

GEN-Z AND MILLENNIAL PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
MESSAGES FROM CHURCHES: IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE
MESSAGING FRAMES USING MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

by

Hannah Boss

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Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Ashley English, Ph.D.

Department of Strategic Communication

Esther Paik, Ph.D.

Department of Communication Studies

Darren Middleton, Ph.D.

Department of Religion

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Abstract

This study focuses on how the Moral Foundations Theory could be used to determine what kinds of messages influence the millennial and Gen-Z audience in their perception of church institutions and their desire to attend church events that focus on police brutality as they engage with social media content. This study found that all messaging was effective in its wording, however the fairness/cheating stimuli was found to be most effective messaging with words such as, “defending the rights of the poor,” “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,” and “speak out against racial discrimination,” being most effective. A key individual factor that influences the audiences perception of these messages is whether they attend church already, versus not at all. For the church crowd, it was found that the fairness/cheating messaging resonated best. Whereas, the non-churched audience found that sanctity/degradation messaging was more effective. This study also discovered a cohesive consensus that social media is the preferred messaging platform for reaching this audience with social justice due to its convenience and ability to hear what others have to say on the issue. This thesis is meant to impact and assist how church communicators utilize social media to talk about police brutality and social justice issues.

Introduction

With every generation there is a new sense of urgency placed on different topics thanks to the ever changing world that we live in. Young adults today have a burden to see the end of racial inequality and this is seen in their involvement in various organizations like Black Lives Matter and Freedom March NYC. This involvement carries over to their preference for the brands and institutions that they care about to also be an active participant in the fight against police brutality through various corporate social responsibility strategies. The church is included in these institutions that young adults would like to see speak out on social justice issues, specifically looking at police brutality.

This thesis examines how older Gen Z and millennials respond to social justice messaging from the contemporary church. The contemporary church for this purpose is considered Protestant megachurches within the United States. This type of congregation has a very effective use of social media that is different than past generations of the church and it is largely due to the idea that the church must adapt to the surrounding environment rather than resist it (Batchelder, 2020). One tactic for the church to reach this audience with their social justice messaging in a way that connects best to this audience is to consider the use of the Moral Foundations Theory when generating messaging for this audience to intake. The religious undertones already associated with this theory makes it a great strategy for church communicators.

The study conducted aims to discover which moral foundation is best for various audiences. The survey that was used to gather data had 149 respondents aging from 18-32 years of age. The goal of the research was to answer which moral foundation frame influences the

attitudes of young adults towards social justice and their intention to engage in church activities related to social justice issues. It also looks at what individual factors may interact with moral foundation frames to influence how young adults react to social justice communication from churches. Lastly, it looks at what communication channels are preferred by young adults in regard to social justice communication.

The question then becomes, how do church communicators marry this desire for effective communication on social justice issues of the world and while staying true to the heart of their institutions? We argue that the Moral Foundations Theory would be an applicable solution. Through testing messaging that reflect various moral foundations with an audience of young adults, the results yield whether these moral foundations are an effective strategy for reaching this audience and shift their perspective of church and move them from passive to active in their participation with the institution.

Literature Review

Police Brutality and the Emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement

It is no secret that the United States has a long history of racism that stretches to its founding and beyond. The spotlight on racism in recent years has largely been shed towards police brutality and the frequency of it being talked about has picked up as well. The Smithsonian created an exhibit in 2017 that went through the history of police brutality in the United States that began in the 1830s. The first institutionalized police force was formed in North in 1838 and was especially harsh on immigrant populations. The influx of African-Americans fleeing the Jim Crow south also saw the brunt end of this. In the late 1920s, the Illinois Association for Criminal Justice published the Illinois Crime Survey. This survey

showed that even though African-Americans only made up 5% of the population, they made up 30% of deaths at the hands of the police (Nodjimbadem, 2022).

Just over 30 years later, the United States is launched into its Civil Rights Era with notable moments such as the murder of black civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson by a police officer in Alabama. This eventually led to “Bloody Sunday” where peaceful protestors that would not back down were beaten, teargassed and hospitalized at the hands of police officers in Selma, Alabama (History, 2022).

Nearly fifty years later and the same conversation is being had about police brutality under the Black Lives Matter movement. In 2014, Michael Brown was murdered by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Tamir Rice, Tanisha Anderson, Mya Hall, Sandra Bland, and Walter Scott were all victims of police brutality from 2014 to 2015 with the result of the loss of their lives. The Black Lives Matter movement was the response to this (Black Lives Matter, 2022). Generation Z is at the forefront of this movement as it reignited with fervor following the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 by a police officer in Minneapolis. They are largely accountable for the population within the protests and for the organizing of various platforms. (Bellan, 2020.)

Millennials/Gen-Z church participation

Gen Z is defined as the age group born between 1997-2010. The older Gen-Z cohort is going to be born between 1997-2003. Millennials are classified as born between 1980-1996. The cohort of this age group used in this study are born between 1990-1996. There is a trend in the contemporary setting where younger generations are leaving the church. This is explored in the literature by looking at why young adults, younger millennials and older Gen Zers, are attending church less. CQ Researcher attempted to provide an answer as to why this is and related it to the

growing sect of religious “nones” (Ladika, 2018). PEW research combines atheists, agnostics and those that identify with “nothing in particular” as a part of this group (PEW, 2020). Religious “nones” are born out of a questioning of religious authority and this questioning has led to less participation in organized religion. Katharine Moody conducts research on the intersection of the philosophy of religion, radical theology and the empirical study of religion. She wrote an article discussing this young adult group and how they define their emerging Christian and religious identities where she claims that both churched and unchurched millennials agree that churches are, “judgmental, hypocritical, and homophobic; shallow, consumerist, and individualistic; exclusivist and intolerant; and both separated from culture and science.” Moody says that there is a growing affinity to be anti-church while remaining religious (Moody, 2017). Ultimately, this means that young adults are more against religion as an institution in comparison to religion as a personal practice. The CQ Research group found this to be interesting because young adults have regularly been found to be the demographic least likely to regularly attend church, but the older Gen Z and younger Millennial generations are waiting longer than previous generations to initiate life milestones like getting married and having kids (Ladika, 2018). These tend to be the factors that drive young adults back into the church context, but with this delay, comes a delay with church re-entry as well.

