant. And the biggest perceptions of all are that we are homophobic, hypocritical, and judgmental. Simply put in the minds of many people, modern-day Christianity no longer seems Christian."[171] Ministry to unbelievers, the unchurched, or Nones in the two cohorts has to attempt to get Christianity to ping on the radars of many and provide different a

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[168] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 3688-3697, Kindle.

[169] Ibid., 3870, Kindle.

[170] Ibid., 3883, Kindle.

[171] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 82.

perspective for others to see the religion. There are several recommendations by religious leaders and groups to accomplish this.

The first is simply a personal invitation and ride to church. The current trend is to rely on web-pages and social media to promote religious services, while overlooking the most basic (and probably effective for both Generations) means of outreach. Rainer posits, "unchurched Americans respond well to an invitation to church, especially if the one inviting takes them to church. We think this simple approach to reaching this Generation [millennials] will be even more powerful."[172] James White argues that it may have an even more profound effect on Generation Z. They place higher emphasis on personal relationships than their Millennial counterparts and because of that are more likely to respond positively to a personal invitation. White says, that even though Generation Z may have shorter attention spans than any generation on record, "when it comes to responding to a text or direct message from a friend? The Gen Z response is immediate. The personal and the relational cut through the noise of their lives."[173]

According to research conducted by the Barn Research Group, "One out of every five unchurched adults would be much more interested in attending a specific church if a trusted friend personally invited them and agreed to attend alongside them," the author continues to say, "This approach has been the highest-rated tactic in the twenty-plus years that we have been tracking the unchurched and how to interest them in attending

[172] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 3888-3889, Kindle.

[173] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 124.

church."[174] According to the different voices and research, personal invitation is a powerful means to reach the unchurched and should not take a backseat to more technological savvy methods. The next means of reaching the unchurched has to do with internal focus of the church in the areas of liturgy, preaching, and attitude.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of the seeker sensitive, or pragmatic, church services. Most of these were inspired by the success of Willow Creek Community Church located in Chicago and pastored by Bill Hybels. This model of church is based on a consumer business model that focused on a combination of church growth and meeting individual needs. Dorothy Greco, writing in Christianity Today, describes them as:

> services originally promised to woo post-moderns back into the fold. Out the stained glass window went the somewhat formal 45-minute exegetical sermon, replaced by a shorter, story-based talk to address the 'felt needs' of the congregants while reinforcing the premise that following Jesu would dramatically improve their quality of life. Contemporary worship had already found its way into the mainstream, but their new model nudged the church further towards a rock concert feel.[175]

The result was churches that felt less like traditional churches and more like coffee shops or music halls. David Kinnaman, based on the Barna Research Data suggests these types of services, and underlying philosophies of ministry, are a leading cause for young people leaving the church, he writes, "most young Christians are struggling less with their faith

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[174] George Barna and David Kinnaman, eds., *Churchless: Understanding Today's Unchurched and How to Connect with Them* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2014), 156.

[175] Dorothy Greco, "How the Seeker-Sensitive, Consumer Church is Failing a Generation," *Christianity Today*, 30 August 2013, accessed 7 April 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2013/august/how-seeker-sensitive-consumer-church-is-failing-Generation.html.

in Christ than their experience of church."[176] In his most recent book, *Churchless*, Kinnaman lists "seeker-sensitive contemporary service" as one of thirteen "loosing strategies and tactics.[177] Later he argues the reason it is, and the 12 others are, failing is because "they are not what the churchless expect to find in today's churches. They don't need to go to church to see a movie, listen to a celebrity speaker, participate in a book club, and so on."[178]

This may describe two of the surprising trends over the last two decades in the decline of seeker-sensitive services and the increase in liturgical service attendance. Many from both Generational cohorts long for the more traditional services and spaces. Writing in "The American Conservative," Gracy Olmsted, relying on Pew Research Data, notes that while the number of 'nones' is increasing, so is involvement in more liturgical denominations, "rather than abandoning Christianity, some young people are joining more traditional, liturgical denominations—notably the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox branches of the faith. This trend is deeper than denominational waffling; it's a search for meaning that goes to the heart of the postmodern age."[179] Colleen Carroll, in her book *The New Faithful*, argues that young people are attracted to very traditional services because it is a strong alternative postmodernism, "Young adults who are

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[176] David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church... and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 27.

[177] Barna and Kinnaman, *Churchless*, 161.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Gracy Olmstead, "Why Millennials Long For Liturgy," *The American Conservative*, 14 January 2014, accessed 8 April 2018, http://www.theamerican conservative.com/articles/why-millennials-long-for-liturgy/comment-page-1/.

disenchanted with moral relativism and materialism that saturate popular culture—and many American churches—may find themselves viscerally attracted to the very aspects of Christianity that their parent's Generation rejected."[180]

Collin Hansen sought to understand this trend in his book, *Young, Restless, and Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists*. Hanson, writing about the motivation for his work said, "At the same time that moral therapeutic deism came to be known as the default religion of American teenagers, a significant minority of evangelicals had gone looking for an older, more countercultural theology. They found it in Calvinism."[181] Hansen, looking back on his work through the lens of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, says the reason for more young people turning to an "older, more countercultural theology" is, "You really have two options in a secular age. Either God is for you, on your own terms, or God sets the terms . . . God is no mere cosmic butler. To read about a God who doesn't merely cater to our whims, you'll need help from theologians of earlier Generations."[182] Many young people want to go to church to encounter sacred spaces and the God that made them, not the other way around. The seeker-sensitive, consumer-based approaches have reinforced the later which "actually plays into one of the potential root sins of this Generation [millennials]: self-absorption.

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[180] Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 60-61.

[181] Collin Hansen, "Hope in Our Secular Age," in Collin Hansen, Derek Rishmawy, Alastair Roberts, John Starke, Carl Trueman, Bruce Riley Ashford, Mike Cosper, Bob Cutillo, Greg Forster, Michael Horton, Brett McCracken, Jen Pollock Michel, and Alan Noble, *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor* (Deerfield: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 5.

[182] Ibid., 6-7.

While it's all too easy for those of us over the age of 30 to poke fun at their selfie antics, I think young Christians actually want the church to help them reign in their narcissism."[183]

For the same reasons, Rachel Held Evans, in her *Washington Post* article, Want millennials back in the pews? Stop trying to make church 'cool,'" argues that churches need to return to their historical roots to reach millennials. She quotes a millennial friend of hers in the article who said, "At church I don't want to be entertained. I do not want to be the target of anyone's marketing. I want to be asked to participate in the life of an ancient-future community."[184] She concludes her article by saying, "If young people are looking for congregations that authentically practice the teachings of Jesus in an open and inclusive way, then the good news is the church already knows how to do that. The trick isn't to make church cool; it's to keep worship weird."[185]

At the conclusion of the Barna Research Study, *Gen Z*, the authors posit the MTD which is prevalent in both the Millennials and Generation Z, "can't deliver on its own priorities of happiness, self-esteem, and general niceness," and because of that its "inevitable failure. . . to bring anything resembling life everlasting or transcendent fulfillment is a welcome mat laid out for the people of God to bring the only One who

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[183] Greco, "How the Seeker-Sensitive, Consumer Church is Failing a Generation."

[184] Rachel Held Evans, "Want Millennials back in the pews? Stop trying to make church 'cool'," *Washington Post*, 30 April 2015, accessed 8 April 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/jesus-doesnt-tweet/2015/04/30/fb07ef1a-ed01-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e_story.html?utm_term=.9dd370a9faaf.

[185] Ibid.

can fill the emptiness."[186] Liturgies and services that are faithful to the traditional teachings and practices of the church may be a welcome place for the Millennials and Generation Z who want to look outside themselves and encounter the transcendence of God. It is not only the liturgy and worship space that is important, but the message preached.

James White addresses one of the challenges of preaching to the younger Generations by comparing two sermons from the Book of Acts in the Bible. In Acts chapter 2, Peter preaches to an audience steeped in Judaism using many references to scriptures and people of the Old Testament to explain the gospel. The result was that thousands came to faith. In Acts chapter 17, Paul is speaking on Mars Hill to the philosopher and seekers of Athens who do not know the Old Testament but are shaped by the pervasive pluralism and relativism of the day. Paul's sermon did not resemble Peter's because of his audience. White says, "Different culture, different approach. This is precisely where we find ourselves today. We are not speaking to the God-fearing Jews in Jerusalem. We are standing on Mars Hill and need an Acts 17 mindset with an Acts 17 strategy."[187] White goes on to say that, "our primary cultural currency is going to need to be explanation."[188] Preachers and teachers cannot assume that the younger Generations have any sort of religious understanding, yet they still have to convey a message that is

[186] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 106.

[187] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 110-111.

[188] Ibid., 111.

true, sincere, and understandable by those who are unchurched, skeptical, doubtful and have an attention span of eight seconds.

Tim Keller, in his book *Preaching: Communication Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, provides a simple, recommendation of using accessible and clear language to explain scriptural truths to those who may have little to no religious knowledge. Keller writes, "Avoid evangelical subcultural jargon and terms that are unnecessarily archaic, sentimental, or not readily understandable to the outsider. Some terms, such as "lukewarm," "spiritual warfare," . . . do have biblical backgrounds, but can become hackneyed."[189] In addition to using words that are easy to understand by the Millennials and Generation Z, it is important how the message is delivered. James White, based on the way media has shaped the way people now process information, says "Whatever it is we are attempting to convey, much less explain, will need to be communicated more frequently in shorter bursts of 'snackable content.'"[190]

Derek Rishmawy suggests two ways to engage millennials through preaching; the first is to preach apologetically. He is not insisting that sermons must all be rigorous academic endeavors filled with arguments for God's existence, the veracity of scripture or proofs of the resurrection. Rishmawy says, "we need to actively answer objections to the gospel from inside the mindset of our cross-pressured culture on a regular basis as part of our scriptural exposition. We need to show the consistency, coherence, and

[189] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 79.

