# Engaging Millennials: The strategies and experiences of Christian social action groups in the UK

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# Contents

# Acknowledgments

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# Abstract

This thesis explores whether and how Christian social action groups are responding to generational change, specifically the changes that have been associated with the generation that has been termed the 'Millennials'.  Accordingly, this PhD considers the interactions between contemporary Christianity, socio-political engagement and participation, and generational change.  Whilst there has been a considerable amount of scholarship that considers the relations between any two of these three areas, the interactions between all three have received little attention.  It will explore these interactions through the analysis of six very different case study organisations, all of which seek to offer something specifically to Millennials, whether that is through an established programme for young adults, or through being a youth-led initiative.  As well as highlighting a wider context of change – whether that is changes to Christianity, generational attitudes and behaviours, or cultures of political participation – exploring Christian social action groups that attempt specifically to engage young adults also offers an opportunity to consider the direction that Christian social action may be heading in, work with young adults being understood to shape future trajectories (see Ward 1996).

The research questions that this thesis will explore are the following:

> *To what extent, and in what ways, are Christian social action groups responding to generational shifts in attitude and behaviour?*

> *How effective and sustainable are these responses?*

> *How are these responses – and their effectiveness and sustainability – filtered and shaped by the varying religious positions of the different case study organisations?*

The emphasis in this set of questions on effectiveness and sustainability necessitates a focus not just on organisational practices, such as youth engagement strategies, but also on the experiences of the young adults who get involved with these organisations, including how they negotiate and interpret their participation, and the various assessments they make of the organisations. As a result, this thesis draws on thirty in-depth interviews with both organisation employees and participating young adults.

This thesis will chart the varied responses - ranging from almost non-existent to fairly comprehensive – by Christian social action groups to generational shifts in attitude and behaviour. The six case study organisations can be split into three broad 'types'. Firstly, I explore two organisations that demonstrate little response to generational change, exhibiting an 'old' model that stresses the creation of leaders who will go on to have influence through institutional channels, and need to be equipped with the 'correct' principles in order to do this. Secondly, I analyse two established NGOs that show many different responses to generational change, and a range of conscious attempts to appeal to Millennials. Thirdly, and by way of contrast, I explore two social action groups formed by Millennials themselves. This thesis thus offers a typology of Christian social action groups in the UK that can be summarised as: adult-forming; youth-empowering; and self-organising.

These groups have varying levels of effectiveness, shaped considerably by their particular religious positioning. In addition, whilst some of these groups seem to have been very effective in attracting young people, there are more questions raised about their effectiveness and sustainability as social action initiatives, as they may appeal to values that, though successful in the short-term, may have problematic long-term legacies. I will conclude by reflecting on the theoretical implications of my research and making some recommendations for Christian social action groups, based on my findings.

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

*We'd start the morning with a what-they-called Westminster pulpit, which would be a church leader typically coming in and giving a thought for the day. You would then have a generally quite academic morning focused on the text and all that sort of stuff and theories and then the afternoon would tend to be more practical on leadership. (Greg, CARE Leadership Programme participant)*

*January 2013, Manchester – In an arty café in Manchester's Northern Quarter, Christian Aid (an international development NGO formed in the 1940s) is launching its latest initiative for young adults, the Christian Aid Collective. Groups of students sit in clusters around small tables and on low, squishy sofas. There is a free meal of homemade bread, vegetarian chilli and cookies. Every ten minutes, a video clip shows on the projector screen, and a young person is shown talking about how they would solve the problem of poverty. Conversation recedes, and then starts up again. As people leave, they are given an information pack about the Collective and the launch is over.[1]*

This thesis, through analysis of six different case studies of how Christian social action groups in the UK engage young adults, aims to explore the interactions between contemporary Christianity, socio-political engagement and participation, and generational change. Whilst there has been a considerable amount of scholarship that considers the relations between any two of these three areas, the interactions between all three have received little attention. Accordingly, this thesis hopes to position itself in the gap and, through the exploration of six case study organisations, provide some snapshots of how Christian social action groups are responding to generational change

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[1] Based on my own personal attendance of this event and field notes compiled at the time

– if indeed they are – and how this relates to a wider context of change, whether that is changes to Christianity, generational attitudes and behaviours, or cultures of political participation.  Exploring Christian social action groups that attempt specifically to engage young adults also offers an opportunity to consider the direction that Christian social action may be heading in, work with young adults being understood to shape future trajectories (see Ward 1996).

The main research questions that this thesis will be orientated around and hopes to answer are:

> *To what extent, and in what ways, are Christian social action groups responding to generational shifts in attitude and behaviour?*

> *How effective and sustainable are these responses?*

The emphasis in this set of questions on effectiveness and sustainability necessitates a focus not just on organisational practices, such as youth engagement strategies, but also on the experiences of the young adults who get involved with these organisations, including how they negotiate and interpret their participation, and the various assessments they make of the organisations.  Accordingly this thesis draws attention both to the *imagined young adult subject* that the case study organisations work with and the experiences of participating young adults.  In this way, the thesis focuses particularly on the gaps between imagined or hoped-for experiences and the experiences as reflected upon by those involved, as well as the moments in which these correspond.

A subsidiary question, which is deeply entangled with the first two, considers the ways in which these different responses to generational change are influenced by the differing religious identity of the organisations:

> *How are these responses – and their effectiveness and sustainability – filtered and shaped by the varying religious positions of the different case study organisations?*

In addition, this thesis will reflect on the implications of the findings of this research for theories about generation, religion, and socio-political action and change.

Changing patterns of political participation and socio-political engagement have been widely acknowledged in a large body of literature, ranging from the sociological theory of scholars like Giddens (1991) and Beck (1997) to recent empirical study (e.g. Marsh et al. 2007). Whilst there is much debate over the exact features of these changes, several characteristics have been widely acknowledged. Firstly, there has been a decline in the membership of political parties and of other traditional modes of political organising, such as Trade Unions. Secondly, many theorists have drawn attention to an increase in what Giddens, for example, terms 'life politics', a development which renders lifestyle an increasingly important part of late-modern political identity and expression. The growth of these political identities and practices amongst young people has been particularly noted (see, for example Marsh et al. 2007). In addition, there has been some focus on the rise of 'participatory politics' among younger people (see, for example, Kahne et al. 2014).

From such works as Inglehart's thesis on the rise of post-material values (1977) onwards, the links between generational change and changing patterns of political participation have been acknowledged. But why the specific additional focus on Christianity? Within the very wide field of political organising and participation, faith-based social action represents an identifiable sub-set, and one that has wielded much influence over the social action landscape of the UK. Christian contributions to social movements such as the Jubilee Debt Campaign, for example, have been particularly noted in the literature (see Shawki 2010; Dent and Peters 1999; Josselin 2007; and Donnelly 2002). More recently, the considerable role of Christian (and other faith-based) organisations in welfare provision has been acknowledged (see, for example, Furbey 2008; Dinham 2011; and Williams et al. 2010). Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly and more intriguingly, religious organising and participation in some ways demonstrate similar patterns to that of political

organising and participation, exhibiting, for example, post-institutional tendencies, such as increased

scepticism towards the holding of religious authority by institutions (see Flory and Miller 2010).

Simultaneously, however, there has been the entrenching and crystallising of certain forms of more

conservative religious identity (see Herriot 2015).

It thus seemed intriguing to consider whether forms of Christian social action have changed in

correspondence to generational changes and changes in political participation and organising that

have been observed more widely.  Christianity demonstrates a complex history when it comes to its

relationships with popular cultural trends and 'secular' culture (see Herriot 2015; Warner 2007).

From this, we would expect to witness very varied Christian responses to generational changes in

attitudes and behaviours and corresponding patterns in political participation.  Furthermore, these

are highly likely to be shaped by the different religious positioning of the various case study

organisations.  Thus, studying Christian social action groups' responses to generational change also

allows for insight into the contemporary Christian landscape.  The focus on Christian social action

groups that specifically target young adults, either as their sole activity or through a particular

programme, is also a way of considering the trajectory of contemporary Christianity.  Christian

attempts to engage young adults should be understood not just as something that targets a

particular age group but that can be expected to set the tone for the shape of future Christian social

action (see Ward 1996).

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This thesis is structured around the identification, and categorisation, of six case study organisations,

all of which specifically engage young adults, or the age group defined by Jensen Arnett as 'emerging

adulthood' (2000) and broadly encompassing those aged 18-25.  The choice of this age group is not

incidental, as it represents the 'coming of age' of Generation Y or the Millennials, those born

between 1980 and 1995 (Warnell 2015).  It is also a significant age group, as it seemed important to

examine how Christian social action groups were appealing to young adults outside of the context of

the familiar socialising structures of family, church and school, which are the focus of other work (for example, Madge et al. 2015), and instead at a time where we might expect these young people to be seeking out and negotiating new, and independent, forms of belonging.

Chapter 2 of this thesis will offer a snapshot of the Millennials, in order to provide a background to the context that the six case study organisations are operating in, regardless of whether or not they are responding to it. This will be followed by a literature review and methodology in Chapters 3 and 4. The subsequent chapters will focus in-depth upon the case study organisations. Operating in a fragmented religious and political landscape, the Christian social action groups chosen as case studies demonstrate a considerable variety of responses to generational change, and have been split into three groups of two accordingly.

Chapter 5 will consider the young adult programmes of two Christian advocacy organisations that campaign on 'family values' issues,[2] CARE and Christian Concern. CARE's subsidiary organisation, the Institute for Faith and Culture, runs the Leadership Programme, a ten-month programme which places recent graduates with an MP alongside study days around the themes of leadership and being a Christian in public life. Christian Concern run a one-week course called the Wilberforce Academy, orientated around networking and talks on faith in the public sphere, as well as on Christian Concern's touchstone issues, such as same-sex marriage and abortion. For both CARE and Christian Concern, young adults are conceptualised as future leaders. The 'imagined young adult subject' is one that will enter into institutional spheres of influence, and, through their embodiment of Christian values and virtues, be a catalyst for change. Traditional institutions are seen as vitally important, but needing to be spiritually reinvigorated and redeemed. CARE and Christian Concern demonstrate the least response to generational changes in attitudes and behaviours, exhibiting an

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[2] 'Family values' is the term I have chosen to use in this PhD as effective shorthand for a wide variety of conservative Christian concerns surrounding personal morality, such as abortion, marriage, and homosexuality. In Chapter 5, I discuss in more detail my reasons for choosing this term, and my rejection of other possible alternatives.

old-fashioned approach that is top-down both in terms of the ways in which they engage young

adults and their theories of change.  This represents the continuation of an historical 'old model' of

Christian youth work that focuses on leadership and strategic spheres of influence (see Ward 1996;

Manwaring 1985).  The lack of response to generational change should also be seen as a result of the

conservative Christian positioning of these two organisations, which makes them unamenable to

adapting to cultural shifts.  In response, however, the young adults who had been involved in these

two initiatives were the most critical about their experiences of all of the young adults I interviewed.

Whilst CARE and Christian Concern still seem to be effective in attracting young people, the

narratives and approaches that they employ did not sit easily alongside the young adults'

subjectivities and identities, which demonstrated some influence of late-modern values.