Along with attendance as a factor of participation in church, there is also a concern about how connected this young adult age group is to the church as an institution. A case study on how millennials feel about their connection to the church, specifically the Seventh Day Adventist church yielded results that are similar to what has been discussed previously. Those that participated in the focus group that helped identify shifting dynamics between millennials and the church agreed that they felt very connected to their church, but there are changing attitudes

towards institutionalized religion and, specifically, how sexuality fits into that context. (Jacobs, 2019) This aligns with what was mentioned earlier in Moody's research about millennials seeing the church with a more negative connotation. Moving forward, this research shows that young adults are still very capable of making a connection to a church institution, but there needs to be a pivot in communication in response to the changing perspectives within the young adult audience, especially in regards to inclusion aspects.

Another aspect of participation comes from interacting with church messaging that comes through the content that the organization puts out. What convinces this audience to interact with content? Colleen Dulle is a co-editor for *America* and hosts the "Inside the Vatican" podcast. She says that she has seen this similar trend mentioned previously, specifically within Catholicism when it comes to the generations meant to be the church's next leaders. She says that the best way to reach the generations that seem to be declining in attendance is by bringing faith "outside of the sanctuary and into the streets," (Dulle, 2018). This means that the young adult age group wants to see words followed up with action. This idea is backed by research from Kristin Joker, Editorial Director of BNP Media. Joker focuses her work on building brand and brand packaging strategies and says that these audiences are not motivated by performativity. Performativity for this purpose is described as something done for show to encourage a transactional relationship rather than the pursuance of actual change. Young adults today are more interested in authenticity from brands and institutions. She says that the best way for a brand to reach the Gen-Z audience is to represent everyone, be authentic and help them change the world (Joker, 2019). Brand research could offer a valuable perspective for church communicators, because both areas of work are interested in persuading their audiences to interact with content they create in order to think or act in a specific way toward an overall goal. The difference is that a brand's product is

physical and a church's product is spiritual. In order to reach a Millennial audience, Seoyeon Kim (2020) conducted research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies that Millennials responded best to. Her research yielded results that said 40% of this generation is willing to support or boycott a company based on their CSR activism. She also found that this was subjective to the cause and whether the consumer agreed or disagreed with the positioning, but overall, it is important to that generation that there is a CSR strategy in place. (Kim, 2020) Teresa McGlone confirms this research in her own look at the Millennials and CSR. According to her findings, 61% of millennials feel personally responsible for making a difference, even if that is with purchasing power (McGlone, 2011).

This CSR research can easily translate to the church's understanding of their declining Millennial and Gen-Z audience. Corporate social responsibility is often entangled with activist causes and if that is something that these audiences want their brands to participate in, it is logical to draw the conclusion that churches can reach these audiences through the same CSR tactics. Morgan Lee wrote the article, "Why Black Churches are Keeping Millennials," and it details out many reasons, but the activist aspect is often one of them. She says that this retention rate in Black churches is largely due to the fact that the church is a place of encouragement and functions for purposes beyond theology. There is a history of activism within the Black church especially when looking back to antebellum and Jim Crow era. The church was the only institution that a black person could lead without persecution at that time. This activism has continue to the present and has led to Black millennials having the expectations of their church to have "authenticity that lives beyond the worship hour." (Lee, 2015) This provides insight to what is required of a church to maintain their millennial and Gen-Z audience.

Social Justice Communication and the Black Lives Matter Movement

Social justice is not a new conversation, but it is one that has gained traction in recent years. The Black Lives Matter Movement has been around since 2013 following the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the aftermath of the murder of 17 year old, Trayvon Martin, in Sanford, Florida. The movement grew the following year in response to the deaths of Michael Brown in Missouri and Eric Garner in New York (Howard University). Both men were victims of police brutality.

In May of 2020, George Floyd became another victim of police brutality. This allowed for the Black Lives Matter movement to pick up steam nationally in regards to in person protests and social media presence. Monica Anderson has been following and reporting on the use of the #BlackLivesMatter since 2016, her data shows that the use of the hashtag spikes surrounding certain events, but following the death of George Floyd, the hashtag is used eight times more than its largest spike since 2013 (Anderson, 2020). *Business Insider's* study on young adults and their use of social media to speak out about the issue of racial inequality and police brutality affirms this. According to their research, 78% of young adults have utilized social media to voice their support of racial equality in America (Davis, 2020).

A writer for *Forbes* calls social media “The Great Organizer,” because of the way the young adults have managed to take it from superficial to “revolutionary” in its use (Bellan, 2020). The organization of the protests following the murder of George Floyd happened largely on social media. These movements were able to come together quickly due to the speed at which information spreads through social media and this is largely driven by the youth. Nupol Kiazolu is an American Activist and founder of Vote 2000 and at 19 years old lead the protest in New York City immediately following George Floyd’s Death. Chelsea Miller at 24 years old is the

founder of Freedom March NYC that forms non-violent protests to fight for black youth issues. Young adults are at the helm of the Black Lives Matter movement and social media is their vessel to get information out.

The young adults that are leading this wave of the Black Lives Matter movement are also using social media to demand more out of the brands that they love and encouraging them to not only express where they stand on the issue of police brutality and racial inequality, but also put their money towards the issue. According to a study by Stylus, 59% of Americans aged 16-34 want to see brands make supportive statements and 58% want these brands to supplement these statements with donations (Morano-Williams, 2020). This is helpful to understand as a church communicator because there is an expectation from the young adults leading this movement to have everyone that is in a position of power take a stance on an issue that they clearly care about.

The church's relationship with addressing racism in the past has not been easy. Previous teachings have settled for what is palatable for most. This ultimately meant that conversations about race were about personal experiences and encounters rather than the institutions that they needed to be about. The Black Lives Matter movement has forced the church to reconcile this. The message of togetherness is not enough for young people that are spearheading this wave of racial justice (Griswold, 2020). As mentioned previously, young adults are leaving the church, Bishop Yvette Flunder, senior pastor of City of Refuge, attributes this to the fact that, "[young adults are] trying to find like-minded millennials who are very interested in doing the work of policy, justice and organizing. And they're feeling like the church... is not really on board," (Turner, 2021). There is a general consensus that the church is slow to engage in the conversation of race, but there are some that are engaging in this conversation. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America issued a statement in regards to Black Lives Matter that details their

regret to have had any role in perpetuating the cycle of systemic racism and also that they stand in solidarity with the black community (ELCA). Understanding where the church sits currently in the eyes of young adults and their expectations for brands in regards to speaking out and taking action towards the Black Lives Matter movement, shows the disconnect between the church as an institution and young adults currently.