[190] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 129.

comeliness of the gospel to this Generation."[191] His second suggestion is an attitude of patience and gracefulness in dealing with the doubts and skepticism of millennials for which he calls for ministers to "make room for Thomas," speaking of doubting Thomas of the New Testament.[192] Rishmawy writes, "More than his disciples, Jesus himself is our model for dealing with Thomas. He comes to him, graciously accepting him unworried and unperturbed by his questions. He meets Thomas on his own terms in order to invite him to faith."[193]

Focusing on those who are skeptical or doubtful Tim Keller posted in a blog entitled, "The Faith to Doubt Christianity:"

> At some point you need to tell the Christian story in a way that addresses what people most want for their own lives, what they are trying to find outside of Christianity, and show how Christianity can give it to them. . . There is a way of telling the gospel that makes people say, "I don't believe it's true, but I wish it were." You have to get to the beauty of it, and then go back to the reasons for it. Only then will many believe, when you show that it takes more faith to doubt it than to believe it; when what you see out there in the world is better explained by the Christian account of things than the secular account of things; and when they experience a community in which they actually do see Christianity embodied, in healthy Christian lives and solid Christian community. [194]

The Millennials and Generation Z do not want pre-packaged answers, wrapped in church words they do not understand, but preaching that conveys the ancient truths of the faith with a clarity and authenticity they are looking for in church.

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[191] Rishmawy, "Millennial Belief in the Super-Nova," 59.

[192] Rishmawy, "Millennial Belief in the Super-Nova," 61-62.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Tim Keller, "The Faith to Doubt Christianity," The Gospel Coalition, 27 August 2012, accessed 20 April 2018, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faith-to-doubt-christianity/.

Authenticity is a buzzword for the Millennials and Generation Z and is important when it comes down to the attitude of the pastor and the church. In Thom and Jesse Rainer's study one category was important to both non-Christians and Christians alike was for leaders to "Demonstrate transparency, humility, and integrity." Rainer says, "the Millennials who are not Christians have little patience for leaders who don't demonstrate integrity and who demonstrate self-centeredness and arrogance."[195] Those who identified as Christians in Rainer's study "are looking for churches where the leaders are people of unquestionable integrity. . . these young adult Christians are concerned about the testimony of the character of the leaders of churches where the leaders are people of unquestionable integrity."[196] James White looks at this from a positive side and suggests, "Living out the faith authentically and being counter-cultural is actually a strength that may win over in today's context."[197]

One ministry that churches have incorporated to build a strong sense of community, trust, and authenticity are small groups. These are groups that meet outside of the normal worship hours, usually in someone's house to share a meal, study the scriptures, and to pray with and for one another. Ed Setzer, summarizing his book, *Transformational Groups* notes, "there is something powerfully unique about an intimate gathering around a living room, a small classroom, or a dining room table that forces us

[195] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 3935, Kindle.

[196] Ibid., 3845, Kindle.

[197] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 85.

to think differently than we do when we are in a big room for worship."[198] He makes a case that small groups provide a deeper level of personal discovery through feedback and conversation, they provide a more profound sense of community, they lead to deeper friendships through transparency, vulnerability, and accountability, and deliver maximum opportunities for people to participate.[199] Small groups foster an environment where people come together to encourage one another, get advice, wrestle through tough issues, and participate in ways that cannot be done in a larger setting. These groups offer a place for confession and healing. Kristen Wetherell, reflecting on her small group of people who are not exactly alike and do not have it all together, writes "the fact that we don't have it all together is the reason I love our small group. Confession marks our time together, and it has changed at least three things: the way we interact, the way we pray, and the way we pursue godliness."[200]

Many of the unchurched and those attending churches today are looking to encounter the transcendence and the immanence of God. They are looking for spaces, words, deeds, and attitudes within the church that reflect the love and grace of a great God. However, they are also looking at what the church is doing outside of its meeting space. Both Generations want to make a difference in the world around them and are

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[198] Ed Setzer, "4 Reasons Small Groups are Vital to Your Church's Health," *Christianity Today*, 30 March 2015, accessed 4 May 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/march/4-reasons-small-groups-are-vital-to-your-churchs-health.html.

[199] Setzer, "4 Reasons Small Groups are Vital to Your Church's Health."

[200] Kristen Wetherell, "The Power of Confession in Your Small Group," The Gospel Coalition, 14 September 2017, accessed 5 May 2018, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-power-of-confession-in-your-small-group/.

looking to see Christianity of the Bible, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27). Rainer suggests, "this Generation wants to be a part of groups and organizations that make a difference. Unfortunately, one of the reasons they are indifferent toward American churches is that they don't see these churches as having a significant impact on the world."[201] James White, making a similar argument for Generation Z says, "What is killing the church today is having the mission focused on keeping Christians within the church happy, well fed, and growing . . . the mission cannot be about us, it must be about those who have not crossed the line of faith."[202]

Young adults are looking for a church that is involved in ministry beyond its doors to people in need. Rainer says, "That is why if you see a church with a large number of Millennials, you are likely to see a church that is passionate about serving its community and passionate about reaching the nations with the gospel."[203] Young adults are looking for churches that are reaching out to provide help and healing to the world around them. David Kinnaman, in Churchless, found that a powerful means for connecting with skeptics are "projects undertaken by a church designed to help the needy in the community, resulting in a reputation for loving the poor."[204] This ties back into to

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[201] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 3913-3915, Kindle.

[202] White, *Meet Generation Z*, 154.

[203] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 3927-3928, Kindle.

[204] Barna and Kinnaman, *Churchless*, 149.

the notion of integrity and the importance of churches putting into practice what they are preaching from pulpits, stages, and even in children's classrooms.

While there are many things that churches and religious institutions can do internally and externally to appeal to Millennials and Generation Z, it is important they have a cohesive theology pulling it all together to prevent them from falling into many of the pitfalls that exist in contextualization. In *Center Church*, Tim Keller makes the case that in reaching the culture "We want to avoid both cultural captivity (the refusal to adapt to new times and new cultures) — and syncretism (bringing unbiblical views and practices into our Christianity). While the danger of the former is becoming incomprehensible and irrelevant, the danger of the latter is losing our Christian identity and distinctiveness."[205] In order to ensure religious leaders avoid these two dangers, he advocates for "Active contextualization": which is a three-part process: entering the culture, challenging the culture, and the appealing to the culture.[206]

Entering the culture is the process of understanding and identifying with the people you are trying to reach. Keller says, "It involves learning to express people's hopes, objections, fears, and beliefs so well that they feel as though they could not express them better themselves."[207] James Davison Hunter argues that one of the greatest things the church could do today is to stop and take time to listen to the culture, he writes:

> It is not likely to happen, but it may be that the healthiest course of action for Christians, on this count, is to be silent for a season and learn how to enact their

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[205] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 119.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Ibid., 120.

> faith in public through acts of shalom rather than to try again to represent it publicly through law, policy, and political mobilization. This would not mean civic privates but rather a season to learn how to engage the world in public differently and better.[208]

Engaging the culture provides the understanding necessary to take the next step, challenge the culture. Keller, like James White, uses the apostle Paul's address in Acts 17 to the Athenians at Mars Hill as a model of how to engage and then challenge the culture. Keller says, "Paul is showing them that their beliefs fail on the basis of their own premises. He challenges idolatry by showing that it is inconsistent with the pagans' own (and better) impulses about God."[209] If a person understands the culture they can identify what Keller refers to as pressure points, those points where culture is vulnerable to change, such as idolatry, the commodification of sex, social justice, and loss of cultural hope.[210] The pressure points serve as opportunities to show people how they live in ways that are consistent with the Christian faith and inconsistent with their own worldview.

This leads to the last step, appealing to the culture. This step moves from addressing the pressure point and creating destabilization to then appealing to the Christian faith. Keller explains the entire process like this:

> When we enter a culture with care, we earn the ability to speak to it. Then, after we challenge a culture's belief framework, our listeners will feel destabilized. Now, in this final stage of contextualization, we can reestablish equilibrium. Having confronted, we now console, showing them that what they are looking for can only be found in Christ. Put another way, we show our listeners that the

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[208] James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 281.

[209] Keller, *Center Church*, 125.

[210] Ibid., 128-129.

> plotlines of their lives can only find a resolution, a "happy ending," in Jesus. We must retell the culture's story in Jesus.[211]

The process of active contextualization is not restricted to conversations between believers and non-believers, but a helpful framework to think through many aspects of ministry such as, preaching techniques, sermon topics, outreach strategies, discipleship and bring them into a unified effort less likely to fall into the pitfalls of contextualization.

Chaplain Corps Contributions

As the civilian church has challenges to face in reaching the generations in question, the challenges of the Chaplain Corps are more intense. There are two works that focus on providing religious support to Millennials. The first is CH (COL) Michael Coffey's War College paper, *Chaplain Ministry to the Millennial Generation*. The other work is CH (COL) John Stephen Peck's Master of Military Arts and Science (MMAS) thesis *Postmodern Chapel Services for Generation X and Millennial Generation Soldiers*. Both works rely heavily on the Strauss and Howe's *Millennials Rising* to provide an understanding of Millennials. Coffey challenges the current chapel models and suggests the "Millennial Generation will be attracted to strong leadership, vibrant worship which offers them choices in style and application, and effective teaching which utilizes both technology and tradition."[212] He also advocates for chapel facilities that are larger, more family oriented and technologically up to date. Peck agrees with Coffee on many points, but his study is much larger in its scope. He seeks to answer the question, "Is the Army

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[211] Ibid., 130.

[212] R. Michael Coffey. "Chaplain Ministry to the Millennial Generation," (Strategic Research Paper, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2006), 14.

chaplaincy using the chapel model that most effectively serves the majority of soldiers?" Peck surveys the most popular church models and several Army chapels to conclude the Army is not using a chapel model that meets the needs of its largest demographic. He argues for a "Chapel Next" program that is branded and tailored to the meet needs of the post-modern influenced Generation X and Millennials, which is the emergent service. Peck provides many great insights and recommendations that would still do well to be implemented.