Chapter 6 will consider two other organisations, Tearfund and Christian Aid (both of them

international development charities and advocacy organisations), and their youth initiatives,

Tearfund Rhythms[3] and the Christian Aid Collective.  Rhythms and the Collective have varied ways

for young adults to get involved, varying from online participatory blogs to mentoring schemes to

internships, as well as 'gap year' style trips abroad.  Through such activities, both organisations hope

to reinvigorate themselves as institutions, helping to restore young people's trust in large NGOs and

to provide young people with new and empowering ways to engage.  Tearfund particularly exhibit a

strong sense of intentionally responding to currents of generational change.  To some degree, and to

varied extents, the Christian Aid Collective and Tearfund Rhythms thus exhibit a new model of

engaging young people.  The 'imagined young adult subject' is one that is politically and socially

interested, desires to have their voice heard, and has the power to influence their peers.  Both the

Collective and Rhythms also encourage a change-making narrative that focuses on making small

everyday lifestyle changes.  This is particularly strong within Rhythms, which corresponds with

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[3] In the final stages of this PhD, Tearfund Rhythms was renamed Tearfund Lifestyle.  Owing to the fact that it was referred to as Rhythms for the majority of my PhD, I call it Rhythms throughout the thesis.  This renaming is, however, illustrative of the clear direction of this initiative.

elements of Tearfund's charismatic evangelical positioning, such as the self-actualising evangelical

subject (Herriot 2015).  Young adults who have been involved in the two organisations seem to have

largely internalised the organisations' ways of thinking, and this is particularly the case with

Tearfund Rhythms, which seems to have been especially successful in producing a simple compelling

narrative.  However, there is also evidence of many constraints to these youth programmes'

operations as a result of the status of Christian Aid and Tearfund as large NGOs and the bureaucratic

regimes that Rhythms and the Collective subsequently operate within.

Chapter 7 will explore two youth-led organisations, SPEAK and Just Love, to consider whether they

are distinctively different.  As youth-led initiatives, Just Love and SPEAK represent responses by the

Millennial generation – and thus are infused to a certain degree by that generation's values – to

what they perceive as gaps within the sphere of Christian social action.  Both these groups hope to

fill this gap, and identify strongly as people who want to 'do it themselves'.  SPEAK and Just Love

offer distinctive Millennial approaches to Christian social action, orientated around values of

community, being a movement, and active participation.  However, the embodiment of these values

in face-to-face, everyday contexts is accompanied by various problems, which are experienced

rather differently according to the religious positioning of the initiatives (charismatic evangelical in

the case of Just Love, broadly 'post-evangelical' in the case of SPEAK).  As a result, the features that

make these initiatives distinctive, and appealing to Millennials, bring with them new problems.  In

addition, remnants of the 'old model', such as a focus on leadership, are retained within Just Love.

Through these three chapters, I offer a typology of Christian social action groups for Millennials that

can be summarised as: adult-forming; youth-empowering; and self-organising.  CARE and Christian

Concern's young adult engagement is run by adults in order to form Millennials into the correctly-

principled adult leaders of the future.   Tearfund Rhythms and the Christian Aid Collective are run by

adults, but with the aim of inspiring and empowering young adults, while SPEAK and Just Love represent self-organised initiatives by the target demographic of the other case study organisations.

Chapter 8 turns to assess the long-term sustainability of all six case study organisations, considering their possible future trajectories.  It seems likely that CARE and Christian Concern will continue to appeal to a small number of young people.  However, the change-making narrative of CARE means that it may decrease its appeal and struggle to broaden its attraction, while Christian Concern's polemical way of addressing its issues of concern suggests that it will be increasingly at odds with young people whose conservative Christianity is shaped under the conditions of late-modernity.  The Christian Aid Collective's religious positioning (combining roots in liberal Protestantism with uneasy current attempts to appeal more to evangelicals) - alongside an observed lack of organisational prioritising of the initiative – render its prospects to thrive in the future fairly slim.  Its survival would necessitate a change of strategy from engaging church youth to appealing to less reachable non-church-going young adults who are interested in faith or spirituality.  Tearfund Rhythms presents a rather more complex picture.  Whilst it appears to be the most effective initiative at engaging young people and responding to generational change on the surface, it also demonstrates some tendencies to appeal to values that may be problematic in the long-term.  Finally, Just Love demonstrates processes of increased institutionalisation and increased demarcation as an evangelical organisation, but simultaneously and perhaps contradictorily, recent developments that show Just Love challenging their own church culture.  Meanwhile, SPEAK seems likely to age as a movement, no longer holding sway in the student world, and this will bring with it both opportunities and challenges.

This thesis will conclude by summarising its key findings, by considering its theoretical contributions, and, finally, by reflecting upon the practical implications of this research for the Christian social action sphere.

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This thesis draws attention to the contradictions within the praxis of the organisations. This has not been done to denigrate them, but to paint a full picture of the existing complexity. It hopes to demonstrate not that the organisations are necessarily problematic in what they do, but rather that a central narrative of incoherence, stemming from the fragmented religious, political and institutional contexts in which the organisations operate, runs through the case study organisations' experiences and serves in some ways to limit and constrain them. The contradictions and tensions also demonstrate a complicated relationship between 'old' models of engaging young adults – fairly top-down approaches that hope to position young adults in spheres of influence and leadership – and 'new' models, which hope to empower young adults and place emphasis upon their voices and upon being youth-led. These are not simplistic notions that can be correlated with different time periods. Rather, the 'old' model continues to influence initiatives today and case study organisations that can more easily be fitted into the 'new' model may still demonstrate the vestiges of the 'old'. This can be partly understood as a result of the struggling emergence of post-institutional political discourse and ways of being.

In summary, this thesis charts the varied responses - ranging from almost non-existent to fairly comprehensive – by Christian social action groups to generational shifts in attitude and behaviour. Whilst some of these seem to have been very effective in attracting young people, they raise questions about their effectiveness and sustainability as social action initiatives, as they appeal to values that, though successful in the short-term, may have problematic long-term legacies.

# Chapter 2 – Introducing the Millennials

*I think there's obviously totally new ways of engaging them [young people] though.  That's an easy no-brainer, because of social media, because of online platforms, because of [how] empowered young people are to be heard, to make a noise, have a voice […] There [are] totally different ways now to engage and to help people outwork this that has not existed in any way for previous generations (Kiera, Head, Youth and Emerging Generation, Tearfund)*

*I think there's a stronger sense with young people of the ability to change things.  I think young people growing up now really do think that they've got a voice and can influence government decisions and things like that (Pippa, Church Youth Manager, Christian Aid)*

A central element of this thesis is exploring the notion –advanced by some academic literature and furthermore by many organisations[4] – that there has emerged a distinct new Millennial generation or Generation Y with new ideas and values (usually defined as those born between 1980 and 1995 [see Warnell 2015: 4]); and furthermore that organisations should be responding to this.  This chapter focuses accordingly on the issue of generational change, in order to consider some reasons why Millennials *may* be different and distinct from older generations.  Whilst the literature review will explore Millennials' relations to religion and political participation and identities, drawing on a wide range of literature not all of which is situated within a generational framework, this chapter offers a brief sketch of two typical ways in which the Millennials have been written about and understood; these are in terms of their characteristics and in terms of specific situational factors. Having explored these two approaches, this chapter will narrow its focus in order to consider the

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[4] This has been particularly expressed by the business sector, and there have been many reports and articles on engaging Millennials in the workplace, and as consumers.

distinctive Millennial experience of my research subjects, whose generational experiences are

shaped by their identity as British Christians who are predominantly white and middle class.

## 2.1 Characteristics

Many attempts have been made to identify the characteristics of Millennials.  These include

marketing approaches (for example, Fromm and Garton 2013), approaches that consider Millennials

in the workplace (Manafy and Gautschi 2011), and social psychology (for example, Twenge 2006).

However, though this chapter identifies several situational factors (including new technologies,

economic insecurity, and the political context), it is rather more tentative when it comes to

identifying Millennial characteristics.  This is a deliberate decision, for which there are several

reasons. Firstly, whilst non-Millennials were found to have clear stereotypes of the characteristics of

the Millennial generation (with negative notions such as 'entitlement' featuring strongly), Millennials

themselves have far more fragmented perceptions of what defines them as a generation (Fromm

and Garton 2013: 51), though it should be added that this doesn't preclude a sense of being

different from other generations.  Secondly, scholarship on generational change is not without its

problems, as the literature review will expand upon in depth.  The need to try and understand the

dynamics of generational changes in attitudes and behaviours without recourse to clichés and

generalisations is a major challenge.  Inevitably, shared experiences will be manifested in different

ways, and these can be expected to be shaped along gendered, raced and classed lines.  The

particular demographic characteristics of my own research participants will be explored later in this

chapter.  Furthermore, much generational scholarship operates within what might be termed a

'deficit model',[5] in which Millennials are seen as somehow 'lacking'.  This can be witnessed when the

characteristics of this generation are described using a moralising tone (see, for example, Smith and

Snell, 2009), or when young people's perceived lack of political engagement is derided by some

social scientists (see Marsh et al. 2007 for a critique of such work).  Thus, whilst cultural, social,

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[5] This expression was suggested by my supervisor, Linda Woodhead.

economic and political circumstances will have inevitably influenced identities, subjectivities, and

practices, this is a rather more contentious area.

## 2.2 Situational factors

Heeding the advice of Mechler that looking at distinct situational factors is a more useful starting

point for studying generational change than trying first to identity Millennial characteristics (2013:

360), this section will explore: new technologies and social media; political memory and experience;

extended adulthood; changes to Higher Education; and neoliberalism.  These circumstances have

been identified because they are seen to offer generational experiences that are, at least in some

ways, different from the experiences of other generations, though this should be understood as

fairly nuanced in some cases.  Accordingly, this chapter also follows Roberts' contention that the

term generation 'is probably best reserved for historically new experiences which make its members

different in some way for the remainder of their lives' and 'best applied […] when a cohort has an

experience which sets it apart from predecessors' (2015: 952).

### New technologies and social media

The growth in new forms of communication and digital media represent one of the main situational

factors for understanding Generation Y.  Much research – and popular media attention – has

attempted to consider what this means for such things as political engagement, attention spans and

sociality, leading to much debate about both the qualities and 'quality' of this generation.  Young

people's forms of political engagement, for example, have either been derided as 'clicktivism' or

celebrated as opening up opportunities for a new kind of participatory politics (see Kahne et al.

2014).  Moving away from such discourse, it is clear that new media infiltrate the daily lives of

Millennials in myriad ways, and can be expected to have at least some influence in terms of political

and religious engagement.  For Dawson and Cowan, the internet is seen to have had two main social

consequences in terms of religious values: a crisis of authority; and a crisis of authenticity (2004: 2).

The proliferation of new media is also seen to have led to young people finding themselves 'having

to negotiate between a diversity of perhaps conflicting values and norms', which necessitates and exacerbates the construction of identity as an individual responsibility, a process that may engender feelings of either security or insecurity (Lövheim, 2004: 62).

It should be noted however, that unlike the upcoming Generation Z or iGen, this generation has experienced some years of their life without the proliferation of social media and technology that they now encounter.  This is not to say that the lives of Generation Z are not profoundly influenced and shaped by technology and social media, but rather that social media are not necessarily so embedded into their lives in the naturalised way observed of iGen, who have existed for longer in 'networked publics' (boyd 2014).

## Political memory and experience

Mannheim's early work on generations contended that 'every cohort of young people was likely to be deeply affected by political events and circumstances at the time when they were first becoming politically aware, that is, during their youth' (summarised in Roberts 2015: 952).  Roberts is critical, however, of notions of 'political generations', suggesting that such a term is only useful during 'periods of major historical change' (2015: 253) and pointing also to levels of political indifference that can withstand even moments of political turmoil.

Whilst being sceptical of the notion of the Millennials as a distinct political generation, as they are likely to exhibit a considerable variety of political beliefs and experiences of political institutions, it is nonetheless possible to trace some shared political reference points that have coincided with the coming of age of Generation Y.  These include: 9/11 and 7/7 and the changes in foreign and domestic policy that have subsequently occurred; the Iraq War (including the mobilisation against it, which was the largest ever political demonstration in British history); and more recently, since the financial crisis of 2008, austerity politics.  Though it took place after I had carried out my interviews,

the EU referendum is likely to have had even more profound effects on this generation. Whilst the

referendum tipped in favour of leaving the EU, the majority of British young people voted to

remain.[6] Among middle class and highly-educated young people, it is likely that this amount was

even higher, leading to an intriguing situation whereby a demographic that is extremely privileged in

other ways compared to their working-class counterparts may feel nonetheless incredibly

disenfranchised.