Young Adult Use of Social Media for Social Justice Communication

When considering the strategies that best target the older Gen Z and younger Millennial audiences, it is important to understand the mediums that they often use and how they use them. According to research done by the Mintel Group (2021), 99% of Gen Zers have at least one social media platform that they utilize. If they are the audience, the best way to target them is through savvy social media campaigns. Sociologist Elain Kaplan, says that from her observations, Gen Zers are more likely to utilize social media as a sounding board for every aspect of their life. In comparison, Kaplan describes the Millennial use of social media as a more tailored experience. Mintel also says that when targeting Millennials on social media it is important to make the messaging resonate. By this they mean that the Millennial generation needs to be reminded of community and security in their messaging. They are likely not going to buy into any belief or product without reading reviews or crowd sourcing for the opinions of others (Kaplan, 2020). Through reading reviews given by their community, there is a sense of trust that is more easily placed in the products. This is applicable to church communication because there is a feedback loop readily available on all social media platforms in the form of a comment section. Consumers are likely to gather how others feel about the messages that communicators put out through this feature.

It is also important to note that while both audiences use social media frequently, it is also a large source of news for them. Jonathan Cox (2021) conducted a case study of 35 students to see where they got most of their information in regard to the Black Lives Matter Movement. Twenty four of those 35 students exclusively received their information from various social media platforms. He notes that social media does not exist within a bubble, but it is actually a part of a larger media machine that reports on society. This backs up previous statements claiming that social media is most likely the best way to capture the attention of young adults.

June Francis (2020) posed the question: Do Black Lives Matter to marketing? To find the answer to this she performed a literary review of articles that included terms such as “race,” “racism,” and “slavery.” Through this search she found that marketing tactics are currently very “whitewashed” and do not do a great job at isolating race or representing BIPOC peoples in advertising. She echoes much of what has been discussed already in regard to performativity. She says, “If we aim for transformative rather than performative change, every area should be subject to interrogation” (Francis, 2020, p.142). Church communicators are often in the business of transformative messaging due to the nature of the territory that they work in. This idea can be translated to their external messaging as well.

Social justice communication and the church

Social Justice is a term that is used often in reference to an array of things. For the purpose of this thesis, social justice is defined as, “The objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest” (Oxford Reference, 2022).

There are different ways congregations engage with social justice issues. A case study by Laura Krull (2020) exemplified this in her observance of Dogwood Church in North Carolina.

Dogwood Church has labeled itself a progressive institution that believes itself to be an “inclusive” institution. This inclusivity depends wholeheartedly on the view that “conservatism” is an exclusivist theory. What this inevitably did was shift the paradigm for the congregation to be exclusive to those with conservative beliefs and backgrounds (Krull, 2020). This shows that the church can have a strong influence on its members and their beliefs to a point where it could actually over-correct in regards to social justice. The goal is not to be so progressive that inclusive becomes exclusive, but to invite pluralism.

Another point of contention that comes up when discussing the church and its habits of social justice work is detailed out by John Delehanty (2016). In his work he describes how faith-based community organizers have a hard time shifting perspectives of congregations from an individualistic mindset to an activist minded one. He says that it is the comfortable culture that hinders progression of social justice activism taking place (Delehanty, 2016). This “comfortable culture” he describes is a factor that makes it harder for communicators to discuss any form of social justice from any stage or media platform because of the focus on offending the individual rather than the focus on the larger issues.

Delehanty’s work plays into Jeanette Baust’s (2005) in depth dive into what evangelical, mainline, and new thought congregations thought about racism in the United States today in regards to congregation involvement in social justice. She surveyed 452 members of 12 churches in the greater Denver area and asked them a series of questions where the responses showed that almost 80% of members thought that the church should have an active role in alleviating racism, 70% said that their church addressed the issue of race and 70% said that they would like their pastor to speak about race when preaching. Of the respondents, only 35% said that race affects their daily lives. Taking these statistics into consideration, it is evident that church members want

to be more educated by institutions that they trust and see as moral leaders on issues of race. Baust also found that only 20% of churchgoers thought that the U.S. had finally achieved equality regarding race relations and that our attention should now turn to other issues. This still shows that a large percentage of members want to go deeper in their places of worship in regard to social justice issues. The conclusion that Baust came to is that “[congregants] are often confused about whether racism is still a problem, how bad it is, or what they can or should do about it... it seems there is little conversation about race in congregant’s daily lives and in their churches.” (Baust, 2005, p. 222) Her work shows that by understanding the needs of the congregation, church staff can better communicate on social justice issues.

Another case study done by Jessica Barron (2016) published in the *Sociology of Religion* focused on a church in Downtown Chicago, Illinois, that was 75% white with an average congregant age of 25. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of congregational diversity in an evangelical urban church. What Barron found was that “racial diversity is essential to the urban experience, [and] an expected component of city churches” (Barron, 2016, p. 32). This essentially means that due to the location of this church and the racial diversity typically present in city centers, conversations about race are hard to avoid. Since these conversations are unavoidable, it is important for church leadership to engage with them in an educated manner.

These case studies have emphasized the importance of communicating on racial issues and shown the members’ desire to know more about these racial issues. A form of communication that megachurches are often praised for is their social media use. Jordan Morehouse and Adam Saffer (2021) conducted a study of megachurch social media use to decipher what strategy was most effective for connecting with members. They found that the

approach that garnered the most engagement was the God-congregant approach with a caveat that geographical location and cultural differences also play a key role in what members tend to engage with most (Morehouse & Saffer, 2021). This God-Congregant engagement strategy is a play on an audience-object strategy where the object is God, Jesus, the Bible, prayer, baptism, and Satan. If a church wanted to communicate more effectively on the issues of race, this study would suggest employing a more persuasive, God-Congregant approach. This looks like creating content that redirects the audience's attention to any of the objects previously mentioned.

Circling back to the conversation previously had about CSR, it is important to mention here that the authenticity of these conversations is important because young adults do not respond well to performativity in regards to these conversations. Jeongwon Yang (2021) and his colleagues conducted a study of social media posts surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020. What they found through 110 Instagram posts and 32,702 comments was that brands garnered the harshest feedback from consumers in comparison to Black influencers. This tells us that consumers prefer credible sources to speak to these important topics rather than blanket statements from brands.