Peck followed up his MMAS thesis with a strategic research paper, "Millennial Generation Spirituality and Religion in the United States Army." In this work, Peck examines the roles that postmodern thought and emerging adulthood have played in shaping the spiritual beliefs and practices of Millennials. Peck provides a well-researched understanding of the Millennials, their views of spirituality, and the challenges of providing them with religious support. One recommendation that he makes is for is for the Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff G-1 and Department of the Army Office of the Chief of Chaplains to "clarify and publish definitions of Spirituality and Religion and expectations for commanders and chaplains as it pertains to Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, Religious Support, and other programs that intersect these areas."[213]

In line with Peck's recommendation, CH (MAJ) Bryan Koyn in his article, "Religious Participation: The missing link in the Ready and Resilient Campaign," explores this dynamic further. He surveys much of the literature on the positive effects of

[213] John Stephen Peck, "Millennial Generation Spirituality and Religion in the U. S. Army." (Strategic Research Paper, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2013), 28.

religion, how that is different from spirituality, and the necessity include religious participation in the resiliency discussion. He calls for more research on this topic, better education for soldiers, and even considering the religious needs of soldiers as part of their medical treatment plans. Koyn's article is an important piece in an ongoing conversation about the role of chaplains and religious support in our current context.

Conclusion

The chaplain's call and duty to provide religious support to soldiers requires an understanding of their religious beliefs and practices and the cultural influences that are shaping them. The predominant factors affecting the religious beliefs and practices of the Army's largest demographic are individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family, and technology. Many civilian organizations have developed effective approaches and methods to minister to young adults. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology the researcher will use to discover the best approaches to use in the Army context.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to answer the primary research question, "What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?" The chapter is structured around the secondary questions the researcher identified as necessary to answer the primary research question. The first secondary question is, "What is the disposition of the current force?" followed by, "What is the Army's largest demographic by age?" The third question is, "What influences are shaping the religious views and practices of the same age demographic in the broader culture?" The fourth question is, "How are soldiers religious views shaped by those same cultural influences?" The last secondary research question is, "What approaches are civilian organizations using to engage this demographic and provide meaningful ministry?" These questions are structured to provide data that will climax with answering the primary research question.

Research Methodology

To answer the first and second secondary questions, "What is the disposition of the current force?" and "What is the Army's largest demographic by age?" the researcher examined the available demographic data available from the ARMY G-1 and the DoD's annual *Profile of the Military Community* for FY16 and FY17.

To answer the next two secondary questions, "What influences are shaping the religious views and practices of the same age demographic in the broader culture?" and

"What approaches are civilian organizations using to engage this demographic and provide meaningful ministry?" the researcher thoroughly analyzed the leading works on the two Generations contained in the Army's largest demographic and identified four major influences shaping religious views. The literature review is structured around those four areas: identity, diversity and inclusiveness, family, and technology. In addition to presenting a shared understanding of this age demographic the researcher specifically searched for the similarities and differences between the two generational cohorts to help answer the primary research question.

To answer the next secondary question, "How are soldiers shaped by those same influences?" the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with U.S. Army soldiers between 20 and 30 years of age. Since the scope of the research is limited by the topic and the age demographic, the semi-structured interview provides an approach that is highly focused on the subject while allowing the participants to share their experiences and opinions in their own words.[214] The structure of the questions enhances the credibility of the data and limits bias and judgments which the researcher can inject in less structured environments.[215]

The danger with the semi-structured interview is the "researcher creates a mind-set in informants about the right things to say."[216] To mitigate this risk, the researcher

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[214] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990), 287.

[215] Ibid., 285.

[216] Steven J. Taylor, Robert Bogdan, and Marjorie DeVault, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 118.

started with an opening question, not included in the findings, to build rapport and set the tone for the following questions. The researcher also carefully crafted the questions to prevent them from having a suggestive quality that might lead the participant to respond in one direction or another.

The planning factor the researcher used for the number of interviews to reach saturation is between twelve and twenty interviews.[217] There is not an established number when it comes to determining saturation for semi-structured interviews, but there is an accepted range among researchers for planning factors. Semi-structured interviews require fewer interviews to reach saturation than more informal interviews and the acceptable ranges used are six on the low end and twenty on the upper end.[218] The researcher planned for twelve to twenty interviews and monitored the data for recurring themes and similarities that would indicate saturation was achieved. The criteria the researcher used to determine data saturation was three interviews with no new themes present across all the questions. Based on this criteria saturation was achieved with 13 interviews.

To answer the primary research question the researcher will compare the information in the literature review with the findings of the analysis of the interviews.

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[217] Sarah Elsie Baker, Rosalind Edwards, and Mark Doidge, *How Many Qualitative Interviews Is Enough?: Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research* (Southampton: National Center for Research Methods and ESRC, 2012), 8. Researchers in this work suggest that 12 interviews as a starting point and not more than 20.

[218] Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson, "How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability," *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (2006): 78. Guest et al. demonstrates that "a sample of six interviews may [be] sufficient to enable development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations."

This will be done by comparing the data using the four categories identified in the literature review (identity, diversity and inclusiveness, family, technology). The findings in the comparison will allow the researcher to see similarities and differences between the civilian and military population and determine which religious support approaches will work best in the military context. The research methods can be seen in the chart below.

Table 1. Research Methodology

Question	Method 1	Method 2	Method 3
What is the disposition of the current force?	Literature Review		
What is the largest demographic in the Army by age?	Literature Review		
What influences are shaping the religious views and practices of the same age demographic in the broader culture?	Literature Review		
How are soldiers shaped by those same cultural influences?	Literature Review	Interviews	
What approaches are civilian organizations using to engage this demographic and provide meaningful ministry?	Literature Review		
What are the best approaches for chaplains to use provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?	Literature Review	Interviews	Comparison of Literature Review and Interviews

Source: Created by author.

Ethical Considerations and Mitigation

The first ethical consideration is that the rank and branch of the researcher could have an unintended influence on the participants. Due to the age of participants, the researcher will outrank every one of them. The concern is that participants may feel coerced to answer questions they are not comfortable answering. The researcher's branch poses two different ethical considerations. The first is that participants may feel a sense of judgement of their religious practices and as a result not honestly answer questions. The second is that participants could assume the interview is considered as sacred communication since the dialogue is happening with a chaplain. This may encourage participants to say things about themselves or others that could be in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

To mitigate these risks the researcher conducted all interviews in civilian attire outside of the soldier's unit area. The researcher used a script to begin and conclude each interview that clarified the researcher's role as just that and encouraged the participants not to share any information about themselves or others that would have to be reported under UCMJ. Each participant was a given consent form that stated his or her rights and the researcher's responsibility to protect their confidentiality. The consent forms where signed by both the researcher and participants.

The other ethical consideration is the protection of the identity of the participants since the researcher used quotations in the study. For some people religion is a public act and others it is very private. This is especially true if they are discussing relationships with their peers or chain of command. Over the course of the interview participants could answer questions in a way that would lead a reasonable person to be able to infer their

identity. To mitigate this risk the data was properly secured during the research process and will remain that way for at least three years. The researcher also removed any information from the quotes that a reasonable person could use to identify the participant while maintaining the integrity of the responses.

Conclusion

Different research methods were considered to answer the primary and subsequent research questions, but the methods outlined above are the best to provide data necessary from which to draw conclusions. Those conclusions are described in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the collected data by the means outlined in chapter 3. In the literature review, the researcher reviewed existing data to draw conclusions about the religious views and practices of Millennials and Generation Z using the categories of individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family, and technology. These categories were used to analyze the responses in the 13 interviews conducted to determine if the religious views of soldiers are similar to those of the civilian population, thus answering the secondary research question, "How are soldiers shaped by those same influences?" This will also provide the understanding necessary to answer the primary research question. This chapter is divided into seven sections: individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family, technology, religious participation and approaches and methods.

Table 2. Participant Demographics

Participant Age	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Number by Age	3	2	2	1			1	1	1	2	
Percent of Active Duty Force	42%						20.5%				
Generational Cohort	Generation Z			Millennial Generation							

Source: Created by author.

Individualism

Four themes emerged within the interviews that specifically pertained to the correlation between individualism and religious beliefs and practices. These themes were discovered in the participants religious identification, the level of importance they ascribed to religion, individualistic responses about religious beliefs and practices, and worship service attendance. The responses are depicted in the chart below. If a participant responded positively to a theme, their response is notated in the positive category. If their response was contrary to the theme, it is notated as a negative response. Accordingly, if the participant did not address the specific theme in their answers they are listed in the "not mentioned" category.

Table 3. Responses on Individualism

Themes	Positive Response	Negative Response	Not Mentioned
Religious Identification	11	2	0
Importance of Religion	11	2	0
Individualistic View of Religion	8	3	2
Regular Worship Attendance	1	10	2

Source: Created by author.

When participants were asked, "What is your religious preference?" only two responded with "none." When Participant 8, who responded none, was asked to explain

his religious preference he said, “when I first came in [to the Army] it was Christian non-denominational, but now I have none.” The rationale for this choice was his church experience, “Growing up I was in church a lot. I understand the stuff about God and I believe there is a higher power. I believe in good and bad, but church itself I felt like there were a lot of hypocrites there.”

Participant 11 also identified as “none.” When asked “Is religion and/or spirituality important to you?” said, “Honestly, no. It wasn’t big growing up, so it doesn’t mean much to me.” While only two participants identified as a ‘none,’ and expressed religion wasn’t important to them, eight of the eleven who said religion was important to them espoused beliefs consistent with a more individualist view of religion.

Participant 13 captures both the anti-institutional views and individual focus that represent much of the broader culture’s views on religion. When asked, “Are there things that would turn you away from religious support programs, services, or activities?” he said:

> I have seen churches when it’s like you do certain things at certain times. I come to church to worship God. I don’t come to be on schedule with your religious beliefs. For me that is why I pick non-denominational . . . I don’t believe that God saw religion, but he saw people and God saw love in people’s heart, not religion. At the end of the day, if you love Jesus and God, you are going to be ok.

Another participant echoed a similar sentiment when asked why he described his religious preference as “non-denominational,” he said, “I don’t like to label myself to one preference. I am open-minded. I know my preference may be wrong. I know there is Jesus and God, it doesn’t matter what religion it falls under, and as long as you have faith in those two you will be alright.” This quote resonates with the postmodern mindset that can affirm different versions of the truth and let the individual or community decide what

is true for themselves, is quick to abandon existing labels and admit to epistemological skepticism. Participant 6 responded in a similar way when asked, “Is religion or spirituality important to you?” he stated, “Very. I believe in it, in my religion, not because someone told me to, but because I believe it.”