## Emerging adulthood

The disruption of traditional markers of adulthood, such as financial independence, buying a house,

and starting a family, have been highlighted by many scholars. Collins-Mayo and Dandelion, for

example, assert that these markers are taking longer to achieve and occurring later in life (2012: 2).

Borlagdan has also commented that 'shifting labour markets, prolonged education, and the

uncertainty brought about by global structural changes have destabilised the meaning of '"21" as a

marker of adulthood' (2015: 839). This phenomenon has been labelled by Jensen Arnett as

'emerging adulthood' (2000). This lengthening of youth, and the emergence of this 'in-between'

period, is pertinent for this study, as the people interviewed were predominantly between the ages

of 18 and 30, and thus fall into Arnett's 'emerging adulthood' categorisation. The choice to look at

this older age group (rather than teenagers for example) was also informed by a desire to consider

Christian social action as experienced by an age group that, despite the constraints identified above,

is able to make more life decisions and exercise more independence and autonomy than their

teenage counterparts. In addition, because of the interest of my research in notions of the post-

institutional, it made sense to study a group that was not defined by institutions such as school.


Jensen Arnett contends that emerging adulthood has led to several key characteristics: exploring of

different possibilities; experimentation; re-examination of learned beliefs and development of

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[6] http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2016/07/01/brexit-everything-you-wanted-to-know-about-turnout-by-age-at-the-eu-referendum/ [Accessed 31/10/16]

beliefs from one's own reflection; and sensation-seeking, including the desire for novel or intense experiences (2000).  Smith and Snell, making conscious use of Arnett's conceptualisation, recognise 'the very unique characteristics of this new and particular phase of life' and highlight 'a general psychological orientation of maximizing options and postponing commitments', as well as 'historically unparalleled freedom to roam, experiment, learn, move on and try again' (2009: 5-6).

## Changes to Higher Education

Whilst Higher Education is not of course a universal experience for Millennials, the UK has now entered a period of mass higher education, and, for those who do experience it (which includes the vast majority of my interviewees), the changes occurring within the Higher Education sector are significant.  Though now dated given the changes to higher education, especially since the introduction of £9000 fees, Peter Scott's *The Meaning of Mass Higher Education* (1995) usefully situates the rise of mass higher education within a context of post-industrialism and post-modernism, identifying the following trends of all three: acceleration, volatility, non-linearity, simultaneity and reflexivity (1995: 9). Scott highlights a paradox whereby graduate status is perceived as an 'essential attribute of a middle-class lifestyle', but 'the graduates of a mass system can no longer be regarded as cadet members of various power elites, because they are too numerous, because elites are no longer formed within the disciplined routines of professional society, and because the links between socio-political power and occupational status have become sinuous' (1995: 109).  As well as the erosion of links between higher education and certain sectors of employment due to increased student numbers, Scott also highlights the societal shift from bureaucratic to adaptable organisations, the latter characterised by 'flexible, individualised, intuitive, even charismatic modes of operation' (1995: 112).  These adaptable organisations are seen as 'too volatile to offer the same opportunities for graduate careers; also the skills they value are both generic and charismatic, and so more difficult to credentialise' (1995: 174).  In the two decades that

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that have passed since the publication of this work, many of these trends are likely to have been accentuated.

However, the socio-cultural effects of mass higher education seem to have been rather less examined, the focus in recent literature often being upon mass higher education in a neoliberal age and the student as consumer.  This leaves unanswered a significant question as to how this may influence the identity and subjectivity of the Millennial generation.  In what ways does the experience of mass higher education affect the 'collective consciousness' of this generation?

## Economic insecurity

The economic insecurity of this generation has been widely noted.  Hardgrove et al. identify the current economic situation in the UK as a 'labour market characterised by insecurity and uncertainty' (2015: 1057).  Borlagdan found in his study of Australian 21 year olds that, although this economic situation is experienced differently along class lines, all the young people he interviewed 'expressed uncertainty when discussing their futures' (2015: 840).  Nonetheless and unsurprisingly, 'those from high-income backgrounds with access to strong social, economic and cultural resources reported feeling better able to manage the risks arising from uncertainty than their counterparts from low-income backgrounds' (ibid.).

Howie and Campbell highlight the impact of the global financial crisis in halting the prior decline of youth unemployment and heralding in an era of 'ambiguous futures and fewer options for employment or a career' for young people (2016: 906).  As a result, young people have come to be overrepresented in 'what might be called precarious forms of casual and part-time employment in low-skill occupations' (Kelly et al. 2015 in Howie and Campbell 2016: 906).  Still further, 'young people face steadily declining full-time job opportunities, a steady increase in the uptake of casual and part-time work, increased competition in employment where (over)qualifications lose out to

experience all combine with persistent and rising levels of youth unemployment' (Howie and

Campbell 2016: 912).

## Neoliberalism

There is a current academic tendency for neoliberalism to become something of a 'catch-all' term,

serving to be the mode of explanation for a variety of social, cultural and economic trends.  I do not

here explore neoliberalism in all its many manifestations, and in all of the many ways in which it has

been conceptualised, but instead focus upon the ways in which neoliberalism is seen to have

affected subjectivity and the self. Kelly contends that young people, under neoliberalism, are

expected to become entrepreneurial selves: 'rational, autonomous, choice making, risk aware,

prudential, responsible and enterprising' (2015 in Howie and Campbell 2016: 907).   For Kelly, 'the

self as enterprise has to be "made up"…in families, in schools, in relationships, in labour markets, in

training programs – and continuously worked on' (2015 in Howie and Campbell 2016: 910).  For the

entrepreneurial self, tied up in notions of developing individual strategies and personal

responsibility, 'the unforgiveable crime becomes not trying' (Howie and Campbell 2016: 913).

Walkerdine has similarly highlighted the constantly 'failing subject' produced by neoliberalism (2003

in Petersen and O'Flynn 2007: 208), while Gokariksel and Secor define the ideal neoliberal subject as

'an autonomous, entrepreneurial, competitive, self-regulating and self-realising individual' (2009 in

Lindenbaum 2013: 114).

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These situational factors are part of the context in which Christian social action groups are

operating, and which they may or may not be responding to, and the context by which my young

research participants have been shaped.  It should be noted here, however, that these were not

necessarily themes that emerged explicitly in my interviews.  However, though they may be

underlying or implicit, they are important to consider as possible background and explanatory

factors.  The literature review explores the more directly relevant areas of changes to religion, values

and political participation and identities, which unsurprisingly were more prevalent themes in my research findings.

## 2.3 Introducing my research participants

The situational factors explored above will have had some form of influence on the vast majority of Millennials, though establishing cause and effect, and the nature of these influences, represents a thorny task. However, this study makes no claim to represent Millennials in all their diversity. Rather, it speaks into the experiences of a very specific sub-set of the Millennials. What 'kind' of Millennials then do my research participants represent? Firstly, they all self-identified as Christian. For most of my research subjects this was a very active form of identity that influenced their everyday life and was manifested in traditionally religious practices, such as prayer. Furthermore, for the vast majority of my interviewees, it was expressed in institutional forms, namely regular church-going. As Christians, these Millennials represent a double minority, in that only a minority of Millennials are Christians and only a minority of Christians are Millennials. Generation Y has been identified by some Christian organisations and churches as a 'missing generation' in the context of church-going. A Tearfund survey, for example, found that only 11% of regular churchgoers are between the ages of 25 and 34 and that the greatest losses per year are amongst the age group 15-29.[7] The proportion of church-goers younger than 45 decreased from 62% in 1979 to 47% in 2005. In 2005, just 7% of church-goers were 20 to 29, and 17% were 30 to 44 (Brierley 2006: 111).

It is also important to recognise changes to the contemporary Christian context, meaning that 20s and 30s may be most prevalent in new types of Christian spaces. Independent and new evangelical churches and Pentecostal churches attract the highest proportion of ages 20-44 (Brierley 2006: 246). Over half (57%) of church-goers in their 20s attend churches in London (Brierley 2006: 249), providing a very concentrated urban population. Whilst it would be easy to draw the conclusion that

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[7] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/03_04_07_tearfundchurch.pdf [Accessed 16/06/17]

a greater proportion of young church-goers (as compared with both older church-goers and in the past) are now of evangelical or charismatic faith, it should be noted that the Evangelical Alliance is also concerned about falling numbers within this age demographic. Research into the Evangelical Alliance's membership basis found that, while in 1998 25% of membership was between 18 and 34, by 2008 this had decreased to 3%.[8]

Much research has considered what kind of religious and spiritual values and beliefs Millennials may possess, an issue that will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter. Flory and Miller emphasise that the post-Boomer generation crave participation, intimacy and community (2008: viii). Post-Boomers are also likely to have different ideas as to what counts as a source of authority and place high importance on tolerance and acceptance of difference (Flory and Miller 2008: 5, 8). Flory and Miller also identify a trend towards smaller communities of faith (2008: 168). A report on non-religious sources of meaning in the US among Millennials (approximately aged 18-34) found that the following very similar values were of great importance: community; personal transformation; social transformation; purpose finding; creativity; accountability (Thurston and ter Kuile 2015: 2).

Certain bodies of literature have also given consideration to how religious identities have been impacted by the kind of situational factors identified above. Guest et al. (2013), for example, explores Christianity in the contemporary university context, while research has also considered the impact of the internet and digital technologies on religious identities (for example, Højsgaard and Warburg 2005). A more recent contribution to this field usefully identifies three main areas in which digital media have influenced religion: the media as a source of information about religious issues; the ways in which 'religious information and experiences become moulded according to the demands of popular media genres'; and the role increasingly played by media as a place of 'spiritual

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[8] http://www.eauk.org/idea/sep-oct-2014-issuu.cfm, p. 4 [Accessed 16/06/17]

guidance, moral orientation, ritual passages and a sense of community and belonging' (Hjarvard 2011: 124).

Secondly, my research participants were overwhelmingly middle class. This is unsurprising, as most of my research participants were also evangelical Christians and evangelicals in Britain are strongly middle class (Robbins and Smith 2015). Accordingly with their class, most of my research subjects had been university educated, often at institutions within the top tier of universities in the UK. Thirdly, my research participants were largely, though not solely, white. In this way, my research participants were in fact unrepresentative of young Christians in the UK.[9] Attention will be drawn to issues of racial and ethnic diversity (and the lack of) throughout this thesis, where appropriate or significant. Finally, my research participants were predominantly British and indeed mostly English.

Thus, my research participants are not representative of a generic, unified Millennial experience, but of a predominantly white British, middle class, Christian one. It is important to note, however, that Christianity is not necessarily a factor that 'isolates' this cohort from their 'secular' peers. Rather, as will be further explained in the literature review, Christianity is informed and shaped by popular culture and more general societal trends in values and worldview, and its reactions to these trends. This process is by no means universal and this thesis charts both elements of Christianity that react against prevalent cultural norms and elements that are highly adaptive to popular cultural trends. In addition, within this largely white, middle class Christian experience, there are inevitably going to be other factors that influence generational experience and identity, such as gender and varying life experiences. Nonetheless, my interviewees still reflect a certain kind of affluent, educated Christian milieu. Their identities as Millennials thus shape and are shaped by this combination of identities. Furthermore, it is likely that in the versions of generational change imagined and acted upon by my case study organisations, class identities in particular play a role. Thus, the case study organisations

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[9] Brierley's church census found that 10.4% of church attendees are black, this figure nearing 25% amongst 30-44 year olds (2006).

of this thesis can be expected to operate informed by notions of generational change that reflect the

middle-class Christian context in which they operate.