Moral Foundations Theory and Church Messaging

The Moral Foundations Theory is a psychological theory that attempts to explain how morals can vary across so many different cultures, yet still have so many similarities. This psychological perspective could be helpful for church communicators to understand how to improve relations with young adults surrounding subjects like police brutality and racial inequality more broadly. The systems of the Moral Foundation Theory are as follows: Care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression. These themes are found in religions across the globe and seem to be common

ground for all to stand on. (Dobolyi, 2021) The categories of moral foundations are born from the fourth claim of the theory that says, "...innate mental structures, such as the moral foundations, are likely to be responses to adaptive challenges that faced our ancestors for a very long time," (Graham, 2013, pg. 67). This pluralistic view explains why multiple foundations exist. With many experiences, came many adaptations. Not everyone shares the same moral foundation at the same capacity because each foundation has its own set of triggers associated with it (Graham, 2013, pg. 67). This is further confirmed with Jonathan Haidt's work on applying the Moral Foundations Theory to politics. Haidt explains that the palate of liberals and conservatives are not the same, "...Liberals rely heavily on care/harm and fairness/cheating while conservatives rely on all foundations somewhat equally," (Schuman, 2018). Through this lens, the topic of police brutality can be better focused because of the polarizing effect it has had in politics today. The Moral Foundations Theory is easily able to allow room for the consideration of political ideology.

In Graeme Trayner's (2017) paper "Why Values Matter," he touches on the fact that there is a shift towards the public being a more values driven consumer. This has been mentioned several times in regards to the importance of CSR to young adults. By understanding the moral foundations that audiences build their life on, communicators can also more accurately predict the attitude of an audience according to Trayner. Ain Simpson (2017) takes these systems a step further and organizes them into categories of autonomy, community, and divinity. This categorization is meant to create an understanding of the foundations that govern them. Autonomy has to do with the principles that pertain to the self. Community looks at the values that protect groups or collectives. Divinity focuses on values that protect the spirit from degradation. (Simpson, 2017) The question is then, how does this understanding help church

communicators? By understanding the morals that impact audiences and are generally universal, communicators can tailor messages to utilize the common systems of value that appear to be cross-cultural to reach a wider audience.

In the article, “Moral Framing and Information Virality in Social Movements: A Case Study of #HongKongPoliceBrutality,” Rong Wang and Wenlin Liu discuss how the moral foundations of the Moral Foundations Theory have been applicable to the social justice movements in Hong Kong. According to the authors, the care/harm foundation makes, “individuals sensitive to signs of suffering and cruelty.” This is tied back to social justice through understanding that care is motivated through individuals recognizing police brutality as being a violation of care. The second moral foundation, fairness/cheating, focuses itself around justice and rights. “It makes individuals sensitive to signs of exploitation and motivates the to shun or punish cheaters,” according to the authors. Injustice is the frame through which activists in the social justice sphere mobilize their movements. The next foundation, loyalty/betrayal, emphasizes the ability to form in and out groups based on mutual trust and reward while also ostracizing those that betray the group. “Collective identity motivates social movement participation through norms of obligation, reciprocity, and shared grievances,” according to the authors. This collective identity is tied with morality for many groups, the authors argue that this increases comradery with victims and see them as a part of the in group that gains protection and loyalty from the in groups. The fourth foundations, authority/subversion centers around proper social order and hierarchies. This foundation causes friction with activists because, “social movements often involve challenging power holders and fostering social change.” The authors claim that it is the violation of authority that causes the insurgence of activists. The last foundation is sanctity/degradation, and it focuses on concerns of the spiritual variety. According

to the authors, “sanctity helps justify social causes that individuals may support,” due to vigorous role religion can play in a person's life (Wang, 2021).

Research Questions:

Through reviewing the literature I have discovered that young adults are either leaving the church or are identifying with the ever growing group of “religious nones.” On top of this, these audiences are also delaying the life milestones that often bring them back to church settings sooner. They are also an integral part of the digital age. A majority of them have a rather extensive digital footprint that exists, but on top of that, they are leading the charge in values based advertising. These values are heavily social justice based for this generation and it is seen through their ongoing trailblazing in the social justice activism spheres whether that is creating a foundation or using their purchasing power. This is important to understand as it translates to church communications. These audiences are seeking more authenticity in all aspects of life and are holding everyone accountable for their actions when talking about social justice issues. They do not want to see performativity, but transformation. With this information in mind, my research questions are as follows:

RQ1: Which moral foundation frame is most effective in terms of changing the attitudes of young adults towards social justice and their intention to engage in church activities related to social justice issues?

RQ2: What individual factors directly influence or interact with moral foundation frames to influence how Millennials and older Gen-Z audiences react to social justice communication from churches?

RQ3: What communication channels are more preferred by Millennials and older Gen-Z audiences when communicating about social justice, and why?

Methodology

To answer the study's research questions, young adults born between 1991 and 2004 completed a Qualtrics survey to evaluate the message effectiveness of three Instagram posts from a fictitious congregation that addressed the topic of police brutality.

For this project, an experimental design was chosen for its ability to compare multiple sets of quantitative data that the survey gathered. Through this method, more direct relationships between variables can be drawn, which is why it is helpful to ask demographic questions before beginning questions on the subject matter. Participants were randomly assigned to evaluate the effectiveness of three message stimuli based on the moral foundations of care/harm, fairness/cheating, and sanctity/degradation. We originally created prompts for all five pillars of Moral Foundations Theory, but after a manipulation test with 37 students, these three foundations were found to be the most different from each other. Participants were randomly assigned only one moral foundations message in the survey.

The Qualtrics Survey was used to present an Instagram mockup pages with moral foundations message condition and measure participants' perception, attitudes, and behavioral intentions after reading the given message.

Participation in the study was voluntary and consent was provided by each participant before taking the survey. The protocol for this study was approved by TCU's Institutional Review Board prior to collecting data. This study used convenience sampling, and participants

were recruited through social media posts on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook accounts connected to the researcher. Emails with the survey link were distributed to TCU students primarily in the Department of Strategic Communication, and some students were offered extra credit for participating in this survey. The first two questions on the survey obtained consent from participants and verified they fell within the required age range for this study.