There were also participants whose views on religion fit closely with Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD). Participant 4 responded to the question “Is religion or spirituality important to you?” by stating, “A little bit. I believe there is a God, but overall I just try to be the best person I can be.” When the researcher asked, “Do you find that religion helps you to deal with the stresses of military life?” he explained, “Yes, a bit. It is just that praying is not something I do often, but I like the idea that someone is always listening to you, even if you can’t see them.” Participant 7, who identified as Christian, stated that religion or spirituality was important, “Generally in times of real stress. That is the time it becomes a bigger part of my life.” Participant 13, commenting on his religious practices, replied, “I pray before big events a lot and during bad times. I pray every night to ask for forgiveness. We all need that.” These responses align with the second (God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most religions) and fourth (God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem) characteristics of MTD.

Another way individualism was reflected in the data collected was the lack of corporate religious participation. Out of the eleven participants who claimed religion was important in their lives only one regularly attended a public worship service. Participant 5 said, “I am Catholic [said jokingly]. We go to church on Sunday. I have a child not old enough to go to catechism yet, but he will. We are not old school catholic, but I try to

keep us on the narrow path." Two participants stated they attended public worship occasionally. Participant 3 stated, "when I was little I was always in church" and now "I go to church when I am able. I listen to Christian music when I am on the road, I pray, and I feel his blessing from time to time." Participant 1 identified as Christian because, "that is what I was raised around" and now, "I go to church, but it is not an every Sunday thing."

Of the other eight participants who identified that religion is important to them, three gave specific reasons why they do not attend religious services. Participant 2 grew up in church and said, "now I don't go to church . . . the thing that scares me is childcare. I know some churches do background checks, but I don't know. That is a big thing right now." When the same soldier was asked if she observed any religious or spiritual practices, she responded with, "No church, I just pray every single night with my children." For another participant, when asked if he observed any religious practices said, "Not too much. School, work and all I don't have much time, especially with the kids . . . don't really go to church, [we] practice at home." Participant 10 said, "I have been going to church since I was a little girl. I haven't been to church since I was in basic training and AIT [Advanced Individual Training]. I would like to go to church, I just have to find one I would like to go to." Similarly, Participant 10 responded, "I was in church all of my life, really. I have been in church a lot" and went on to say about his present practices, "I pray when I wake up and go to sleep. I haven't been to church here [Fort Leavenworth]."

The trend that emerged about church attendance in these interviews is that for most of the participants, even if they grew up regularly attending, that has waned since they joined the military. There is also a trend that religion can be practiced privately, and

a broader community is not necessary. This is also evident by what is absent from all but two responses in the interviews conducted. Almost no one mentioned any communal aspects of their religion, whether encouragement that comes from worshiping together or the ability to give back to the God or the broader community. One exception came from Participant 3 in his response to the question "Are there any practices, attitudes, etc. that turn you away from religious support programs, services, or activities?" Commenting on changes within services to meet the needs of the younger generation said:

> If you continue to do new hymns and not old ones you cut out the traditional churches and that is where we need to keep our roots, but also alter it for a new generation. . . that is a major turnoff, completely remaking church for a new generation and getting away from what we are supposed to be. I feel we need to be more of a church family instead of trying to fill up the church.

For this participant the family aspect of a church community is very important. The other exception came from Participant 4 who admitted, "I was raised as a Catholic, however, I am not the type of person that goes to church often." When he was asked "What would you find meaningful in a religious or spiritual event or service?" he responded, "The people. They are friendly, and you can build relationships with people and share relationships with people who share the same beliefs with you."

While there are some who are drawn to the community aspects of a religious service only two expressed that in their responses. The preponderance of the responses revealed a more individualistic response such as one by Participant 12 who, when asked the question, "What would you find most meaning in a religious or spiritual event?" answered, "For me, when I go to church the first thing that I want is the priest or pastor to show me the impact of the Word in my real life. I want him to explain the impact of the Word of God to my life, so I can walk in the way." The focus is first and foremost on

having personal needs met, not on being able to contribute to a service, the lives of those in attendance, or the broader community.

When compared to the broader culture, the responses in the interviews are largely consistent with the level of individualism found within the Millennials and Generation Z. Some participants shared the anti-institutional sentiment which is at the heart of the Millennial and Generation Z's distrust of churches and other large organizations. The interviews also reflected an affinity with the religious Nones and MTD.

Diversity and Inclusivity

The second area that had a significant influence on the religious beliefs and practices of the broader culture in both generations are their diverse make-up and subsequent commitment to inclusion. The primary question in the interviews that explored the participants views of diversity and their comfortability talking about religion was, "How would you feel if someone in your chain of command or a coworker shared part of their spiritual journey to foster spiritual resiliency?" The responses are captured in the chart below.

Table 4. Responses on Diversity and Inclusivity			
Themes	Positive Response	Negative Response	Not Mentioned
Welcomed Religious Encouragement	12	1	0
Open to other Religions	4	1	8
Boundaries in Conversations	4	0	9

Source: Created by author.

An overwhelming majority of the participants welcomed this type of interaction. Only one of 13 participants stated he would be bothered by such an interaction. Participant 4 indicated that religion was "a little bit," important to him stated that, "It would bother me a bit, but at the same time I am open minded. I will keep it in mind that I have heard what they shared with me and will take into account in my personal life. I don't like the idea of people trying to push religion onto you." Even though he would not be one hundred percent comfortable with the conversation, he feels it is important to be open-minded about things.

The other twelve participants who responded positively to the question stated different levels of receptivity to such a conversation. Some provided straightforward answers that revealed a common willingness to learn from others and validate their stories. Participant 11 said, "I would listen to see if there were any ways it would benefit

me or what I can learn from it. It wouldn't offend me." Similarly, Participant 9 said, "I honestly wouldn't have a problem with that I would take it into consideration and see what they have to say." Participant 6 stated, "I would accept it. Even though it might not be my vision I would try to relate to it."

Other participant's responses reflected a deeper level of appreciation for a conversation from someone trying to promote spiritual resiliency. Participant 13, who said that religion was "very important," declared, "I am one hundred percent about listening to different views, I am very open minded. I would sit there and listen and learn until I felt they were trying to push some on me, then I would turn it off." Participant 3 commented, "I would probably jump in the boat and start talking . . . I would appreciate it." Two participants gave responses that connected these types of conversations with care and respect. Participant 2 assured, "I honestly would feel blessed if someone came up to me and told me what they believe and cared" and the other asserted, "I would listen to what they have to say. I always will listen. I would not be offended. I would appreciate it. If people want to talk to me about religion, or the military, or anything, I feel that they respect me enough to entrust their views."

Another theme that emerged in the answers is that participants are open to the conversations even if they are coming from a completely different religion than their own. Participant 10, who was raised in a Christian family and says that religion is still important to her, said, "That doesn't bother me. I feel like everybody is different. You don't have to have the same religion as me, go to the same church, or listen to the same music I do. I feel like that doesn't bother me." Participant 5, who is devoutly Catholic, responded:

> I am always welcoming of that as long as it is not condemning. I always welcome debate and a journey through religion. Especially being raised strictly Catholic with a very narrow mindset. Once I joined the Army and talked to people of different religions, started to understand similarities and differences and symbolism among different religions, I welcomed it.

While almost all the soldiers interviewed revealed an appreciation for a leader or coworker attempting to encourage them with religion or spirituality, there were some limits. Four responses indicated conditions and caveats for religious conversations. The participant quoted above, who is very welcoming of these conversations, begins his comments with the caveat, "As long as it is not condemning." The other dynamic that would turn people away from such conversations is if the conversation was perceived to be more for the purpose of proselytizing and less of caring instruction. Participant 4 said, "I don't like the idea of people trying to push religion on you." Participant 13 echoes this same sentiment noting it would be termination criteria for the conversation, "I would sit there and listen and learn until I felt they were trying to push something on me, then I would turn it off." Therefore, the way conversations take place, their tone, and perceived intent can determine how receptive this group is to receive the information.

The Millennials and Generation Z are the most ethnically diverse generational cohorts in our nation's history. This diversity spreads to beliefs, practices, and their views of others. These cohorts are very inclusive of others with different beliefs and values. Both generations are more likely to marry across racial and ethnic lines and respect different religious and cultural worldviews. While they are inclusive and accepting, there is also a sense where they have difficulty talking about controversial subjects and prefer safety to honest dialogues. The interview responses reveal a difference here between

soldiers and their civilian counterparts. The participants were very welcoming of talks with their co-workers on religion, if it was not their own.

Family

The third area to explore is influence role that family exerts in the belief and practices of soldiers. There were no questions that specifically asked about the religious influence of family on soldiers, but there were several questions throughout the interviews where themes of family influence on current religious beliefs and practices surfaced.

Table 5. Responses on Family Influences

Themes	Positive Response	Negative Response	No Response
Presence of Religion in Families	13	0	0
Consistency with Family Practices	7	6	0
Passing on Religion to their Children	3	0	10

Source: Created by author.

Looking over the 13 participants' responses in this research, religion was at least present in all their families as they grew up. Two of the participants' responses indicated a small influence, while the other eleven participants indicated a more substantial role. In

almost all of the interviews, there is a strong correlation between the attitudes and practices between soldiers and the families they were raised in. First, we will look at the group that indicated a less pronounced religious influence growing up.

Participant 1 responded to the questions, “Is religion and/or spirituality important to you? How or why not?” stating, “It is. Religion didn’t really play a big part, I mean my grandparents were religious, but that didn’t rub off on me.” Describing his religious practices, he stated, “I go to church, but it is not an every Sunday thing.” When asked “If religion/spirituality is important to you, do you find that it helps you to deal with the stresses of military life?” he responded, “Since I have been in the military I have not turned to it a lot, so I would say not really.” Although he identified that religion is important on some level, his religious activity appears consistent with his family’s. Participant 11 answered the questions with, “No. Honestly, no. It just wasn’t big growing up, so it doesn’t mean much to me.”