# Chapter 3 – Literature review

This research has cut across several disciplinary boundaries, resisting containment within a single specific theoretical framework. Instead, this research has been informed by many different contributions to various bodies of literature. This thesis explores the intersection between three main areas of interest: contemporary Christianity; socio-political engagement and participation; and the Millennial generation and generational change. This literature review will accordingly be structured by considering scholarship that addresses the interactions between: contemporary Christianity and the Millennial generation; and the Millennial generation and socio-political engagement/participation. There is a considerable literature on Christianity and social engagement (for example, Elisha 2008; Stanczak 2006). However, very little of this considers young people, or even themes of participation more broadly, much of it being more concerned with such issues as faith-based organisations' role in the provision of key welfare services and their relationship to the state and to neoliberalism (for example, Furbey 2008; Dinham 2011; Williams et al. 2010). Whilst this is a rich and insightful literature, it does not address the kind of questions that I am particularly interested in and, as a result, I do not consider it here. This chapter will also consider the small amount of scholarship that considers the interaction between all three areas of interest. Finally, I will provide a summary of where I situate myself theoretically and the main theoretical influences that have informed and shaped this piece of research. Throughout, my focus is largely on British scholarship, as this is the political and religious context my chosen case study organisations are operating in. I do, however, focus on some particularly significant non-British scholarship, and specify where this is the case.

First though, and following on from the sketch of the Millennials in the previous chapter, it is necessary to briefly outline some of the common problems present in generational scholarship, and the challenges to studying generational change. Generational scholarship is plagued by two

particularly pertinent questions – and, in some cases, its failure to acknowledge these queries or to provide a satisfactory answer.  Firstly, generational scholarship raises the question as to the extent to which we are observing a cohort effect or an age or life stage effect, an issue that has been highlighted by Gordon Lynch (2010: 37).  In other words, do people behave in particular ways at certain ages *because* of the age that they are; or are the changes being observed within a generation more substantial with the possibility of longer-term effects?  To rephrase further, is the Millennial generation quantitatively different to its parents' generation, or can the observed characteristics more accurately be accounted for by age-related differences?

Secondly, the generalisability of observed generational differences or characteristics is a thorny issue.  Mechler has highlighted how, within US scholarship at least, there has been a tendency to extrapolate findings based on a college student demographic to the entire age-based population (2013: 359).  This reveals how accounts of generational characteristics may be based on a particular socio-economic milieu, and may not take into account how generational experience is shaped by, and varies according to, other non-age-related factors, such as race and class. Lynch has also criticised much generational scholarship for its generalisations and has argued, in the case of religion, that 'far from there being any broad cohort effect on young adults' engagement with religion, it is becoming increasingly clear that young people's lives reflect the increasing religious pluralism and fragmentation of Western societies' (2010: 36).

These problems are not solved by the nature of much scholarship on generation Y or the Millennials.  A literature search reveals three main tendencies.  Firstly, there is considerable literature on the position of Millennials within the workplace that explores the distinctiveness of Millennial attitudes towards employment, what they can offer, and how they may present challenges to employers (for example, Graybill 2014; Kuron et al. 2015).  Secondly, many examples of generational scholarship

come from a marketing perspective that considers how to market products to a new generation of consumers with different attitudes and behaviours (for example, Smith 2012; Fromm and Garton 2013). There are evident limitations connected with such literature. Whilst marketing experts may well have significant insights into generational change, there are going to be obvious problems stemming from an approach that normatively attempts to understand a generation in order to better market products to them, and may furthermore be actively involved in trying to create certain value sets or reinforce particular behaviours and attitudes. Thirdly, there have been missional or pastoral approaches (for example Mason et al. 2007), which consider how the church can better serve the upcoming generation. Gordon Lynch has highlighted how the basis of generational scholarship – in this case the focus being Generation X – arose from these latter two categories, marketing and missional approaches (2002: 25).

What all three approaches share is a conception of Millennials as a problem or challenge. They present challenges to employers, business and the church, even if these may be conceived simultaneously as opportunities. This focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by Millennials, and on how to solve or respond to them, has led to fairly instrumental approaches with inevitable generalisations. Much scholarship is also rather normative, a problem that has been identified again by Lynch, who, considering Generation X, asserts that the term 'has been taken up by people who either want to make points in ongoing arguments about the relative merits or failings of young people, or who want a concept which they believe will help them to target younger adults more effectively with their products, beliefs and practices' (2002: 26). Normativity in scholarship is not in and of itself a problem, but the denigration of young people has serious ethical implications, as has been argued by Arnett (2013).

This problematic tendency identified by Lynch of exploring the 'failings' of youth is evident in American social scientific studies of young people's attitudes and values. A case in point here is the work of Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, which, despite rigorous empirical research, retains a moralistic and moralising tone, such as a preoccupation and concern with young adults' sexual activity and the deploring of certain characteristic features of Millennials. In particular, there is a tendency to 'blame' the younger generation for their lack, in the majority, of religious participation. For example, Smith and Snell highlight 'emerging adults' interest in indefinitely maintaining all their options tends to decrease their desire and ability to commit to the investments, routines and disciplines of religious faith and practice' (2009: 80). Whilst this may be the case, Smith and Snell rarely turn their perspective around in order to ask about the extent to which religious institutions are – or are not – adapting to socio-cultural changes. Instead, the overwhelming impression is of nostalgically mourning a lack of institutional religious participation. My research hopes to challenge this kind of orientation, by exploring not just the experiences of young adults but critically examining how Christian social action groups are responding to generational change.

The problems and shortcomings of work on generational change are not, however, insurmountable. To return to the two questions or issues that have been particularly problematic for generational scholarship, I believe that there are ways of thinking through these questions without falling into either/or type approaches, such as either cohort effect or age effect; or either generalised approaches that ignore the dynamics of such factors as race and class or a micro approach that enables few generalisations to be made. A both/and approach to generational change perhaps offers a helpful alternative. Thus, I think it is useful to consider that, whilst some identified features of the Millennial generation may be a result of being young at a particular moment in time and may be – as it were – 'grown out of', there are other features that will have longer-term effects and more profoundly characterise the generation. Likewise, any solid theory of generational change should take into account the difference in experience as a result of such factors as class, whilst

demonstrating awareness of more universalising experiences, such as the growth of technology, living under a certain government, or living post 9/11.  As previously stated, Mechler (2013) suggests that it is important to look at such situational factors, and that this may be a more useful starting point for considering generational change than trying, at the onset, to identify Millennial characteristics.  Accordingly, in the previous chapter I attempted to do this, as well as clarifying the particular demographic characteristics of my research participants.

Again, the work of Gordon Lynch offers an additional way of helpfully engaging with generational scholarship and its limitations.  In his 2002 study of Generation X, Lynch advances a concept of a generation as a particular attitude rather than a birth date or distinct age group (2002: xi).  This draws on the novelist Coupland's definition of Generation X as a 'term that defines not a chronological age but a way of looking at the world' (1995 in Lynch 2002: 27).  This understanding of generation is useful because it enables us to escape some of the limitations of generational literature highlighted above.  I would contend that the concept of a generational attitude helps us to move away from both the problem of generalisation and the problem of whether we are experiencing a cohort or life stage effect.  In the case of the former, the idea of a generational attitude helps capture what is pervasive, distinct or new, but does not undermine the possibilities of differences as a result of such important intersectional identities as gender, race and class.  In the case of the latter, the notion of an attitude allows for shifts over the life cycle.  Mannheim has also made the useful distinction between people *from* a particular period and people *of* a particular period (in Voas 2010: 28), and this does seem to offer a slightly more nuanced way of thinking about a generation than, for example, Howe and Strauss's conception of a 'core persona', encompassing a set of distinct 'attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics, religion, culture, lifestyle and the future' (2000 in Ross and Rouse 2015: 1365).  Thus, there are several helpful ways of considering a particular generation and the dynamics of generational change that escape some of

the many pitfalls. These approaches to the issue of generational change and the characteristics of the Millennials should be borne in mind throughout the analysis to follow.

## 3.1 Contemporary Christianity and the Millennial generation

As charted in the previous chapter, there has been a considerable decline in young people's engagement with church-based Christianity and particularly with traditional churches. Perhaps unsurprisingly as a result, there have been several significant studies of religion and young people, but far less of Christianity and young people, and fewer still of young people and institutional or organised Christianity. Nonetheless, for this research, the relationship of young people to church and Christianity remains a significant theme, and it was important to consider research that analysed this topic.

A useful work that focuses on young people of Christian faith is Mathew Guest, Kristin Aune, Sonya Sharma and Rob Warner's *Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith* (2013). This work discusses how, whilst conservative evangelical Christian Unions may be the most visible manifestations of Christianity in universities, many more Christian students 'occupy the liberal centre ground that has much in common with mainstream British culture' (2013: 3). This runs counter to popular mythology, in which evangelical Christianity predominates. Guest et al. estimate that only 20% of self-defining Christian students are evangelical or Pentecostal, but that these speak with the loudest voices (2013: 93). Furthermore, evangelical denominations and churches are those that seem to be most able to retain their students (2013: 91) and, in addition, Guest et al. assert that:

> The most conservatively Evangelical student organisations do appear to foster the most
> robust and practically committed faith identities among Christian students, while the more
> liberal, social justice-oriented organisations – notwithstanding pockets of innovation and
> vitality – show little signs of regaining comparable influence (2013: 162-163).

Guest et al. also point, crucially, to the 'destabilisation of Christianity as an identity category' (2013: 35). This necessitates the loosening of assumptions as to what being a Christian might entail, and a readiness to listen to individuals' interpretations of what their Christianity might represent.

For understanding the experiences of young people within specifically evangelical Christian culture, as was the case for many of my research participants, one of the most important works is Pete Ward's *Growing up Evangelical.* Though dated now – published in 1996 –it charts a fascinating history of evangelical youth work. Though there will of course have been many changes to the evangelical youth scene in the last two decades, this history matters, as it has laid deep foundations, and today's evangelical youth represent merely the latest stepping stone in a Christian tradition replete with historical trajectories, despite evangelical rhetoric of innovation and novelty. One of Ward's strongest contributions is his assertion of the class identity of evangelical Christianity. Ward contends that English evangelicalism has been 'dominated by a prevailing public school and university (indeed Oxbridge) educated ethos' (1996: 10) and that 'evangelicalism has its roots firmly placed in the rarefied atmosphere of successful ministry amongst the English professional classes' (1996: 33). This has resulted in youth work, Ward contends, with distinctive traditions that 'carry the particular "accent" of the educated upper-class context from which they emerged' and that has thus largely reached out 'to the children of the educated and the wealthy' (1996: 32, 42). Ward's other important argument is that evangelical youth work has placed a strong emphasis upon leadership, such that there has been a perception that 'the primary root to maturity and therefore adulthood is through increased responsibility and leadership within the structures of youth work' (1996: 15). In my own research I found that such findings had ongoing applicability and relevance.