The survey first asked demographic questions, including religion, church attendance, gender, and political affiliation. Then the survey shows an Instagram Mockup which was accompanied by text that reflected one of the moral foundations listed previously. After reading the mockup, participants were asked about how they perceived the tone of the message and how much they would be interested in knowing more about social justice and attending a church event surrounding social justice issues. The point of the measures was to determine which moral foundation caused a young adult observer to take action in response to a church's communication about social justice issues.

Findings

The survey launched on April 5, 2022, and the Qualtrics survey used to collect data for this study received 149 responses. Of those responses, the highest political affiliation was Democrat, the highest religious affiliation was Christian and the majority of participants self identify as female. When looking at the data collected it is important to note that for the gauging questions in the survey a 5-point Likert scale was used to determine how strongly someone agrees with the statements that were provided to them. "Strongly Agree" has a value of 1 where "Strongly Disagree" has a value of 5 in the data. Data were analyzed using the ANOVA to

determine how moral foundation message influenced participant's perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions.

The first research question was: Which moral foundation frame is most effective in terms of changing the attitudes of young adults towards social justice and their intention to engage in church activities related to social justice issues? The ANOVA results showed that there were no significant effects of moral foundation frame alone. The three frames were not significantly different from each other in terms of main effects. However, as I describe in the following, when individual factors were considered, there were certainly more effective moral foundation messages than others.

The second research question asked was: What individual factors ~~directly influence or~~ interact with moral foundation frames to influence how Millennials and older Gen-Z audiences react to social justice communication from churches? Among many individual factors we measured, the results suggest that whether the participant attends church regularly or not interacted with moral foundation frames to influence reactions.

Statistical differences were found in terms of how participants perceived emotional tone. In table 1.1 the results for those that attend church regularly are highlighted in yellow and those that do not are highlighted in blue. This data shows that for those who attend church, the sanctity/degradation message was perceived as less emotional than the care/harm and fairness/cheating moral foundations. For those who do not go to church, the fairness/cheating message was perceived as less emotional than the others. For both populations, the care/harm message was perceived as more emotional. We also found statistically significant differences between the rationale nature of each message condition. The fairness condition was more consistently rated as having a more rational tone than the fairness and sanctity conditions.

emotional

church	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					1	30		
2	32	2.13	.907	.160	1.80	2.45	1	4
3	21	2.43	1.121	.245	1.92	2.94	1	5
Total	83	2.18	.990	.109	1.96	2.40	1	5
2	21	2.00	.632	.138	1.71	2.29	1	3
1	19	2.79	1.228	.282	2.20	3.38	1	5
3	26	2.27	1.079	.212	1.83	2.71	1	5
Total	66	2.33	1.043	.128	2.08	2.59	1	5

Table 1.1

Next, statistical differences were found in terms of participant's interest in learning more about various social justice issues. Table 1.2 reveals that those that attend church regularly were less likely to seek more information about social justice issues after reading the sanctity messaging than the others. The opposite is true of the non regularly attending crowd. Participants with church experience were more likely to agree that the care and fairness message conditions made them want to know more about social justice issues. However, participants with church experience, were neutral or in disagreement that the sanctity message made them want to know more about social justice issues.

When considering the same impact for the non-church attendees, they agreed that all three message conditions made them want to know more about social justice issues, with the sanctity message rating the highest. However, all three were in the 2.60 – 2.98 range, which is closer to neither agree nor disagree than agree.

Descriptives

interestjustice									
church	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
1	1	27	2.44	.892	.172	2.09	2.80	1	4
	2	27	2.44	.892	.172	2.09	2.80	1	4
	3	18	3.11	1.231	.290	2.50	3.72	1	5
	Total	72	2.61	1.015	.120	2.37	2.85	1	5
2	1	20	2.95	.887	.198	2.53	3.37	1	4
	2	18	2.89	.963	.227	2.41	3.37	1	4
	3	25	2.60	1.000	.200	2.19	3.01	1	5
	Total	63	2.79	.953	.120	2.55	3.03	1	5

Table 1.2

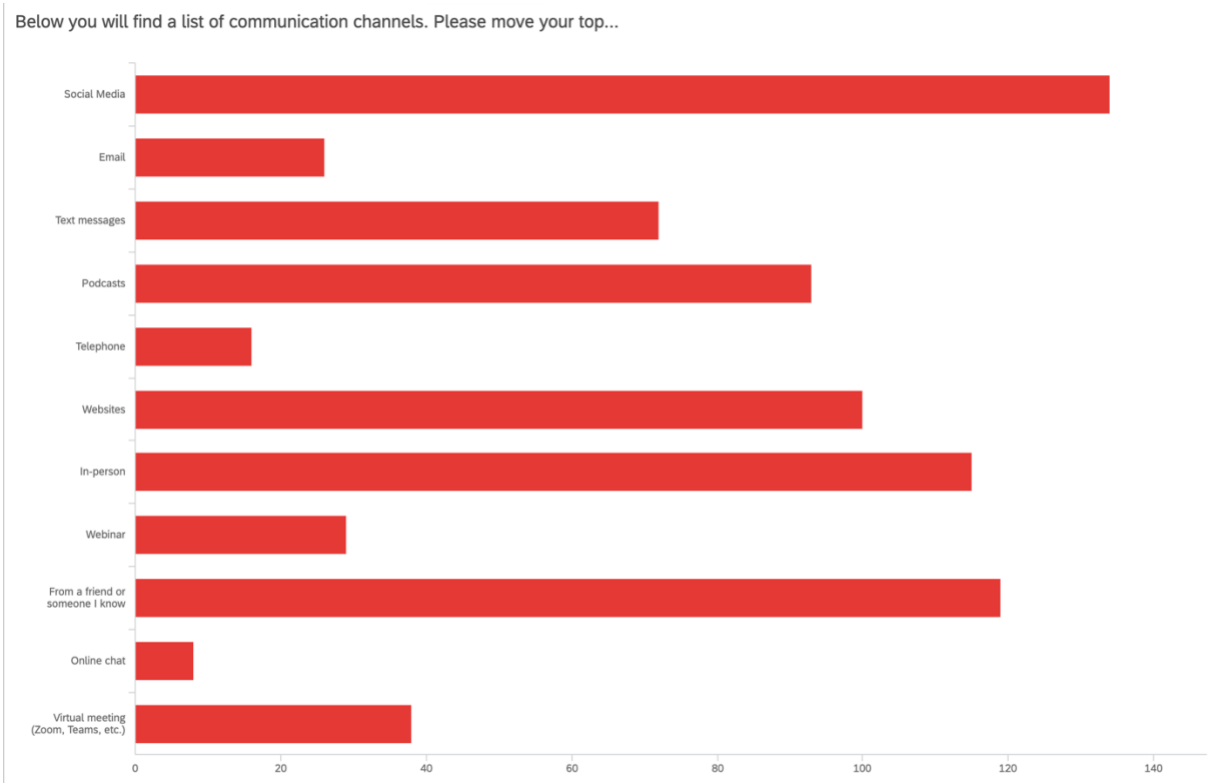
Table 1.2 shows the results of behavioral intentions of participants after reading the message. Question 18 of the survey was about whether the message stimuli is effective in causing the participant to want to attend events by that church that surround social justice issues. We found that the fairness condition was the highest-rated when church-going participants stated they were more likely to attend a social justice event at this church after reading the message. However, all three conditions were rated closer to a neutral position.