While the correlation is very strong between the families that were not very religious and the beliefs and attitudes they bestowed on their children, there are differences between those who indicated a greater religious influence growing up and their current beliefs and practices. In the responses, five out of the ten participants have views and practices consistent with their family’s, four show a decline in religious participation, and one indicated a significant shift in beliefs and practices. Beginning with those who show the most similarity to their family is Participant 3. He said “I grew up in a Christian home. It is one of those religious families. When I was little I was always in a church. I am from a Christian family and a Christian myself.” When asked, “Is religion or spirituality important to you?” he responded, “Yes. It is important to me because after I

gave my life over to Christ I had that sense of security, comfort, and peace, so I wanted that and especially being in the Army."

Participant 5 said, "I grew up in the Catholic church. I attended catechism until 11th grade when I did confirmation. My father was Baptist, but every Sunday he was in the Catholic church with us." When asked "Is religion or spirituality important to you?" he answered, "It is. It is so simplistic, but hard to explain. Knowing what I was taught, believing what I was taught, really shapes the way I live. So, it is important to me." When asked about his religious practices he replied, "We go to church on Sunday. I have a child not old enough to go to catechism yet, but he will." Participant 10 indicated, "Religion for my family is a big thing. My parents have always had me in church since I was younger. I have been going to church since I was a little girl." Her family still plays an important role according to her, "if I am having a bad day I will listen to gospel music, I will pray, or I will call my parents or grandfather and they will talk to me or give me certain Bible verses to think about to help me."

Not all the soldiers interviewed show the same level of commitment to religious participation as they did growing up. Participant 6 relayed, "I was in church all of my life, really. I have been in church a lot." While the soldier states that religion is very important to him he says, "I haven't been to church since I have been here [at Fort Leavenworth]." Participants 7 said his religious preference was Christian because "that is what I grew up with, I grew up in church." However, he also said regarding religious practices, I "don't really go to church [we] practice at home." While these participants grew up in families that regularly attended worship services, they don't follow them the same way.

Two participants revealed considerable changes from the way they were raised and their current beliefs on religious practices. Participant 9 said, “My parents were very religious. I went to Catholic church every Sunday.” He still claims Catholic as his religious preference, but when asked “Do you observe any religious practice?” he said, “I grew up with prayer and Bible reading, but don’t practice that anymore.” The other participant had an even more significant change as he grew up. Participant 8, when asked “Is religion/spirituality important to you said, “No it’s not. Growing up I was in church a lot. I didn’t like it.” He even comments that he has shifted further from his family’s views since been in the military, “when I first came in it was Christian Non-denominational, but now I have none [religious preference].”

It is clear from the responses in the interviews that the religious views of families, with few exceptions, is carried on by their children. While there was a decline in religious participation among some, they still claimed that religion is important to them. Three of the participants mentioned they intend to pass it on to their children, as one said, “I don’t judge people who don’t believe in God, but since it was important to my family and part of me, it will always s be a part of me and I will do it with my daughter.”

Based on the responses, the religious views and practices of families influence soldiers in the same way that it does the civilian population. As noted in the literature review, the increase in both generations identifying as none for religious preference is in part due to their parents’ beliefs. Families play a vital role in shaping the beliefs and values of their children.

Technology

The last category of comparison is in the realm of technology and how it is shaping religious beliefs and practices. The questions in the interviews that addressed this topic specifically were, “Do you feel more connected through personal interaction or social media?” “What types of technology do you use to communicate?” and “Do you feel it has positive or negative impacts on your religion/spirituality?” The participant responses are depicted in the charts displayed throughout this section.

Table 6. Communication Preference

Themes	Social Media	Personal Interaction	Both	Not Mentioned
Feel Connected	1	8	4	0

Source: Created by author.

The answer to “Do you feel more connected through personal interaction or social media?” was one that challenged some of the participants as is revealed in the responses. One participant responded with social media, eight with personal interaction, and four who were torn between the two choices and answered both. Participant 9 responded, “more [connected] through social media,” because it enabled him to “talk to family and friends that are far away and catch up.” For the participants who indicated both as their response, personal interaction and social media are both important to their sense of connectedness.

Participant 2, who was having trouble deciding which option to choose, decided, "I think both, but if I have to pick one it would probably be social media." Another participant who chose both provided a rationale for his response, "A mix of both," Participant 13 stated, "I actually have some friends on Facebook that I grew up with and I know and went to school with, also my parents and other friends, so it depends on what is going on." Participant 10 replied, "It really depends. I like personal interaction and the fact that you can touch people's lives." In response to "What types of technology do you use to communicate?" he said "I have over twelve thousand followers on Instagram and a few thousand on twitter, so I try to keep everybody informed on my life as much as possible." The fourth participant who had difficulty coming down on one side or the other leaned towards personal interaction. She said, "I don't even know. I think face to face." While she did not give a rationale for her answer, she mentioned in the following questions in the interview that social media keeps her connected to her family.

The nine participants who preferred personal interaction over social media did so for several reasons. Participant 1 responded, "Personal interaction. I don't really use social media a lot. I also don't really talk to a lot of people. I am not usually around a lot of people." Participant 5 answered, "Personal interaction." In answering "What types of technology do you use to communicate?" he responded "If I want to talk I will call, text, or drive by. I am not a social media person." Participant 11 said, "Face to face. Face to face" and responding to what type of technology he used he said, "Call[ing] is my primary way to communicate." The participants' views on social media reveal the importance of keeping up with family and a closer identification to Generation Z who is more hands on and prefers face-to-face interaction over some other media platform.

Table 7. Technology Platform Preference					
Themes	Facebook	Text/Call	Instagram	Snap Chat Messenger	Periscope
Platform Preferences	8	4	4	2	1

Source: Created by author.

The next two questions in the interview focus on what types of technology people use to communicate and most important to this study, how it affects their religious beliefs and practices. The most common platform listed among participants was Facebook with it showing up in eight interviews, followed by calling and texting mentioned in four interviews, Instagram mentioned in three interviews, and Snapchat and Messenger mentioned in two interviews. While Generation Z is more inclined to use private social media platforms than Millennials, one Generation Z participant, Participant 10, described her preference for Facebook, "Texting, social media, that is the big thing now that everybody is on it. Facebook is for everyone, but snapchat isn't for my parents, they don't know how to work it, so I spend more time on Facebook."

The participants' primary use of social media, as mentioned above, is to keep in touch with their family and friends, see what is going on, let other people know what they are doing and a few other reasons surfaces. One participant used social media largely for entertainment, "I use Facebook and I just watch stupid videos."

Table 8. Technology and Religion				
Themes	Positive Response	Negative Response	Both	Not Mentioned
Impact on Religion	3	2	5	3

Source: Created by author.

When asked if technology use "has a positive or negative impact on your religion/spirituality?" Three participants (two of whom chose none for their religious preference) did not respond to this question, three participants found it helpful, two indicated a negative impact, and the other five participants responded with both. Those who responded with both represent the tension between the positive and negative aspects of technology seen in the literature review. Most of the participants focused more heavily on content than an app or program. Participant 5, "I would give it to either one [positive or negative] because everyone is entitled to their own opinion on their social media site. So some people can have a negative view on it or a positive outlook on it. It really just depends on the individual."

Participant 3 responded, "Both. Because my family posts Christian stuff and military stuff as well, but there are also some people who post the complete opposite of that, and you just have to take it with a grain of salt. If you see it you can 'like it' or you can't. It is all based on you. It is all on you." Participant 6 replied in similar fashion, "It depends. I can't say it is helpful or harmful. You are going to believe what you want to believe regardless of what anyone else posts." One thing that is consistent in these

answers is the individualism common to the Millennials and Generation Z. The other is ability people have to expresses just about anything through the means of social media or some other platform. Participant 5 brings this all together in his response to, "Do you feel it has a positive or negative impact on your religion/spirituality?"

> There are some pros and cons, me and my wife had this debate before. When used correctly any type of medium for religion can be good. Whether it is word of mouth or a social media platform, as long as it is spreading the word and work of Christ it is Good. On the Flip side, social media has become so nasty and people put everything on there. It is a life style we feel is important, people do crazy stuff and say mean things to others. It makes it easier to cheat, it makes it easier to lie, to say bad things, I think that is why I stay away from it.

According to the existing research and the responses in these interviews, there is a helpful side to our current ability to communicate over various platforms, but also a dark side, that in the case of the last participant is enough to keep him away from social media all together. The other negative influence mentioned in the interviews emerged in a response from Participant 4, "They are definitely a distraction." The tensions between the positive and negative aspects of technology indicated in the interviews are common to Millennials and Generation Z in the broader culture.

Shifting to the positive aspects of technology there were two trends. The first trend was the ability of technology to keep the participants connected to churches or family members that are not in the immediate area. Participant 2 said that "One of the churches I went to have live sermons on YouTube that are helpful to me." Participant 10 has a family member who uses social media as an avenue of ministry who "does a 5:30 a.m. worship on Facebook and Periscope, so some mornings I catch him on Facebook live. I know it helps a lot of people because he gets thousands of views from people who cannot go to church because of their schedules. Social media can play a big part, it can."

It is important to note that while both participants have been involved in regular church attendance in the past they are not currently active in a local congregation. Technology can keep them connected to the churches and people who have been important in their religious growth, which may be easier than trying to find something comparable at their current duty station.

The other positive trend of different communication platforms is the encouraging effects they have on participants' daily activities. Two participants mentioned they listened to Christian radio for encouragement. Participant 13 said, that technology "definitely helps. If you are having a bad day and going through [tough times] and see that someone posted their day, you can see how blessed you are." Another participant said one of the positive aspects about technology is that his "family posts Christian stuff and military stuff." The participant who used YouTube to watch sermons from a church she attended was also helped by a ministry from an Army chaplain. She said, "One of the chaplains in another unit sends e-mails every Wednesday. You can opt in or opt out, just to let him know, but they are very inspirational. Whenever you are at work, on the computer all day and you see that e-mail pop up it helps—it helps. There are inspirational quotes, verses, or stories and it helps a lot." These are the reasons why eight out of the thirteen participants found some aspects of technology helpful to their religion.