Alongside these contributions, there have been several significant works that consider religion/spirituality and young people more generally. Such work on the general spiritual climate of younger generations – as well as burgeoning scholarship on the growth of the 'nones' (those who do

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not affiliate to a religion) – is important, because Christianity – including even the conservative evangelical forms considered in one chapter of this thesis – does not exist in a vacuum.  My research participants inhabit a world in which their subjectivities are also shaped by more general trends in values, attitudes and worldviews.  The work of Anna Strhan – studying the congregants of a large conservative evangelical church – is particularly good in highlighting this, drawing attention to the ways in which middle-class conservative evangelicals respond to the 'fluidity and fragmentation of late modernity' (2015: 4).  Strhan further highlights how her research subjects inhabit 'differentiated social spaces suffused with differing moral norms' and that this particularly manifests itself in the middle-class social milieus that these evangelicals operate in, resulting in 'reluctance to speak about issues where the moral standpoints of their faith are in tension with those of the secular space they inhabit outside the church' (2015: 85, 104).  Strhan's research participants had – alongside the moral tenets of their conservative faith – imbued principles of 'toleration, in which expressing their views on such issues would impinge on another's right to live according to their own moral norms' (2015: 100-101).[10]

This illuminating work points to the importance of understanding Christianity – and its many constitutive elements and 'types' – not in isolation, but in interaction with other beliefs, value systems and worldviews.  Consequently, a knowledge of scholarship on the more general spiritual make-up of the Millennial generation is invaluable for understanding the prevalent cultural climate among young people, and the values that my own research participants thus interact with and are shaped by, even as they are simultaneously shaped by the values instilled in them by their varied experiences of Christianity, which, according to their particular Christian tradition, may or may not be in conflict with these more predominant value systems.

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[10] Strhan's work will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The situation highlighted by Strhan, for example, was one largely of conflict and tension and conservative evangelicals' 'struggle for coherence' as a result. However, some research suggests parallels between the experiences of young people in more or less institutionalised Christian settings and those in 'secular' spheres. As previously mentioned, the finding of Flory and Miller, for example, that the post-Boomer generation crave from religion experiences of participation, intimacy and community (2008: viii) mirrors the findings of a report on non-religious sources of meaning in the US amongst Millennials, which stressed the importance of: community; personal transformation; social transformation; purpose finding; creativity; accountability (Thurston and ter Kuile, 2015: 2).

This complex relationship between more general cultural values and those espoused by religious institutions is also highlighted by Smith and Snell, who identify a key paradox:

> Among all American religious traditions, the one that would seem to best suit the values and interests of emerging adults, because of its emphasis on tolerance and inclusion, is theologically liberal mainline Protestantism- yet that is precisely the religious tradition that … is faring among the worst in retaining and recruiting emerging adults (2009: 81).

In answer to this paradox, Demerath has argued that emerging adults have internalised and secularised values instilled by liberal Protestantism, such as individualism, pluralism, tolerance, and the authority of human experience. Liberal Protestantism's success in fostering these values is, Demerath argues, one reason for its decline, as such values do not promote institutional vitality (in Smith and Snell 2009: 288). Smith and Snell continue this line of thinking, by considering the cultural effects of American evangelicalism, now more prevalent in the US than liberal Protestantism. They argue that this form of Christianity has further contributed to a perception that religion is a personal, rather than institutional, matter. In addition, evangelicalism is seen to have instilled an individualistic subjectivism 'that "truth" should be decided by "what seems right" to individuals, based on their personal experiences and feelings' (2009: 290). In this way, the cultural influence of

American evangelicalism is seen to be sowing the seeds of its own demise. It should be noted, however, that evangelicalism is far more culturally influential in the US than in the UK.

As mentioned previously, there are several important works that consider religion/spirituality and young people more generally. Included in this category are studies of non-religion, understood as another form of value system. In particular, the following contributions have been significant: *Religion and Youth* (2010)*,* edited by Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion; Madge, Hemming and Stenson's (2014) *Youth on Religion: the development, negotiation and impact of faith and non-faith identity;* Christian Smith and Patricia Snell's (2009) *Souls in transition: the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults;* and Christel Manning's (2015) *Losing our religion: how unaffiliated parents are raising their children.* All of these studies look largely at the age group that I am considering, with the exception of the work of Madge et al., which focuses on a younger teenage age group (approximately 13-18). However, despite the fact that the contexts explored by Madge et al. of family and school are less relevant for my own research, this work still yields significant insights. Smith and Snell's and Manning's research was conducted in the US, while the other two volumes considered here are based upon research in the UK.

All these works can be situated in a tradition of the study of religion and young people that has moved away from a previous emphasis upon formal religious socialisation processes, instead increasingly recognising young people's 'high degree of critical autonomy in making their own decisions about what to believe and how to translate their beliefs into action' (Beckford, 2010: xxiii). My own research positions itself in a similar way, exploring not just the forms of religious socialisation encouraged by the various organisations studied, but the ways in which these processes of socialisation – and the forms of 'appropriate' identity that are subsequently projected – are actively, reflexively negotiated by those involved. Madge et al. contend that this negotiation of

religion has led to a very complex and destabilised picture of contemporary religious identity, arguing that 'the concept of "being religious" has no unitary meaning.  There is no necessary match between the affiliation young people may give themselves, whether they practise religion in a public and/or a private way, their sense of belonging to a religious community, and their beliefs in God or a higher power' (2014: 119-120).

Several key themes have also been identified by these works: the importance for young people of identity negotiation and religious agency; and the prevalence of certain values such as tolerance, choice and an emphasis upon the personal self.  Firstly, then, the importance of individual agency and active processes of identity construction have been highlighted.  A key point is that young people are increasingly having to negotiate their identity amongst a multitude of different options, and that this negotiation process incudes religion as one of its elements.  As Collins-Mayo expresses, 'today young people are faced with many different choices concerning the path their life might take and who they want to become; as such they are required to engage in a reflexive process of identity construction whether they like it or not' (2010: 4).  A similar line of argument is taken by Madge et al., who assert that 'whatever their faith position and strength of adherence, young people profess their own personal agency in both their choice of religion and how it is practised' (2014: 211).  For Beckford, such processes are enhanced by new technologies and social and digital media, which are seen to increase young people's 'opportunities for creative responses to formal socialisation in religion and to induction into religious ways of life' (2010: xxiii).  Whilst important, however, these identity negotiation processes and this sense of agency should not be overestimated, as it is very important to recognise the interplay between agency and structure, considering both young people's agency and also the influences upon them.  Shepherd's conception of a 'reflexively endowed faith habitus', building on Adams' (2006) notion of the reflexive habitus, is one concept that has been offered to capture this dynamic (2010: 153).

Secondly, there is considerable emphasis upon a constellation of values around the self, choice, and tolerance.  Lynch has highlighted the desire of young people to 'seek meaning that feels personally authentic to them rather than being prepared to accept "pre-packaged" truths provided by religious, political or corporate organisations' (2002 in Harris 2010: 142).  The worldview of this age group, Smith and Snell assert, stresses the sacred nature of the personal self, of 'who I am' and 'being yourself' (2009: 41).  Smith and Snell found that any strong objective sense of good and bad, or right and wrong, was missing from the perspectives of their interviewees (2009: 41).  Instead, moral intuition, karma and individual difference were stressed (2009: 46, 48).  Authority for beliefs and actions is located in the individual's 'sovereign self' (2009: 49).  Smith and Snell also chart a shift from 'I think that…' to 'I feel that…', which they interpret as a move towards 'an essentially subjectivistic and emotivistic approach to moral reasoning and rational argument' (2009: 51).

Madge et al. found that, despite evidence of some conflict between 'faith values and the absorbed ethos of personal agency and liberal individualism fostered by modern Western culture', the influence of a language of human rights, human agency, equality and respect was highly prevalent (2014: 214, 8).  There was also a stress on choice – 'consumption rather than obligation' – and this was the case even for Madge et al.'s research participants that were 'devout followers of their faith' (2014: 116).   Whilst it is difficult to identify firm features of Millennial spirituality and religiosity, as perhaps one of its defining characteristics is its variability, Christel Manning's study of the 'Nones' – those who identify as having no religion or being religiously unaffiliated – makes a significant case for one key Millennial characteristic being the 'sanctity of personal worldview choice' (2015: 6).  Many 'Nones' are young and for Manning the sanctity placed upon choice mirrors Millennial characteristics, such as tolerance, multiculturalism and progressive liberalism (2015: 52).  Manning highlights the 'choice narrative' as being pervasive through society, not just among young 'Nones' (2015: 149).  She also identifies this as having simultaneously fracturing and liberatory effects (2015: 152).  Whilst the idea of choice as sacrosanct is a useful notion, it is also worth bearing in mind that,

in the case of some of the groups considered in this thesis, choice as a central orientating principle

can be seen as one of the elements of contemporary society against which they are acting.  This,

however, is complexly interwoven with the imbuing of certain choice-based values.


All of these contributions provide very useful insights into the religious, spiritual and values

landscape that my research participants occupy.  However, what they lack, as will be considered at

the end of this chapter, is much discussion of the political and socio-political engagement and

participation.


## 3.2 The Millennial generation and socio-political engagement and participation

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed a move away from engagement

with political parties and other forms of institutional political participation.  This is shown most

clearly in the UK by the decline in political party membership, recent increases in membership of

UKIP, Labour and the Green Party notwithstanding.[11]  Castells charts this process of political

alienation and scepticism (1997: 345), but argues that this does not equate with political withdrawal

but rather a reframed sphere of political engagement, characterised by 'symbolic politics, single-

issue mobilisations, localism, referendum politics, and, above all, *ad hoc* support for personalised

leadership' (1997: 349).  Norris has also highlighted the changes to political participation that have

occurred owing to the diversification of 'the agencies (the collective organisations structuring

political activity), the repertoires (the actions commonly used for political expression), and the

targets (the political actors that participants seek to influence)' (2002 in Marsh et al 2007: 7).

Different forms of civic membership have also been identified, with Warner drawing attention to the

following characteristics of late modern organisational membership: 'provisional, temporary, linked

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[11] In addition, this should be understood as a result of all three of these (in the context of Labour under Corbyn) being seen to offer a 'new', more 'real' kind of party politics.

to vision not an institution, linked to a person more that principles, functioning as a secondary identity not one's primary identity' (2006: 65).

Lifestyle is also increasingly identified as a crucial component of modern political identification and expression.  This has been explored in the work of Giddens.  For Giddens, late modernity is distinguished by an increasingly reflexive modern self and the emergence of lifestyle as 'increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity and daily activity' (1991: 5).  This heralds the growth of what Giddens refers to as 'life politics', which 'emerges from the shadows which "emancipatory politics" has cast' (1991: 9).  Emancipatory politics is defined as 'a generic outlook concerned above all with liberating individuals and groups from constraints which adversely affect their life chances', marked by an orientation of '"away from" rather than "towards"' (1991: 210, 213). Life politics, by contrast, is not primarily concerned with 'the conditions which liberate us in order to make choices' as much as 'a politics *of* choice' (1991: 214).  The context for this is late-modernity as a 'post-traditional order', in which 'the question "How shall I live?" has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity' (1991: 14).  This is inherently political, as 'the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change' (1991: 33).  Giddens' framing is echoed in new social movement theory, which highlights such phenomena as the 'political of the everyday' and 'lifestyle politics'.  Social movements are seen to have become increasingly symbolic, less rights-based, less state-oriented, and have less easily defined goals (cf. Melucci 1989; Jasper 1997).

Whilst such theoretical contributions provide important background, there is also more recent work that focuses on the patterns of young people's political participation particularly, with the question of whether young people are increasingly apathetic gathering especial attention, both academic and

popular.  Marsh, O'Toole and Jones's *Young People and Politics in the UK: Apathy or Alienation?* (2007) is a useful contribution to this debate.   Marsh et al. consider that much of the prior literature has operated 'with a narrow, imposed conception of the political and hence of political participation' (2007: 4) and hope to instead begin with a much more open starting point, the key issue for which is not 'are young people politically engaged or apathetic?', but how young people conceive of the political.  Owing to the fact that politics has often been externally defined, Marsh et al. suggest that many scholars and commentators have wrongly equated non-participation in a narrow range of activities with political apathy (2007: 5).  Surveying the existing literature, particularly that of both Norris and Pattie et al., Marsh et al. levy four key criticisms at their work: one, that their work does not sufficiently engage with how young people conceive of 'the political'; two, that there is a lack of serious study into non-participation; three, that age, class, ethnicity and gender are not understood as lived experience; and finally, that little attention is given to the broader context of patterns of governance and citizenship (2007: 18-19).