For non-church attendees, sanctity messages rated the highest when participants stated they were more likely to attend a social justice event at the church. However, all three were in the 3.36 – 3.57 range. The fairness condition prompted the most disagreement with the likelihood to attend a social justice event at the church for non-church attenders.

attendchurchevents

church	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					1	27		
2	27	2.93	1.141	.220	2.47	3.38	1	5
3	18	3.56	1.097	.258	3.01	4.10	2	5
Total	72	3.33	1.101	.130	3.07	3.59	1	5
2	20	3.50	.827	.185	3.11	3.89	2	5
2	18	3.67	1.085	.256	3.13	4.21	1	5
3	25	3.36	1.036	.207	2.93	3.79	2	5
Total	63	3.49	.982	.124	3.24	3.74	1	5

The third research question focused on is: What communication channels are more preferred by Millennials and older Gen-Z audiences when communicating about social justice, and why?



The table above shows the communication channels chosen most often when the

participants were asked to choose the top five communication channels for social justice. Social media had the highest engagement with 134 responses, followed by “from a friend” with 119 votes, “in person” with 112 votes, websites with 89 votes, and podcasts with 79 votes. This provides further substantiation for previous research that claims young adults care about what other have to say on topics and often crowd source information before coming to their own conclusions. When asked to elaborate on why the participant chose the channel that they did, many answers were in agreement that social media is the most convenient source while face to face conversation creates a space where empathy is more effective.

Implications

The data collected validated previous findings in the literature review that show that there is a growing group of religious “nones” also associated with the “spiritual but not religious” affiliation. Of the top three self identification factors of the survey gives, religion none was the third highest result. Question 7 on the survey gauged where the participants fell in their knowledge of social justice issues and it also confirmed previous research done that implies that this generation in particular is passionate about the topic of social justice issues. Most reported being very knowledgeable on the topic. There is also the question of what platform is this generation best reached on, which is identified with question 29. Previous literature discussed says that this generation is found largely on social media because of its function as an open forum of ideas, and the responses received in the survey back this information up as well. Social media is the number one source of information for those that participated followed by websites and in-person conversations.

The survey findings focus on two audiences within the young adult group; those that attend church regularly and those that do not. This was important because it made a distinction in

purpose for the stimuli. To an audience that regularly attends church, the fairness/cheating message is likely to convince them to attend a church event that is hosted as well. For the non-churched audience, the messaging does not have much effect on the physical actions they take after engaging with the media. This information tells the church communicator that fairness/cheating messaging is most effective when trying to get the regular young adult congregants to be more active, but no messaging is especially effective when it comes to bringing outsiders into the doors of the church.

The Moral Foundations Theory has not previously been applied to church communication, but by doing this the results revealed that there are disparities in how the messaging effects a person due to the intersections that are affiliated with them. Regular church attendees and non church attendees respond to messaging differently and this is also the case for Republicans and non-Republicans (this includes Democrats and independent, etc.). All three messages were perceived similar in terms of argument quality; for republicans, care and fair messages were perceived to be of better argument quality than the sanctity message.

Through this experiment, the effectiveness of the sanctity message proved to be less effective than the others with all audiences. It is less likely to increase interest in social justice and less likely to make the recipient think positively about the church institution sending the message.

The Moral Foundations Theory suggests that a person's initial response to a stimuli is more important than the post-rational thought. What this tells us is that recipients are making snap judgments on the church institution based on the messaging that church communicators are filling channels with. By applying this theory to church communication backed by the research on which moral foundation is more effective for the population segment, church communicators

can proactively combat the narrative that is growing in popularity among young adults. The narrative that church institutions do not care about social justice and issues of race due to their lack of authenticity and emphasis on tradition. The Moral Foundations Theory gives church communicators research-backed strategy to consider when looking to reach out to this young adult audience. By applying this theory to church communication backed by the research of which moral foundation is more effective for the population segment, church communicators can proactively combat the narrative that is growing in popularity with young adults.

Limitations

This research focuses primarily on the use of the Moral Foundations Theory as it pertains to social justice communication and police brutality from churches. Furthermore it only utilized three of the five available: care/harm, fairness/cheating, and sanctity/degradation. The implicit religious undertones of the Moral Foundations Theory leaves it open to being utilized in further church communication topics that center around audience engagement. This research focused on the digital media aspect of communication, but the theory could be used to analyze the interpersonal communication of leaders to congregation as well. This research also used the theory to analyze the audiences perceptions as well as activation immediately following the stimuli presented for social justice communication. For further research, a study could utilize more of the moral foundations and connect other topics of conversations to institutions to gauge audience perception and activation.