Technology, especially smart phones and social media has created an environment where people are more connected than ever, but on a very shallow level. Technology has made it harder to concentrate for long periods of time. It makes certain religious practices such as prayer and meditation very difficult. At the same time technology has provided a plethora of resources for people to learn about any religion and

find communities, even if they are through digital means, to connect with those of similar beliefs.

Understanding how individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family, and technology shape the religious beliefs and practices of 20 to 30-year-old soldiers' provides the data for the researcher to answer the secondary research, "How are soldiers shaped by those same cultural influences? To answer the primary research question, "What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?" It is important to understand what the participants' responses reveal about how religion helps them in the military context and what approaches, programs, or attitudes resonate positively with them.

Religious Participation and Resiliency

Religious participation looks at the specific practices people observe. In this research it is unique to soldiers in that it focuses specifically on how religious and spiritual beliefs and practices affect their abilities to cope with and overcome the challenges associated with military life. The researcher asked the participants "If religion and/or spirituality is important to you, do you find it helps you to deal with the stress of military life?" and was followed up by "How?" to encourage participants to explain the relationship between their religious beliefs and practices and their ability to deal with the stresses of military life.

Table 9. Religion and Resiliency			
Themes	Positive Response	Negative Response	Not Mentioned
Helpful to Deal with Stress	9	2	2
Prayer for help	5	0	7
Religious Framework	2	0	9
Purpose	1	0	11

Source: Created by author.

Of the eleven participants who responded that religion was important in their lives, nine stated that it helped them to deal with the stresses of military life and two responded that it did not. Participant 1 responded that religion was important to him, when asked "do you find that it helps you to deal with the stresses of military life?" he responded, "Since I have been in the military I have not turned to it a lot, so I would say not really." The other participant with a negative response simply responded with "No." Analyzing the responses that showed a positive relationship between religion and coping, the most common practice was prayer.

Participant 2 explained, "I think it always brings me peace of mind to know that when I am praying that my prayers will be answered in one way or another. It helps me a lot." Participant 4, who responded to the question, "Is religion important to you?" with "A little bit. I believe there is a God, but overall I just try to be the best person I can be,"

answered, “Yes, a bit. Praying is not something that I do often, but I like the idea that someone is always listening to you, even if you can’t see them.” Participant 6 responded, “Yes, it does. If you don’t have something to go off of this place will really stress you out. Praying is good to get you through some tough stuff.” Similarly, Participant 13 said, “It has helped me a lot. A lot of times this stuff can get very stressful in the job we do. But praying is my woosa [sic] moment. I sit back and close my eyes and ask the Lord to show me the way.” Participant 10 includes prayer in a list of religions practices that help her, “if I am having a rough day I will listen to gospel music, I will pray, or I will just call my parents or grandfather and they will talk to me or give me certain Bible verses to think about to help me.” The second trend within religious participation is the importance of a larger religious framework to help deal with difficult situations.

Participant 3 found religion helpful because of the sense of purpose it brought to his life. He believes that God wanted him join in the military, “After I gave my life over to Christ I had the sense of security, comfort, and peace. I wanted that and especially after being in the military. I felt God wanted me to be in the Army and it is all based off of what God wants me to do.” Participant 5 stated, “I guess if you look at the big picture, I never put much thought into it. I think it is subconscious after almost 30 years. You can learn to turn the other check, love others, look for the good in others, do the right thing, I think that was not only taught from my parents, but the church helped mold that.” In a parallel line of thought, Participant 12 responded, “First, I will say yes. When you read the Bible and you look at the teachings and your life, if you follow God, then you are going to feel better as you go through life. So, yes.” One participant simply responded

with, “It is the real stressful times when I am away from family that I turn to it [religion], so it does help.”

Religion is a vital part in the lives of many soldiers and something they turn to in difficult times to find strength and comfort. The religious values and teachings these soldiers were raised with also help provide a sense of purpose and instill in them a framework to process and deal with stressful times. Since religion is such an important aspect in the lives of many soldiers, it is essential for chaplains to understand the best approaches and methods to provide religious support.

Approaches and Methods

To answer the primary research question “What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army’s largest demographic?” the researcher used the responses from two questions on the questionnaire: “What would you find meaningful in a religious or spiritual event or service? and “Are there any things (practices, attitudes. etc.) that would turn you away from religious support programs, services, or activities?” The responses are depicted in the table below and will allow the researcher to compare them to the approaches listed in chapter 2 to make recommendations in chapter 5.

Table 10. Approaches and Methods			
Themes	Positive Response	Negative Response	Not Mentioned
Preaching and Communication	4	2	7
Relationships	4	0	9
Traditions	2	1	10
Money and Stewardship	0	2	11
Childcare	0	1	12

Source: Created by author.

The theme that participants mentioned most in their response to "What would you find meaningful in a religious or spiritual event or service?" was preaching. Four of the participants indicated preaching was meaningful to them both in form and content. Participant 1 relayed, "the topic the instructor is talking about. Maybe I can relate to it or he is talking about something happening to me." Participant 6 was drawn to revival services with many speakers, he said, "Like a revival over the weekend. Different pastors and preachers giving input on what religion is. Not just the same pastor, but different ones talking about the same thing." The other two responses highlight the connection between the message preached and the activity of God through the message.

Participant 3 replied, "It would probably be in the sermon the preacher is making." He went on say, "Sometimes the Spirit of God reaches out and touches you and

says hey, this is meant for you. It is that stomping on your toes type feeling. And it is like a wake-up call. That is mostly how I get mine, a wakeup call from God saying this is what is going on and this is the path you need to be on." Participant 12 said, "For me, when I go to church the first thing that I want is the priest or pastor to show me the impact of the word in my real life. I want him to explain the impact of the word of God to my life, so I can use it and walk in the way."

While four of the participants found preaching meaningful in a religious service, two found bad preaching to be something that would turn them away from a religious service. In response to "Are there any things (practices, attitudes, etc.) that would turn you away from religious support programs, services, or activities?" Participant 10 commented that is bothered by "somebody that talks too much about the same thing, over and over. If you are telling a word you can go off of a scripture and teach on it, but once it gets boring and long, and becomes a lecture it is boring. I hate that." The other participant, along these same lines, said "I grew up with a monotone pastor, and if it draws out more, and I am looking at my watch, then I am not getting into it. They have to have some excitement in it."

The other theme that had four responses centered on the importance of relationships in religious services. The first two quotes focus on the church community. Participant 4 said the most meaningful aspect of a religious service or event was, "The people. They are friendly and you can build relationships with people and share relationships with people who share the same views with you." Participant 7 viewed involvement of congregants in the church community to be important, "A regular Sunday service I like to see people in the audience get involved." One participant responded that

one of the things that would turn him away from a religious event were things that diminished the family dynamic of church, he said, “That is a major turn off, completely remaking the church for a new generation and getting away from what we are supposed to be. I feel we need to be more of a church family instead of trying to fill up the church.” Not only are relationships important, but so are the attitudes and integrity of people in religious services.

The other two responses on relationships focus on the character of people in a church setting. Participant 11 indicated that an existing relationship with the minister would make the service more meaningful. He responded to the question, “What would you find meaningful in a religious/spiritual event or service?” with, “Getting to know the person first.” Participant 8 felt it was the character of the people that is important. He declared, “People living up to their words, living by what they believe. If you are going to be one way, then be that way the whole time. Be consistent.” The people, their involvement in the church community, and their attitudes and integrity are critical for providing a meaningful religious service or event. The next theme that emerged was the importance of tradition.

One response mentioned above ties the concept of relationships and tradition together. This highlights a theme that two participants mentioned, the importance of tradition and liturgy. Participant 5, referencing music choice said, “If you continue to do the new hymns and not the old ones you cut out the traditional churches and that is where we need to keep pour roots, but also alter it for the new Generation. You can have some guitar and drums but keep some of the traditional church the same . . . That is a major turn off, completely remaking the church for a new generation and getting away from

what we are supposed to be. I feel we need to be more of a church family instead of just trying to fill up the church." Participant 5 answered the question "What would you find meaningful in a religious/spiritual event or service? with, "That is a hard one. Being a devout Catholic I have gone to other churches that my wife drug me to years ago, but I like the tradition. I like going in and knowing what we are doing. I like traditional mass and the Catholic way."

One participant found the opposite to be true and felt that a structured, more liturgical services, are very stifling. Participant 13 asserted, "I have seen church where it's like you have to do certain things at certain times. I come to church to worship God I don't come to be on schedule with your religious beliefs. For me, that is why I pick non-denominational. My mom is Catholic. It is almost like being in the military." The difference between his comments and the ones preceding it underscore the challenge of providing religious support to this age demographic.

There were two other themes that developed in response to the question, "Are there any things (practices, attitudes, etc.) that turn you away from religious support programs, services, or activities?" The first is money and the second childcare. In regards to money, Participant 5 responded, "Funny you should say that. I attended a non-denominational service with my wife a while back and the entire sermon was an hour long about why you should give money to this church. I was like what? This is insane! What are you doing? I just left. I went outside to drink my coffee. Anytime I see people trying to use religion for their personal gain I am out. To use God, I don't want to use hate, but it is up there." Participant 2 answered the same question with, "I think a big thing was one [church] that I went to I was told you have to give that 10 percent, you

have to give that 10 percent donation and that was a turn off." This same participant said the other difficulty she has with services is childcare, "The other thing is childcare and not knowing who is caring."

Conclusion

The researcher analyzed the interviews using the categories of individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family and technology to answer the secondary research questions, "How are soldiers shaped by those same cultural influences?" The assumption the researcher started with was the largest demographic in the Army has the same religious needs, unique distinctives, and outlooks as that of the civilian population. For the most part this assumption was confirmed, and participants were shaped by individualism, diversity and inclusivity, family, and technology the same ways in which their Millennial and Generation Z civilian counterparts were. There was one area that surprised the researcher and two with some differences between the military and civilian population.