In response to this, Marsh et al. draw attention both to political structures that promote exclusion and alienation and to different forms of political engagement to formal politics (2007: 5, 13).  It is the latter that is particularly relevant to this thesis and, in exploring this, Marsh et al. draw heavily on the work of Henrik Bang, which identifies two emerging forms of political identity, the Expert Citizen and the Everyday Maker.  Both Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens are 'people who want to engage directly in helping to solve those policy risks that confront them in their everyday lives, rather than merely helping to articulate citizen's wants as demands that call for collective decisions' (Bang, 2009: 119).   This is seen as a form of project identity, as opposed to a legitimating or oppositional one, such that 'they do not engage primarily in order to give voice to repressed interests and identities, but rather in order to help to empower people and develop their own identities as well as their capacities to act in solving common concerns' (ibid.).  For Bang, such forms of political identity and participation have been ignored in much mainstream political theory and

democratic studies, due to the prominence of liberal and communitarian theoretical frameworks (2009: 121).  Notions of identity and project politics, according to Bang, 'clearly dissociate themselves from liberalism and its notions of an abstract, "free-standing" individual as well as from communitarianism and its notion of one overarching common good', and 'from republicanism in which the main emphasis is on how an institutional hegemony constructs virtuous citizens from the top down' (2009: 121).   Both the Everyday Maker and the Expert Citizen 'do not gain their political identities from being citizens of the state or of an autonomous civil society, but from being ordinarily engaged in the construction of networks and locales for the political governance of the social' (2005: 172).

The Expert Citizen grouping is made up of new professionals, often in voluntary organisations. Characteristics include: politics being seen as discursive; having a project identity that is embedded in a more general lifestyle; expertise for exercising influence in elite networks; preference for negotiation and dialogue over antagonism and opposition; and an insider identity (seeing themselves as an autonomous part of the system, rather than oppositional to it) (Bang 2009: 131). Expert Citizens 'feel they can articulate and implement policy as well as, and even better than, politicians and other professionals from the public and private domain', and operate outside of formal democratic structures (ibid.).   Their focus is on concrete projects and policy 'rather than in fighting so that all can enjoy free and equal access to, and recognition in, collective decision-making' (ibid.).

Everyday Makers stress politics as lived experience, and can be identified, Bang contends, as a response to the rise of the Expert Citizen (2009: 119, 131).  Characteristics of the Everyday Maker include: thinking globally, acting locally; being interested in party politics but not defined by it; scepticism of Expert Citizens; and being motivated not by a sense of duty or to gain influence but to feel involved and to self-develop (2009: 131).   Bang explains that to be an Everyday Maker is 'to be

more individualistic, more project orientated, more "on" than "off" and "hit and run" in one's

engagement, more pleasure orientated and more fun-seeking, than is usually associated with being

civilly engaged' and to take part in low-level, concrete and short-term political action (2004 in Marsh

et al. 2007: 102). Everyday Makers can then be seen as embodying a *playful* form of political

identity, in which 'they don't want to waste time getting involved in the "old style" civil society

politics; they prefer to be involved as reflexive individuals participating with other reflexive

individuals for getting a particular and very concrete project going, right where they are' (Bang,

2009: 131). This manifests itself in a 'just do it' philosophy: 'Do it yourself; Do it where you are; Do it

for fun, but also because you find it necessary; Do it ad hoc or part-time; Do it concretely, instead of

ideologically; Do it self-confidently and show trust in yourself; Do it with the system, if need be'

(Bang, 2009: 132). Further still, this 'does not build on a common good, but on the acceptance and

recognition of their common capacities for making a difference, which is precisely why they are not

satisfied with being obedient supports or "virtuous" citizens of the state' (ibid.). Bang identifies that

many Everyday Maker characteristics are found amongst young people and Marsh et al.'s findings

largely confirm Bang's conceptualisations, except in the fact that 'contra Bang's argument, our

respondents' conceptions of the political tended to be intensely state-centred, with many of our

disadvantaged respondents believing that their lives were constantly determined by the state'

(2007: 216).


Whilst Bang's concepts have been used predominantly to apply to the sphere of citizens' initiatives,

another similar form of typology has been offered by Bennett et al. in the context of young people's

activity online. Bennett et al. chart the decline of what they term 'dutiful citizenship', an orientation

in which 'individuals participate in civic life through organised groups, from civic clubs to political

parties, while being informed via the news, and generally engaging in public life out of a sense of

personal duty' (2011: 838). This dutiful citizen relies on 'one-way communication managed by

authorities' and is channelled through 'membership in defined social groups' (2011: 835, 840). In its

place, Bennett et al. recognise the emergence of the 'actualising citizen', which includes 'the rise of more personally expressive cause-oriented politics based on lifestyle concerns such as consumer behaviours and the emergence of direct action protest networks in a variety of local to global arenas' (2011: 838).  The actualising citizen is centred around 'looser engagement with peer networks that pool (crowd source) information and organise civic action using social technologies that maximise individual expression' (2011: 339).  Considering youth organisations, Bennett et al. argue that the actualising citizen will be encouraged by organisations that are primarily online in their expressions, and the dutiful citizen by organisations 'that exist primarily in conventional office forms of membership-based, hierarchical organisations' (2011: 844).

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to operationalise both Bang's and Bennett et al.'s concepts, considering them in an empirical context. It should be added here that I did not encounter Bang or Bennett et al.'s work until the latter stages of my fieldwork.  Thus, there was not a deliberate attempt to prove or disprove the relevance of these concepts, but rather they seemed a useful way to reflect upon what I was encountering in my interviews.  However, neither Bennett et al.'s nor Bang's typology is perfect, and my attempts to operationalise these concepts were not wholly successful.  In the conclusion of this thesis, I consider the theoretical implications of this engagement with their work.  Since discussing Bang's concepts in his earlier work, Marsh has gone on to publish a sympathetic critique of Bang's work, in which he argues that Bang may be less relevant in the context of British politics.  Marsh contends that 'while we may be able to identify Everyday Makers, they may not exhibit all the characteristics that Bang identifies' (2011: 78).  Marsh also sees the Everyday Maker as a far more demographically determined form of identity than he believes Bang recognises: 'the activity of Everyday Makers seems more context-specific, and shaped by access to economic, social and cultural capital, than Bang acknowledges' (2011: 82).  Marsh concludes that the transition to 'late modernity' is less complete than it appears in Bang's theorising and that Bang places 'too much emphasis on agency and ideas and too little on material relations and structures'

(2011: 86).  Nonetheless, the essence of these concepts still provides a helpful starting point for

considering the kind of political identities and forms of participation exhibited in the case study

organisations explored in this thesis.  In addition, Bang's approach contributes both theoretical clout

and a usable typology to a field dominated respectively either by a lack of theoretical content or by

fairly woolly abstractions of limited applicability.  Bang's approach also possesses something lacking

from, for example, the nascent study of young people and participatory politics – that of

*intentionality*.


The recently-formed MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics is one such

example.  An exploration of the publications yielded by this research platform reveals several key

trends in this field of scholarship.  Firstly, participatory politics is understood largely in terms of the

importance of new social and digital media and communications, and the practices enabled by this.

Defining participatory politics as 'interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups

seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern', Cohen and Kahne describe how

young people are increasingly 'circumventing traditional gatekeepers of information and influence'

(2012: vi) and engaging in political acts, through social media, that are peer-based, interactive, and

non-hierarchical.


Secondly, this focus on practices is partly a result of an attempt to wrestle the term 'participatory

politics' away from ideological meanings:

> Across the literature, the concept of participatory politics designates forms of political action
>
> that seek to advance peer-to-peer forms of organisation and to evade elite dominance in
>
> politics, regardless of what the partisan affiliation is of those elites.  While the historical
>
> usage of the term in lived political context has skewed left-ward, we believe that as an
>
> analytical category 'participatory politics' is equally good at capturing political practices that

can emerge from any of a wide array of ideological or philosophical perspectives (Kahne et
al. 2014: 10).

Whilst there is value in this approach, it has, in effect, resulted in a focus on practices at the expense
of analysis of what those who perform such practices mean by it, or any sense of intentionality.

Perhaps the reason for this is that these works are underpinned by a rather instrumental
perspective, which explores how participatory political practices might be encouraging citizenship
among young people.  Kahne and Middaugh, for example, contend that 'youth learn norms for
working effectively in groups, acquire digital and leadership skills they can use in the political sphere,
and become part of networks through which they often hear about ways to get involved in the
broader society' (2012: 55).  This situates such authors within an historical debate about whether
young people are apathetic, or rather engaged in politics, but in different ways.  However, rather
than looking – as Marsh et al. suggest – at how young people define the political,  the focus is on
how young people may enter into more traditional spheres of political engagement.  Thus, there is a
tension – as the use in the quotation above of the phrase 'the political sphere' indicates – embedded
in simultaneously exploring these new areas of political activity but also implicitly denigrating them
as *not quite political.*   In an unstated, but underlying, dialogue with such authors as Putnam (2000) –
who have deplored the individualisation and atomisation of modern American society – writers for
this research project state that 'online civic expression may … strengthen individuals' identification
as civic actors and bolster their off-line engagement' (Weinstein 2014: 212).  Cohen and Kahne
similarly state that 'engagement in online interest-driven participatory cultures may provide a
valuable new pathway through which youth develop as engaged members of our political
community' (2014: 36).

A more insightful contribution to this body of work is that of Elisabeth Soep.  Whilst Soep utilises a similar definition of participatory politics as involving 'young people [using] digital and social media to exercise voice and agency on issues of public concern' (2014: 2), she issues the following important challenge for current and future scholarship:

> Rather than super-impose generic measures of political potency, we need to grapple with the explicit and tacit 'theories of change' young people and their collaborators pursue through their civic activities – whether, for example, they seek to transform policy, sway elites, render new services, or reframe issues and identities at the level of culture (2014: 13).

This is a useful challenge to look for the meanings that young people embed in the political practices they perform in their lives; not only how they define what is political, but how they hope to bring about change and what their narratives of change consist of.  This is something that I have tried to consider and have awareness of throughout this research.

Aside from the research produced by the MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, there have been some other contributions to this field, including Brian Loader and Dan Mercea's edited collection on *Social Media and Democracy: Innovations in participatory politics.* Again, the focus is on social media, which is identified as having led to a profound shift involving:

> The displacement of the public sphere model with that of a networked citizen-centred perspective providing opportunities to connect the private sphere of autonomous political identity to a multitude of chosen political spaces (Loader and Mercea, 2012: 2).

This work also explores how notions of citizenship have moved away from those that were primarily dutiful towards those that are instead more personalised and self-actualising.  This is charted in Janelle Ward's study of youth organisations' web presences, in which she contends that youth organisations' attempts to appeal to young people online are shaped by their different theories of

citizenship (2012: 150).   Firstly, there are those that uphold a conventional citizenship model, identifying young people's disengagement from traditional political structures and processes and attempting to reconnect them.  Secondly, there are those that uphold non-conventional notions of citizenship, seeing young people as dynamic and empowered, despite different channels of political activity.  This latter, drawing on Bennett is the actualising citizen who 'finds meaning in individual purpose rather than government structure and focuses on issues like consumerism rather than voting to perform an active role in democracy' (2012: 51).  In another contribution to this volume, Ariadne Vromen poses an interesting question as to how we can explain this trend towards self-actualising forms of citizenship among young people online, and considers whether it might be a product of neoliberalism, individualisation and a decline in collective action (2012: 205).