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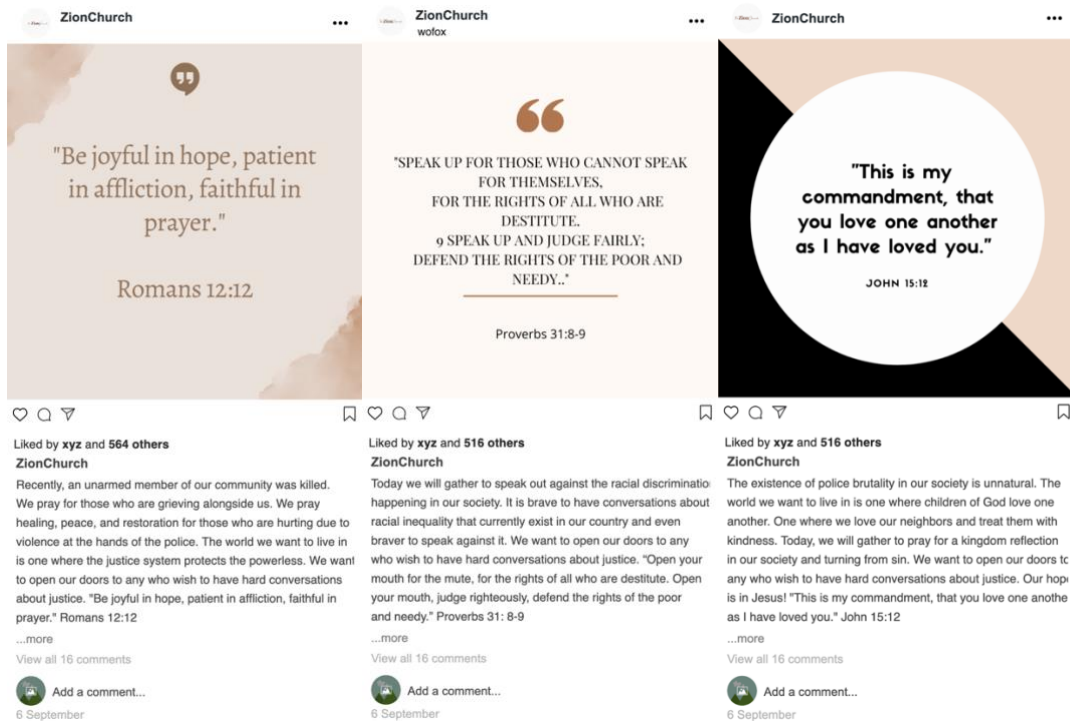
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Appendix

Message Stimuli



Methods

- Experimental design
- Participants complete demographic questions
- Then we assess awareness of certain causes or issues areas
- Then participants are randomly assigned to two messaging frames
 - Care/fairness
 - Sanctity/Authority

Hypothesis

H1 = Participants who are older, less educated, living in the South, have a history (personal and family) of church attendance are more likely to want to take additional action on church communication.

H2 = Participants who are more knowledgeable, see issues as a problem, have less constraint recognition, and more personal involvement are more like to want to take additional action on church communication.

H3 = Messages related to fairness and harm are more likely to result in additional action on church communication when compared to messages about authority and sanctity.

Analysis

- ANOVA?
- Multiple Regression (for factors influencing perception)?

Survey Questions

Gen-Z/Millennial Perceptions of Church Communication

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q1 Please read this consent form in its entirety. By selecting "I agree to participate in this study" below, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you agree. You will be given a copy of this document for your records upon request. If you have any questions about the study after you agree to participate, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

- I agree to participate in this study. (1)
- I do not wish to participate in this study. (6)

Q2 I was born between 1990 and 2003.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Religious Experience & Social Justice Knowledge

Q3 Do you attend church service either in-person or online?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you attend church service either in-person or online? = Yes

Q4 If yes, how often do you attend church services?

Weekly (1)

Monthly (2)

Twice a year (3)

Once a year (4)

Q5 Did your guardians/parents attend worship services when you were a child?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Unsure (3)
-

Display This Question:

If Did your guardians/parents attend worship services when you were a child? = Yes

Q6 If yes, how often did your guardians/parents attend church services?

- Weekly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Twice a year (3)
- Once a year (4)

Q7 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I know a lot about social justice issues. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compared to most people, I know more about social justice issues. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When it comes to social justice issues, I am quite knowledgeable. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Religious Experience & Social Justice Knowledge

Start of Block: Demographic Questions

Q8 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

- Republican (1)
- Democrat (2)
- Independent (3)
- Something else (4)

Q9 How do you identify?

- Man (1)
- Non-binary (2)
- Woman (3)
- Prefer to self-describe (4) _____

Q10 What is your religious preference?

Protestant (1)

Catholic (2)

Jewish (3)

None (4)

Other (5)

Buddhism (6)

Hinduism (7)

Other Eastern Religion (8)

Muslim/Islam (9)

Orthodox-Christian (10)

Christian (11)

Native American (12)

Inter-Nondenominational (13)

Prefer to self-describe (15) _____

Q11 What state are you from?

Q12 What level of education have you obtained?

No formal schooling (1)

1st grade (2)

2nd grade (3)

3rd grade (4)

4th grade (5)

5th grade (6)

6th grade (7)

7th grade (8)

8th grade (9)

9th grade (10)

10th grade (11)

11th grade (12)

12th grade (13)

1 year of college (14)

- 2 years of college (15)
- 3 years of college (16)
- 4 years of college (17)
- 5 years of college (18)
- 6 years of college (19)
- 7 years of college (20)
- 8 years of college (21)

Q13 What is your race?

- Asian and Pacific Islander (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- Hispanic or Latino (3)
- Native American or Alaskan Native (4)
- White or Caucasian (5)
- Multiracial or Biracial (6)
- A race/ethnicity not listed here (7)

End of Block: Demographic Questions

Start of Block: Care

Q14 Please read this Instagram post very carefully as if it appeared on your Instagram feed. You will be asked several questions about this post afterward.

Q15 Identify the words or phrases that were most effective in this message.

Q16 How would you describe the tone of this message?

	Extremely (1)	Moderately (2)	Somewhat (3)	Slightly (4)	Not at all (5)
Polite (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Harsh (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aggressive (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rational (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radical (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compassionate (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q17 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
This post presents good reasons to speak against about social justice issues. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post presents convincing arguments that we should care about social justice issues. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This post
makes me
feel
concerned
about social
injustice
present in our
society. (3)



End of Block: Care

Start of Block: Message Stimuli Reactions

Q18 (You may use the back button to go back to the Instagram post)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
This post makes me want to know more about social justice issues. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post makes me want to know more about this church. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post makes me want to know more about Christianity. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This post makes me think more positive about social justice issues. (4)

This post makes me think more positive about this church. (5)

This post makes me think more positive about Christianity. (6)

Q19 Please indicate how likely you are to engage in the following behavior.