The researcher expected to find some differences in the level of individualism expressed in responses of the participants and those reflected in the broader culture, but that was not the case. This was based on the simple fact that the participants joined the military. Both the Millennials and Generation Z are less likely to join the Armed Services than generations before them. The work environments that many of them desire, environments where they have control and flexibility, are not at all like the strict discipline that permeates military life. Based on soldier's willingness to serve their country, and endure the hardships that accompany that choice, they would potentially be

less individualistic in their thinking. Their responses on religion indicated that they are very similar to the broader culture on this point.

The two areas where there was some difference was in diversity and inclusivity and technology. The participants showed a tremendous amount of inclusivity in their willingness to listen to and even welcome religious encouragement from others, even those of different faiths. While some of the participants presented limits to those conversations, they were still more welcoming of them than the broader population. The other area of difference is in technology. The role of technology did not appear to be as consuming in the lives of the study participants as it did in the data reviewed in chapter two.

Based on the responses from the 13 participants in the interviews the answer to the secondary research question, "How are soldiers shaped by those same influences?" the answer is in the same ways as the broader culture, with the only exception being that the participants in the interview were less threatened by and more welcoming of religious conversations and encouragement.

The responses also help to answer the primary research question, "What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?" According to the data collected, 20 to 30-year-old soldiers desire preaching and communication about religion that they can understand and with which they can identify. They desire preaching that has application to their life situation. There is an expectation for some that God will speak to them through a preacher to give them guidance or "a wake-up call." The participants also expressed a disdain for boring, monotone preaching that felt more like a lecture than an encounter with God. One of the

greatest approaches to provide religious support is through well crafted, well presented, inspired, and applicable communication about religion. It was clear from the participants that this communication is most effective in a community with strong relationships with others.

The participants expressed the value of community and importance of personal relationships. One of the appealing aspects of a church service or religious event is that people come together with a shared sense of belief and purpose. Religion, according to its definition, binds people together with sacred truths and experiences in a way that other groups do not. Participants felt the family-type connections in a church setting were significant. They also felt the character and attitudes of the people within that community are important. The participants expressed they would be willing to listen to someone they had an established relationship and be more prone to stay in a community where they felt the people were authentic.

While the participants were not directly asked if they preferred any worship model or style over another, for some traditional elements of worship are important in establishing community and a sense of comfort. One participant indicated the complete opposite and valued freedom in a service. While this data is not sufficient to prove one model over another, it does demonstrate that traditional elements should not be thrown to the side in an attempt to accommodate young adults. The tension between these two views of traditional and liturgical elements in a worship service or activity are instructive in the fact that there will never be a service that meets every need of every person.

When it comes to what is unappealing to people attending a religious event or service, in addition to preaching that is disconnected, boring and more of a lecture and

things that may erode the community within the church, money weighed in, as well. The way in which ministers ask for money can come across in as repulsive. If people feel like they are being pressured or the money is not being used wisely they are likely to go somewhere else or not go anywhere else. The other dissuading factor is childcare. One participant shared that her concerns with childcare keep her family from regularly attending church. While a chapel service may not be able to completely abate those fears, a strong childcare program is important.

These are themes in the interviews that help answer the primary research question, "What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?" In chapter 5 we will look at specific recommendations based on the themes from the interviews, the nature of religious support in the Army, and approaches and programs from the civilian church community that are outlined in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Religious support by its very nature is a complicated endeavor as is indicated by FM 1-05, "Providing meaningful religious support to Soldiers, Families, and authorized civilians can occur under widely differing circumstances. The requirements of unified land operations are more demanding now than ever. But the mission remains the same: providing meaningful religious support to Soldiers, Families, and authorized civilians."[219] Today this is compounded by the rapid changes in the religious landscape of our nation that are the results of the postmodern mindset, secularism and the speed of technology, in particular social media, that allows complex cultural changes to happen at an accelerated rate. In order to provide religious support, it is imperative that chaplains understand the nature of the changes and current religious needs and beliefs of soldiers. The purpose of this research is to offer an understanding of these changes in the lives of the Army's largest demographic and suggest the best means to provide religious support to them.

The intent of this chapter is to review the data compiled in the literature review and the interviews to draw conclusions and make recommendations for current implementation and future studies. This chapter is divided into three sections: conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

[219] HQDA, FM 1-05, 2-4.

Conclusion

The primary research question the researcher set out to answer was, "What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?" To answer this question, the researcher had to answer several secondary research questions:

1. What is the disposition of the current force?
2. What is the Army's largest demographic by age?
3. What influences are shaping the religious views and practices of the same age demographic in the broader culture?
4. How are soldiers shaped by those same cultural influences?
5. What approaches are civilian organizations using to engage this demographic and provide meaningful ministry?

Based on the answers to those questions in the literature and in the interviews conducted with 13 participants ranging from 20 to 30 years of age, two major themes and three minor ones emerged that should be considered when planning and providing religious support whether in the unit area or a chapel.

The two major themes are communication and community. The participants indicated they desire to hear a clearly communicated message that connects them with the sacred text and God himself. They also desire a message that displays an understanding of who they are and has touch points with their lives and struggles. The challenge for this demographic today is they are bombarded with images, with snack-size portions of information rushing toward them at the speed of light. Each time a chaplain speaks he or she is competing with smart phone and smart watch notifications and alerts. The young

adults in the Army and society at large are easily distracted, and many have short attention spans. Messages constructed, whether for sermons or inspirational thoughts at a formation, must be completed with precision and care if chaplains expect to penetrate through all the distractions to the hearts of the listeners.

The other major theme was community. Many participants expressed one of the most meaningful parts of a religious service or event is gathering with people who share the same beliefs and experiences. However, as the responses reflect, it is more than a mere gathering of people. They are seeking for genuine community with people who live consistently with their beliefs. They are more likely to attend a religious support event or service if they have a relationship with the chaplain or person leading it. In a culture of the curated-self and digital communities, there appears to be an appreciation, if not a longing for authentic community. Religious support events and chapel services should seek to foster environments where that type of community is flourishing. Many of these soldiers are living far from their homes and the communities they grew up in. Helping them find a home in a religious community could be life-changing.

The three minor themes that emerged were tradition and liturgy, money and stewardship, and childcare. There is no cookie cutter chapel service or religious support program that will accommodate everyone. This is one reason each installation has chapel services to meet the religious needs of those from different faiths and different traditions within those faith groups. Some of the participants in this research expressed the importance of traditional and liturgy in religious services, while one felt the complete opposite. To reach these young adults, chaplains need to be careful not to equate trendy with meaningful. The Millennials and Generation Z have a strong self-focus and worship

services that incorporate some traditional elements may provide a welcome respite from looking inward and instead focusing Godward.

This demographic also expressed concern, and even strong disdain, over ministers preaching on and asking for money. While churches and chapels need money to conduct services and provide ministry they must show wisdom in both how they ask for funds, and more importantly, how they are using the funds they have. Many members of the Millennial Generation and Generation Z believe that churches are focused too much on what happens inside the sanctuary and not enough on the needs of the community. According to the researcher's findings these generational cohorts do not want to be pushed into giving; however, if they see the funds are being used wisely inside and outside of the of the sanctuary, they will be more willing to partner with the church financially.

The last minor theme was childcare. Only one participant mentioned childcare, but it is worth noting that none of the participants were asked if they had children. Three mentioned their children during their interview, so the researcher does not know if more than three participants have children. The Millennials, and even more so Generation Z, are concerned with safety. They were overly sheltered as children and the Millennials are carrying out similar trends with their own children. Parents will often attend a chapel service for the sake of their children. If parents do not feel their children are safe and well cared for, they are not likely to return to a service or event. On the contrary, if parents are impressed with the professionalism of the childcare, love and education their children receive, they may return, if for no other reason than their children's well-being.

According to the responses of the interviewed participants, the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic are: clear, engaging and applicable communication; fostering authentic community; worship services that help young adults look outside of themselves through traditional and contemporary means; faithful stewardship of resources; and a safe and caring environment for their children.

The researcher found two differences between the soldiers interviewed and the civilian population. The first difference was in the category of diversity and inclusivity. Soldiers interviewed showed a willingness, and even excitement, to receive spiritual encouragement from a leader or peer. While the broader culture is very inclusive of different beliefs, they can readily perceive conversations that are intended to be encouraging as offensive or intolerant. The other area the researcher noticed a dissimilarity between the two groups was in the importance of technology. The participants' reliance on technology and social media, while evident, did not seem as strong as is reported in the civilian population. However, the researcher did not ask questions to ascertain how much time was spent on communication platforms, which may have been a better indicator. So, there is not enough data in the interviews to say with a level of certainty that it is less important or pervasive in the lives of the participants.

One area this research is wanting is a lack of religious diversity represented in the interviews. All the participants were raised in Christian homes and except for two of them, they still identify with some variation of Christianity. This study would have benefited from perspectives outside of the Christian and None perspectives. However, the religious preferences represented among the research participants are consistent with the

Army population. To include multiple religions in a study would require a much larger sample size and research study.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this study are a combination of the findings from the literature review and the interviews. Since the researcher determined that the 20 to 30-year-old soldier's beliefs and attitudes about religion are very similar to the civilian population some of the recommendations will come from approaches civilian religious leaders are using that would work well in an Army context. The recommendations will be divided in to two categories representing the two roles in which chaplains serve to accomplish the religious support mission: religious advisor and religious leader. The first three recommendations will focus on the role of advisor and the last six on the role of the chaplain as religious leader.

Chaplain as Religious Advisor

Chaplains need to go beyond traditional religious categories to advise their commanders on religion within their units. If it is difficult for chaplains to keep track of the changing religious landscape of the 20 to 30-year-old soldiers, then it likely follows the commander, who is probably in the same generational cohort as the chaplain, will not have a firm grasp on the nuances of his or her soldier's beliefs and attitudes towards religion. The traditional snapshots with the statistics of religious preferences listed in the unit, may be helpful to identify certain religious needs among low-density faith groups, but it will fail to capture what many believe and the importance of religion in their lives. The Armed Forces Chaplain Board added 221 religious preferences in March 2017 to

enhance fidelity in this area. While this is helpful to identify some faith groups and religious support needs in the Army, the problem is that many 20 to 30-year-olds do not want to be labeled. Because a soldier identifies as "no religious preference," does not indicate that religion is not important in his or her life. In fact, with the rise of Moral Therapeutic Deism, those who identify as Nones, and other more individualistic forms of religion, traditional categories will have less meaning. To provide commanders with an accurate description of the religious beliefs, attitudes, and needs within the unit chaplains must go outside of the traditional categories. Many chaplains may already be capturing this data with questionnaires for new soldiers arriving to the unit or through other means. Chaplains need to develop systems for understanding the unique religious beliefs and needs of the soldiers in their units and accurately advising command based on that information. This could be done through questionnaires, surveys, or conversations at a training event.