Vromen's reference to neoliberalism raises an issue that seems to be generally conspicuous in its absence within scholarship on participatory politics, and is definitely missing from the work of Henrik Bang, which, though critical of aspects of the Expert Citizen, celebrates the emergence of the Everyday Maker.  Considering the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, Petersen and O'Flynn contend that the entrepreneurial self is a key characteristic that the scheme encourages, feeding into ideas of 'what it means to be a successful and worthwhile person and how that is done' (2007: 202).  The neoliberal 'imperatives' identified by Petersen and O'Flynn of self-governance, self-motivation and entrepreneurialism are worth bearing in mind alongside Bang's 'playful' Everyday Maker.

## 3.3 Millennials, Christianity and socio-political engagement

There is very little literature on Millennials, Christianity (or religion more generally) and socio-political engagement and participation. In the works considered above on religion and young people, it was noticeable that there was little sense of the political at all. It scarcely features in *Religion and Youth,* for example, and was not asked about in the *Religion on Youth* project survey.  In Guest et al., it is discussed minimally, serving to raise more questions than are answered.   Intriguing findings

include that volunteering for political causes was more common in the student group labelled as 'established occasionals', those students who attend church occasionally both at home and in university term times (2013: 44). Political activity, however, was generally found to be fairly uncommon. Most Christian students, Guest et al. assert, 'do not volunteer for political causes and show few signs of developing a politico-moral stance out of their Christian convictions' (2013: 147). They continue that 'politically oriented Christian societies are relatively marginal, although attract a small number of highly committed activists' (2013: 197). Here, *political* seems to be equated with progressive social justice goals, which is further indicated in the statement that 'political engagement is often about fighting for the rights of the socially marginalised' (2013: 191). This ignores forms of political activity – such as the family values groups studied in this thesis – that do not exactly fall into this category.

Smith and Snell draw some attention to political issues and social engagement, finding few voices that were 'critical of mass consumerism, materialistic values, or the environmental or social costs of a consumer-driven economy' and little sense of moral obligation for helping others (2009: 67, 68). They also found strong feelings of political disenfranchisement, in which politics seemed remote and feelings of powerlessness and fatalism predominated, and that few emerging adults were involved in community organisations or social movements (2009: 72). Given the general morally concerned tone of Smith and Snell's approach, however, perhaps such findings are hardly surprising. This also suggests the importance of not imposing externally defined notions of the political upon young people, as previously discussed, and as has been stressed by the work of Marsh et al.

One recent contribution that does, however, consider religion, young people and politics in rather more depth is Daniel Nilsson DeHanas's *London Youth, Religion and Politics: Engagement and Activism from Brixton to Brick Lane* (2016). This work is based around interviews with second-

generation Bangladeshi (Muslim) and Jamaican (Christian) immigrants living in inner-city areas of London, many of whom have low socio-economic status. These interviewees thus represent a very different cohort to my own predominantly white middle class Christian research participants. Nonetheless, DeHanas's work has broad applicability. DeHanas usefully charts three main trends within studies of young people and political participation: the hypothesis of youth apathy which posits that 'youth will show low levels of civic identity, low levels of political literacy and interest, and low levels of actual practices of political participation'; the hypothesis of youth alienation that 'predicts low political participation, but does not have specific predictions of the other two dimensions of civic engagement'; and the hypothesis of youth atomism which suggests that 'youth will primarily participate in individual-level activities, while their engagement in collective forms of participation will be minimal' (2016: 27-29).

From charting these trends within the theoretical landscape, DeHanas goes on to consider the experiences of his participants. From his interviews with Jamaican neo-Pentecostal Christians, DeHanas unearthed no general trend and suggests that there is 'no overall basis to argue for a positive or a negative effect of religiosity on the civic engagement of young Jamaicans' (2016: 41). This is contrasted with the fact that 'the influence on religiosity on civic engagement is positive, strong and fairly consistent' amongst the Bangladeshi Muslims interviewed by DeHanas (ibid.). DeHanas also makes the compelling argument that political action conducted by the Jamaican Christian community can be situated within a trend of 'revival activism', a train of thought that suggests that society is improved as more individuals become Christians. DeHanas contends that this can lead to a blindness to structural factors and furthermore positions this within a wider paradox that has been observed to exist within evangelicalism. Drawing on the work of David Martin, DeHanas argues that whilst evangelicalism is orientated towards change and 'has hopes for deep individual-level heart change that culminate in the transformation of society', evangelicals can become cynical about the potential for social change when they are 'confronted with societies

where the vast majority is indifferent to their faith message'.  As a result, many evangelicals 'compartmentalise their influence to the voluntary sector (especially to their local church), or in some cases may campaign on a small set of moral touch-point issues' (2016: 186).  This has relevance for some of the evangelical groups I consider in this thesis.

## 3.4 Conclusion

The geographer of religion, Thomas Tweed, poetically conceptualises theorising as 'purposeful wandering', in which 'theorists...lean on "staffs" bestowed by others as...they negotiate the trail by what illumination they can find along the way' (2006: 11, 13).  For me, this is a liberating way of considering the art of theorising – not as something tribalistic or dogmatic, but a journey in conversation with those who have paved the road.  I am reluctant to commit myself to a single theoretical positioning.  This stems partly from an epistemological standpoint that no single theory is adequate to explain the complexity of generational change, contemporary religion or socio-political engagement, but it also stems from the perspective that any process of change is never complete; the 'old' and the 'new' are constantly in co-existence, and subsequently generational, religious and political change are all continually fracturing and unstable.

This stated, however, I am much in debt to the 'staffs' I have picked up and leant on along the way, many of which have been highlighted above.  Though not a theoretical framework that has been directly, explicitly applied to this thesis, my research is also strongly underpinned by an understanding of religion as a contested phenomenon, rather than a static entity (Tweed 2006; Hemming and Madge 2012), involving the 'continual creation and reconfiguration of religious discourses and identities' (Edgell Becker and Eiesland 1997).  However, I do not only draw attention in this thesis to how religion is negotiated, but also how it is transmitted by organisations, an approach that seems to be unusual in current scholarship.

# Chapter 4 – Methodology

This chapter will begin by describing the methods used in the course of this thesis – website analysis and interviews – and explain and account for these choices, with reference to the particular nature of my research topic.  I will also consider ethical considerations and the strengths and limitations of these methods in relation to my research questions. The second section of this chapter will briefly describe the forms of data analysis conducted, while the final section will critically reflect upon my own personal positioning in relation to my research topic and my research participants.  This is done partly in the interests of reflexivity and partly to advance further the notion that the binary identities of 'insider' and 'outsider' that have sometimes been advanced are in fact inherently blurred, fluid and complex, particularly in the context of a research topic as 'messy' as religion.

## 4.1 Choice and account of methods

### Website analysis

Early research involved using online searches to map the current spectrum of Christian social action groups in the UK.  This mapping exercise was intended to establish the variety of Christian social action groups operating in the UK within a variety of sectors, and covered a wide spectrum of groups in terms of their organisational structure, from established NGOs to more grassroots movements. This process of early research is not drawn upon in any great depth in this thesis, but served to provide important background and context and help develop my thinking.  The mapping exercise search was guided by the identification of several key sectors of concern and action:[12] the environment; poverty/inequality in the UK; global poverty and development; peace and reconciliation; and 'family values'.  It was enabled by some personal knowledge of these sectors, and by the guidance of several 'key informants'.[13] This mapping exercise enabled me to identify six case

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[12] Whilst this list is fairly comprehensive, it is by no means exhaustive.
[13] Discussion with Professor Gordon Blair, in particular, was useful for establishing the main players in the Christian environmental sector.

study organisations that were distinct in having at least some particular focus on young adults.

Following this selection, I began a more thorough analysis of their websites, and the other online platforms (such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter) of these organisations. This was done to establish a strong sense of how the organisations perceived and presented themselves, and their main modes of self-description.

In the case of organisations which had blogs (Tearfund Rhythms, Christian Aid Collective, Just Love, and the SPEAK Network), I also conducted analysis of the blogs' content, collecting information on: blog author, in order to establish a sense of how many people were participating in these participatory platforms; and key themes, so as to assess what were the primary topics of conversation.[14] I had intended to do some further analysis of the kind of responses from the reader that each blog post suggested, but this was made difficult by the fact that both the Tearfund Rhythms and Christian Aid Collective websites were substantively rebranded in the middle months of 2016. As a result, two extensive bodies of previous blog entries were lost, as they were either archived or the links were disabled. Consequently, the blog analysis is less thorough and more simplistic than I would have hoped and referred to only fairly minimally in this thesis. It also relies on an earlier process of analysis in which some key criteria I subsequently wished to consider were not included. The re-branding of websites points to the difficulties inherent in studying online platforms, particularly those of organisations that are concerned with their image and how they appear – by extension, we may expect this to be a particular problem for organisations that are trying to widen their appeal to young people. This demonstrates that digital texts are by no means stable and this can represent substantial difficulties for carrying out such research. It also poses challenges to academic accountability and integrity, if, for example, quotations are provided from now-expired web links, with no recourse for a potential reader to consider these quotations in their original

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[14] I discuss these findings in greater detail in Winter (2017) 'Negotiating the Popular, the Sacred and the Political: An Extended Case Study of Three UK-based Youth Christian Social Justice Initiatives', *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 25(1): 87-105

context.  As the blogs that I had previously analysed were archived and made unavailable, I was also left with no way in which to corroborate my early analysis.

Interviews

Interviews have been the main research tool used for this project.  I conducted thirty interviews with both relevant employees of the case study organisations and young adults who had been involved with the organisations.  Interviews lasted between just under an hour and up to two hours.  The early process of website analysis had revealed a strong sense of the case study organisations' projected identities.  However, it seemed important to interview organisation employees to get a clearer picture of the thinking and rationale that might lie behind the identities these organisations projected online.  Interviewing young people who had been involved with the organisations was also needed though in order to consider how successfully these organisations were engaging young adults and to hear from Millennial voices.  Interviewing both these groups of people enabled me to get a fuller picture of how my case study organisations were responding to generational change and how effective Millennials themselves found these responses.  This two-pronged interview strategy thus enabled me to establish more thorough and nuanced answers to my research questions.  It also corresponds with Weiss's advice that, when studying organisations, 'interviews should be held with people in different jobs on different levels, in different relationships to the institution and from different informal groups' (1994: 19) and Arksey and Knight's recommendation to 'seek out the views of several sets of stakeholders' (1999: 21).

I also chose interviews because I wanted to access not observations of people's activities or practices – which would have rendered an ethnographic approach far more appropriate – but people's understanding of their experiences.  As Weiss contends, 'interviewing gives us access to the observations of others' and to their interior experiences and ways of meaning-making (1994: 1). Weiss lists six particular research outcomes for which conducting qualitative interviews are

appropriate and, of these, three especially are relevant for my own research: developing detailed

descriptions; integrating multiple perspectives; and learning how events are interpreted.[15]  Arksey

and Knight similarly highlight how 'it is the world of beliefs and meanings … that is clarified by

interview research' (1999: 15).  Interviews then were the most appropriate way to access the

meanings that organisation employees gave to their work and young adults' perceptions of their

experiences.[16]

*Pilot interviews*

I carried out two pilot interviews several months before the main interviewing phase of the project

began.  These interviews were with Dionne and Ian,[17] who occupied senior positions in Christian Aid

and Tearfund respectively, and I used the opportunity to canvass their perspectives on a series of

fairly broad issues.  These included the religious context they were operating in, the state of the

development NGO sector in the UK, and public engagement with development issues.  Whilst

neither Dionne nor Ian occupied a relevant position in terms of being involved in youth engagement

work, they were able to provide a very useful overview of two of my case study organisations, and

this contextual material is drawn upon in Chapter 6 of this thesis.  Due to the nature of the status of

both Dionne and Ian within their respective organisations, the pilot interviews by necessity involved

different types of questions to the interviews that followed.  However, they nonetheless gave me

the opportunity to try out certain kinds of questioning technique.  In particular, the experience

cautioned me against asking open questions that were in fact rather too broad.  The pilot interviews

also offered a useful opportunity to test out certain 'hunches' that I had developed early in my

project.  Using the pilot interviews for this purpose led to an especially fruitful discussion with Ian,

for example, on whether or not public support for international development was waning in the UK.