After reading the messaging, I am likely to...

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
talk to someone else about this post. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
talk to my friends about this post. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
like this post on Instagram. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
share this post on my social media. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

learn more
about the
congregation
of the church.

(6)

attend one of
the social
justice events
offered by the
church. (7)

attend the
church's
Sunday
worship
service. (8)

contact a
member of
the church to
ask more
questions
about events
related to
social justice.
(9)



End of Block: Message Stimuli Reactions

Start of Block: Fairness

Q20 Please read this Instagram post very carefully as if it appeared on your Instagram feed. You will be asked several questions about this post afterward.

Q21 Identify the words or phrases that were most effective in this message.

Q22 How would you describe the tone of this message?

	Extremely (1)	Moderately (2)	Somewhat (3)	Slightly (4)	Not at all (5)
Polite (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Harsh (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aggressive (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rational (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radical (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compassionate (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q23 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
This post presents good reasons to speak against about social justice issues. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post presents convincing arguments that we should care about social justice issues. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This post
makes me
feel
concerned
about social
injustice
present in our
society. (3)



End of Block: Fairness

Start of Block: Sanctity

Q24 Please read this Instagram post very carefully as if it appeared on your Instagram feed. You will be asked several questions about this post afterward.

Q25 Identify the words or phrases that were most effective in this message.



Q26 How would you describe the tone of this message?

	Extremely (1)	Moderately (2)	Somewhat (3)	Slightly (4)	Not at all (5)
Polite (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Harsh (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aggressive (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rational (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radical (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compassionate (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q27 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
<p>This post presents good reasons to speak against about social justice issues.</p> <p>(1)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>This post presents convincing arguments that we should care about social justice issues.</p> <p>(2)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This post
makes me
feel
concerned
about social
injustice
present in our
society. (3)

End of Block: Sanctity

Start of Block: Social Justice Communication Preferences



Q28 Below you will find a list of communication channels. Please move your top five options for communicating about social justice to the box and rank your options.

Rank your top five options for communicating about social justice issues.

-
- _____ Social Media (1)
 - _____ Email (9)
 - _____ Text messages (10)

_____ Podcasts (11)

_____ Telephone (12)

_____ Websites (13)

_____ In-person (14)

_____ Webinar (15)

_____ From a friend or someone I know (16)

_____ Online chat (17)

_____ Virtual meeting (Zoom, Teams, etc.) (18)

Q29 Please share why you selected your TOP (#1) option for communicating about social justice issues.

End of Block: Social Justice Communication Preferences

IRB Information



**TCU-IRB
RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

Dear [Name]:

My name is Hannah Boss, and I am research assistant working with Dr. Ashley E. English at Texas Christian University (TCU).

We are conducting a research study on how Millennials and Generation Z (specifically ages 18 - 32) respond to social justice messages from church institutions via social media. I am emailing to ask if you would like to take about 10-15 minutes to complete a survey for this research project. Participation is completely voluntary, and your answers will be kept anonymous.

If you are interested, please click on the link for the survey and additional information:
Survey Link Here

There will be no compensation for participation in this survey. Additionally, there are no known risks involved in this research.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (Hannah.boss@tcu.edu) or Dr. English (a.english@tcu.edu).

Thank you for your time.

Hannah Boss
Undergraduate Research Assistant
Texas Christian University



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY
GEN Z AND MILLENNIAL
PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
MESSAGES FROM CONGREGATIONS**

IRB#2022-90

- The Department of Strategic Communication is conducting research to understand how Millennials and Generation Z perceive social justice messaging from church institutions on social media.
- We are currently recruiting Millennial and Generation Z participants born between 1990 and 2003 (ages 18 – 32).
- You will be asked to participate anonymously in an online survey that asks about various messaging strategies and involves about 10-15 minutes of your time.
- There are no known risks involved in this research.

For more information, please scan the QR code:



Or go to: https://tcu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3awTE8qtv0OxmyW

Texas Christian University

TCU does not discriminate based upon any protected status. Please see
<http://www.tcu.edu/notice-of-nondiscrimination.asp>

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Research: Gen-Z and Millennial perceptions of social justice messages from churches: Identifying effective messaging frames using Moral Foundations Theory

Principal Investigator: *Dr. Ashley English*

[Co-investigators:] *Hannah Boss, Dr. Esther Paik*

Overview: You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be born between the year 1990 and 2003.

Study Details: This study is being conducted through an online Qualtrics survey and is supported/sponsored by the Department of Strategic Communication at Texas Christian University. The purpose of this study is to understand how Millennial and Generation Z audiences perceive social justice messaging on social media from church institutions. Participants will complete a short survey that evaluates their reactions to specific messaging strategies that align with Moral Foundations Theory.

Participants: You are being asked to take part because you were born between 1990 and 2003. We want to know how people born within this frame react to various social media messaging strategies from church institutions. If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 90 participants in this research study at TCU. All participants will be 18 years or older.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no loss of benefit or opportunities if you decide to stop after you begin.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your information private and confidential. Anyone with authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

What is the purpose of the research? The purpose of this research is to provide evidence to church communicators that utilize social media as a communication strategy for reaching Millennial and Generation Z audiences. Specifically, this research will help communicators determine how to best approach these audiences when discussing social justice matters.

What is my involvement for participating in this study?

Participating in this study only requires you to anonymously answer question on a Qualtrics survey that we will later assess. You will share your reaction to five social media posts that could come from a congregation. You will also provide information about your background and basic demographics. We expect your participation to take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

All materials associated with this research project will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Department of Strategic Communication. Additionally, all online materials will be stored in a password-protected, TCU Box folder. We are not collecting participant names, therefore the data will be anonymized upon collection.



Volunteers Needed for Research Study

**GEN-Z AND MILLENNIAL PERCEPTIONS OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE MESSAGES FROM
CONGREGATIONS**

The Department of Strategic Communication is conducting research to understand how Millennials and Generation perceive social justice communication from church institutions on social media.

We are currently recruiting Millennials and Generation Z born between 1990 and 2003 (ages 18 – 32) to participate in an anonymous online survey that takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. There are no known risks involved in this research.

**Please call 985-246-0866 or
email Hannah.boss@tcu.edu with any questions
IRB#2022-90**

Texas Christian University

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<http://www.tcu.edu/notice-of-nondiscrimination.asp>