In 2008, CH (COL) Steve Peck made the recommended in his master's thesis that the Chief of Chaplains should contract researchers, such as the Barna Research Group of the Pew Research Foundation, to conduct Army wide surveys to faithfully capture the religious beliefs and perspectives of soldiers.[220] Due to rapid changes and shifts within religious views and practices, this recommendation is timelier than ever. While this research, performed for this current study, conducted interviews with soldiers to better understand this dynamic, it is not on the scope and level of detail that an outside

[220] John Stephen Peck, "Postmodern Chapel Services for Generation X and Millennial Generation Soldiers" (Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008), 119.

organization could provide. This data would provide chaplains and commanders a better picture of the religious needs within their units, help prioritize those religious support needs, offer appropriate programs, as well as, provide justification for resources to conduct religious support.

Chaplains should look for opportunities to provide basic religious education and promote religious participation. While this may appear obvious, it needs some explanation. A declining number young adult are growing up in religious homes, which is where most people received their religious education and values. The findings of the interviews revealed that soldiers are surprisingly open to talk about religion, if they do not feel it is being forced on them. They also feel that religious beliefs and practices help them deal with the stresses of military life. When it comes to promoting resiliency, some may not turn to religion simply because of ignorance. Events that are more educational in nature, than say a Bible study which is very focused, may resonate very well with those who do not have much of an understanding of what religion is and what it has to offer. While the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) addresses spirituality in a broad sense, the research referenced in the literature review shows that religious participation has a much greater impact on resiliency than a very nebulous view of spirituality. Chaplains may consider working with their respective Master Resiliency Trainers to teach a curriculum on religion and the benefits of religious participation concurrently with CSF2.

Chaplain as Religious Leader

The chaplain's role as religious leader is multi-faceted, demanding, and very personal. One competency that chaplains must master in order provide exceptional

religious leadership is the ability to communicate in a clear and engaging way to soldiers of every age. While most chaplains would assert preaching and communication as one of their strongest gifts, it is an area that Chaplain Corps must further develop in order to communicate to younger soldiers in the Army. While civilian pastors often preach on a weekly basis, a chaplain may only preach once every quarter in a chapel setting. This makes it difficult to receive regular feedback and make necessary adjustments for the next sermon.

For these reasons, the Office of the Chief of Chaplains (OCCH) should develop strategic partnerships with seminaries to provide opportunities for continued education for chaplains in preaching and communication. The OCCH should also establish a committee of chaplains that excel in preaching and would be available to chaplains across the Corps for input, criticism, and guidance to develop better preachers and preaching. This would be an additional duty on a yearly rotation. Chaplains could upload sermons to a designated site and the identified chaplains could provide them feedback in a timely manner.

Chaplains should use personal interaction to promote religious participation. According to the civilian research, the most effective way to attract people to church is by asking them and offering them a ride. People are more likely to attend a church service if someone they know invites them and offers to take them. The interviews conducted with soldiers also indicated a personal relationship with a minster or chaplain would contribute to a meaningful experience. Building relationships has been at the heart and soul of the Chaplain Corps since its inception and must continue if chaplains wish to stay relevant in

the future. Chaplains need to be intentional about building authentic relationships and promoting religious participation through those relationships.

Chapel services should include outreach and community building efforts. One of the most deserved complaints lodged against religious institutions is they are too self-focused. The Millennials and Generation Z are in search of churches and chapels that will facilitate their involvement in outreach. They desire to positively affect the world and hold the church accountable to its mandate to care for the sick, the broken-hearted, the widow and orphans.

Army chapels have an enormous capacity to contribute to outreach. While a typical church must pay a mortgage, a power bill, a pastor's salary, and other basic expenses, chapels do not incur theses expenses, Instead, the buildings and ministers are provided by the government. While there are expenses with childcare, musician contracts and other items, the overall expense of a chapel are significantly lower than a civilian church. Chaplains should consider opportunities to partner with local ministries in serving the community. This would provide occasion for those who aspire to be a part of an organization that is making a difference beyond their walls or service hours, to fulfill that desire within the military chapel.

Chaplains should encourage the development of small groups in chapels. This is a challenging ministry to produce in a chapel context due to transitions, training time in the field, and deployments, but one that has resonated well in the civilian community. Based on the interview participants' preference for face to face contact over virtual contact and the overall importance they place on relationships, there is great opportunity to build strong religious communities. Therefore, the chapel small group can become a family for

those away from their families. The most significant hurdle that prevents chapels from starting small groups is finding someone to lead them in a community where there is constant flux in participation and attendance.

One suggestion to mitigate the challenges of leading small groups is to encourage retirees to step into this role instead of active duty soldiers or chaplains. Retirees are often stable in their communities and can provide a consistent meeting place. The other benefit to allowing retirees to facilitate small groups, is that it places parental figures in the lives of young adults. The Millennials and Generation Z rely heavily upon their parents well into their late twenties and early thirties with the development of emerging adulthood. Having retirees involved in hosting or leading small groups could be an effective method to bring the entire chapel family together in a meaningful way by offering a useful form of mentorship and discipleship in the small groups.

Chaplains should explore the best technological and social media platforms to provide religious support to the soldiers under their care. The most popular social media platform used by the research participants, even the youngest, was Facebook. The best platform, however, is the one the individual chaplain's audience will most likely follow him or her on, which could be different from unit to unit. The most utilized method to communicate could be discovered by a simple survey administered periodically in the unit. This may be easier for chaplains who are digital natives than those who are digital immigrants, but it is a rather simple and powerful way to regularly communicate and encourage soldiers no matter where they are located. Several interview participants used Facebook, YouTube, Periscope, e-mail, and Christian radio stations for encouragement.

While modern technology does have some negative drawbacks, it can be a simple and effective resource for providing religious support.

The Chief of Chaplains should direct for the establishment of a yearly compilation and publication of best ministry practices within the Chaplain Corps. The researcher is aware that many chaplains throughout the Army are striving to discover the most effective approaches to provide effective ministry to 20 to 30-year-old soldiers. The problem is that knowledge of these approaches and programs do not often transfer from one installation to another. This causes wasted time, energy, and resources when chaplains feel the need to reinvent the wheel, when in fact, another chaplain may have already developed a successful program that will suit the needs of their unit. When successful programs are developed there must be a formal method within the Chaplain Corps to report and share them. If there are chaplains who have researched this area, developed effective programs, or those coming to the Chaplain Corps out of youth or college ministry, this would be the forum for the entire Corps to benefit from their expertise and hard work.

Although the researcher was able to answer the primary research question and provide recommendations for immediate implementation, there were areas that time and resources prevented from exploring in this research.

Areas for Future Research

One area that needs further exploration is establishing the role of religious participation in resiliency training. There is a growing body of research, inside and outside of the Army, that demonstrates a strong correlation between religious participation and increased resiliency. While CSF2 promotes spirituality in a very broad

sense taught by a Master Resiliency Trainer, chaplains do not teach this program, nor should they since religion is one category within the greater spirituality concept. Future study needs to be conducted on an officially recognized curriculum that defines religions, broadly explains the different religions, the benefits of religious participation, and local institutions and opportunities to practice. Such a course could help educate an increasingly religiously illiterate culture and promote a greater understanding and respect within the Army for those who hold different beliefs.

This research focused on the religious beliefs, attitudes, and needs of 20 to 30-year-old soldiers and sought to discover successful civilian approaches and programs that may prove effective in the military context. One area of further researcher is to survey existing programs and approaches that are currently employed within the Army, their effectiveness, and replicability on different installations and in different units.

The last area for future research is to explore the best ministry approaches and methods for the smaller faith groups within the Army population such as: Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, as well as many others. Different faiths have different religious support needs that are also affected by the broader culture. This study would have to take place at a larger installation or across several installations to achieve a sufficient sample size.

Conclusion

Throughout the history of the United States Army, at home and abroad, in times of peace and war, the Chaplain Corps has provided religious support tailored to the needs of the current generation. The purpose of this study was to understand the changing religious needs of the Army's largest demographic and the best approaches and methods

to provide them with religious support. The researcher used a qualitative research method to accomplish this through a review of civilian-focused studies, professional writings, and semi-structured interviews with participants from the Army's largest demographic. Analysis of the data revealed two major themes and three minor themes. Soldiers in the Army's largest demographic desire clear and engaging communication, authentic community, traditional and contemporary elements of worship to draw their focus toward God, faithful stewardship of chapel resources, and excellent childcare. These themes yielded nine recommendations for chaplains in response to the primary research question, "What are the best approaches for chaplains to use to provide religious support to the Army's largest demographic?" While this study provides an important understanding of influences shaping the religious beliefs and practices of soldiers and approaches to provide religious support, further research with a larger population base that also includes non-Christian faiths would greatly aid chaplains and commanders to ensure the religious needs of all their soldiers are supported in a meaningful manner. Pro Deo et Patria.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Opening Question

Tell me a little bit about where you are from and what, if any, part religion played a role in your life growing up.

Demographic Information:

Age:

Questions:

Is religion and/or spirituality important to you? How or why not?

Do you observe any religious/spiritual practices? If so, what are they?

What is your religious preference? Why?

If religion/spirituality is important to you, do you find that it helps you to deal with the stresses of military life? How?

Do you feel more connected through personnel interaction or through social media?

What types of technology do you use? Do you feel it has a positive or negative impact on your religion/spirituality?

How would you feel if someone in your chain of command, or a coworker shared part of their spiritual journey to foster spiritual resiliency? Why?

What would you find meaningful in a religious/spiritual event or service?

Are there any things (practices, attitudes, etc.) that turn you away from religious support programs, services, or activities?

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