Being able to explain that I was only a year into my research also gave me a useful standpoint from

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[15] The other reasons given are describing process, developing holistic description, and bridging inter-subjectivities.

[16] Later in this chapter I do consider, however, that interviews might have been usefully supplemented with ethnographic methods.

[17] Dionne and Ian were both happy to be named.  I refer to them here with first names only.

which to invite interviewees to respond to certain ideas I had developed. This was particularly appropriate given the status of these interviewees as 'experts' within their field, as they occupied a position from which they could easily refute or challenge my 'hunches'.

*Choice of semi-structured interviews*

The interviews were designed to be semi-structured and open-ended. A structured interview approach would not have been suitable, as there was a need to be able to follow up on interesting themes that emerged during the course of the interview. I also did not want the conversation to be directed solely by myself, as the researcher. However, some degree of structure was needed, as there were several themes that needed to be discussed in each interview in order to allow for comparison between interviews and between case study organisations. As Galletta highlights, the semi-structured interview is a hybrid method, 'sufficiently structured to address specific topics related to the phenomenon of study, while leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the study focus' (2013: 24). Its key benefit is thus 'its attention to lived experience while also addressing theoretically driven variables of interest' (ibid.).

*Sampling*

The context of my research did not render a random sampling strategy appropriate, but rather other strategies such as purposeful selection (Galletta 2013: 33). This project relied on two main strategies when it came to sampling: the selection of key informants from the organisations; and snowball/convenience sampling. The former was used in the case of approaching people who worked for the organisations. It was fairly obvious in most cases who to get in contact with, based on job descriptions that were available online (for example, on LinkedIn). In the case of CARE, there was only one person involved in running the Leadership Programme. In the case of Tearfund and Christian Aid, I interviewed as many people working in their youth teams as responded to me and made a concerted effort to gain access to as many different perspectives from within each youth team as possible. Getting the contact details of young adults who had taken part in the youth

initiatives on offer was a more problematic process.  I used my own social media channels to advertise for participants, so several people I interviewed were 'friends of friends'.  I also found several Facebook groups for alumni or participants of programmes in particular years.  Though these groups were 'closed', I was able to contact their members privately on an individual basis.  This was a successful, though time-consuming, strategy, which led to several interviews, including all those I conducted with attendees of the Wilberforce Academy.  I elaborate further on the use of social media platforms, such as in this case Facebook, below.  I was also put in touch with potential interviewees by people I had interviewed, in a classic example of snowballing.

The nature of this research made this kind of sampling fairly appropriate.  The key organisational informants were chosen because of the positon within the organisation that they occupied, and it was thus evidently important that these individuals be interviewed.  The young adults who had been involved with the organisations represented a bounded and small population; the main issue was of their visibility and how I might be able to contact them.  The presence of various Facebook groups (for example, 2012 Emerging Influencers, or Wilberforce Academy Attendees) was very helpful in solving this problem.  When I found a Facebook group like this, I contacted all its members individually, and the sample became all those who responded affirmatively.  Such a volunteer sample is by no means perfect, as we might expect those who had particularly strong feelings – such as really enjoying or really disliking the experience – to be more likely to respond to the call for interviewees.  There is also the issue as to who was not represented in the Facebook group, such as people who do not use Facebook or people who had chosen not to join the group due to an especially bad experience.[18]

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[18] It is worth briefly elaborating on some of the peculiarities of using Facebook to get in touch with people.  One of these features is that, if you have 'mutual friends' with someone, they will receive your message in their 'normal' inbox.  However, if you do not have mutual friends, the message goes into their 'Other' inbox, meaning that they are not notified about the message.  Some of the messages I sent, which would have ended up in people's 'Other' inboxes, were not read at all.  (Facebook now notifies you, underneath the message, when the message has been read).  I did, however, receive responses from people for whom the message

However, using social media does seem to be an appropriate way of getting in touch with young adults, or Millennials, for many of whom social media are embedded in their everyday life. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of Facebook as a research tool was in fact quite a surprise to me in some ways. From the private messages sent to each individual member of the relevant Facebook groups, I expected very little response. My feeling had been that it was unlikely that people would be able to place trust in a 'random person', who had got in touch with them using their own personal social media. The fact that many people did in actuality respond to me demonstrates not only the appropriateness of social media as a tool for contacting this generation, but also perhaps the ways in which social media may have changed both communicational and attitudinal norms for this generation, such as creating alternate notions around such issues as privacy and trust. Social media thus opens opportunities for the qualitative researcher.

*Absences*

The sampling strategy was largely successful in ensuring the diversity of voices I had hoped for. However, there were some challenges in making contact with certain organisations. Whilst this represents a weakness of this study in terms of representativeness, it does however reveal certain things about the nature of some of the case study organisations, and is in this way in fact rather illuminating. Particularly, I struggled to get in touch with CARE and Christian Concern employees. It was easier to find contact details for people at Tearfund and Christian Aid and I also had a more extensive network of contacts at, and links to, these two organisations, which were utilised to good effect. I could only find generic emails for CARE and Christian Concern, which I emailed to no response. I then utilised a different tactic, being put in touch with individuals at both CARE and Christian Concern by a personal contact who had previously occupied a very senior position in the Evangelical Alliance. I hoped that such an approach, in demonstrating personal connections with significant figures in the evangelical movement, might be beneficial and help to reassure the two

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would have gone into their 'Other' inbox. This was significant, in that it meant that I didn't just interview people with whom I had one or two 'mutual friends'.

organisations about myself as a researcher.  However, I still heard nothing back from Christian

Concern, though I did eventually from CARE.  This contrasts to the willingness of Christian Aid and

Tearfund employees to be interviewed.  Whilst a lack of response to repeated emails can easily be

attributed to such factors as busyness, it is worth mentioning that both CARE and Christian Concern

may have been suspicious about the idea of being researched.  Both organisations have received

negative media attention, which may caution them against speaking to 'outsiders'.  In addition,

these organisations – to varying degrees – have an exclusive sense of Christian identity, as well as

concern with issues relating to personal morality.  Christian Concern in particular possess a highly

exclusive conception of Christian identity and are intensely concerned about policing their own

boundaries and not particularly interested in conversation or dialogue.  It is possible therefore that

there may be reluctance to speak to people on a research basis who do not share such values.  As a

PhD researcher, I may well have been assumed to lie outside the boundaries of Christian Concern's

clearly bounded and delineated identity. However, I nonetheless still felt a little surprised at the

difficulties I faced, partly as I was offering these organisations a perhaps rare opportunity to present

their perspective in a non-combative space, rather than being vilified in the mainstream media for

much of their advocacy activity.[19]  My focus on young people was also one that I had imagined might

be interesting for, and attractive to, these organisations.  The fact that it did not seem to be may be

illustrative of the nature of the youth engagement strategies of these organisations, which are not

characterised by any particular attempts to be more 'youth-savvy' or 'current'.

It was a different story when it came to young adult participants in Christian Concern's Wilberforce

Academy and the CARE Leadership Programme.  In this case, I was able to successfully recruit

research participants that had attended the Wilberforce Academy, but struggled to recruit

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[19] See, for example, http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/uproar-in-oxford-as-trinity-hosts-christian-group-with-controversial-views-on-homosexuality-8550531.html [Accessed 31/10/16] and http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/stephen-crabb-new-dwp-secretary-criticised-for-links-to-gay-cure-group-a6941281.html [Accessed 31/10/16].

Leadership Programme participants.  Even a couple of people who I knew personally were reluctant to speak to me about their experiences of the Leadership Programme – and in fact refused – and this seemed to be largely a result of their perception of the sensitivities surrounding the programme.  One acquaintance had spoken to me several years ago about the difficulties she had encountered as a programme participant, but did not want to be interviewed as she feared such views might be unrepresentative of the Leadership Programme experience more generally or present the programme in an unduly negative light.  In addition, there may be reluctance to speak openly about a programme that has provided valuable work experience and has enabled the opening up of subsequent job opportunities.

*Means of interview*

I interviewed people both by Skype and face-to-face, employing the latter whenever time and finances allowed.  On a personal level, I found the face-to-face interviews more enjoyable and satisfying, as the 'data' was situated within an experience of 'actual' interaction. I also found it easier to start an interview face-to-face, as the context enabled small talk in a way that Skype didn't.  One of the main difficulties surrounding Skype interviews that I encountered was whether to use the video setting, or not.  In my pilot interviews, I had found that the video could negatively affect the call quality, or be distracting (predominantly due to time delay).  Deakin and Wakefield have observed how such technological hitches can lead to difficulties in developing rapport (2014: 610, 613).  I was also conscious of not making it awkward for the interviewee by verbally offering them a choice of medium (video and audio, or audio only).  My decision was to wait a few seconds into the call to see if the interviewee had chosen to use video.  If they had, I responded by switching on my own video.  If they didn't, then I also used audio only, as I did not want interviewees to feel forced into choosing the video medium.  As a strategy, this seemed to work well.   The majority of the interviewees chose to use video and I responded, thus mirroring the medium they seemed to feel comfortable with.  Though I had been worried about the video disrupting the quality of the call, it was helpful to be able to observe interviewees' non-verbal forms of communication.  It also

demanded more attentiveness from me as the interviewer and necessitated that I put in the same kind of effort as I would face-to-face, such as showing signs of active listening and responding.  In the absence of the video, I found it was easy to get distracted and feel distant and removed from what was going on.

There is some nascent research on the use of Skype for interviews.  Intriguing research by Cabaroglu and Basaran, albeit in the rather different context of interviewing non-native speakers in English, found that there were no statistically significant differences in the occurrence of pauses and repetitions between face-to-face interviews and Skype interviews and concludes that 'the communication mode cannot be taken as the decisive factor that affects the content and quality of talk'.  They assert that 'similar physiological and/or cognitive processes must be at work during talk under computer-mediated and face-to-face conditions' (2010: 16).  However, there doesn't seem to be any research which replicates such findings in a situation where interviewees are interviewed in their native language.  Being interviewed in something other than your native language inevitably will lead to different speech patterns than being interviewed in one's own language, so it is difficult to assess whether such findings are widely applicable.  In addition, an interview that may feel like more of a 'test' may be expected to yield forms of communication and interaction rather different to an interview framed more as a conversation.  Deakin and Wakefield provide some broad reflections on the use of Skype for qualitative interviews and, despite some shortcomings of this medium, conclude that 'online interviews can produce data as reliable and in-depth as produced during face-to-face encounters' (2014: 604).  In this way they, albeit tentatively, challenge the assumption that face-to-face interviews represent the 'gold standard' of qualitative research (McCoyd and Kerson 2006 in Deakin and Wakefield 2014: 604).

The use of Skype, in my own experience, did not necessarily impact upon the 'quality' of the interview. Rather, the interviews were shaped by a far more complex matrix of factors, including personality, time of day, distractions (such as the interview being interrupted), my own energy levels, and the ease with which rapport was developed. Rapport was not necessarily markedly lacking in Skype interviews in comparison with their face-to-face counterparts, for example. One of the most 'successful' interviews I conducted, due to a high level of rapport, naturalness and a conversation that lasted almost two hours, occurred over Skype. By contrast, an interview that never found its flow and was rather awkward at times occurred face-to-face in one of the usually most convivial of interview settings, a café. This points to the importance of seeing the interview as an encounter that is mediated by many factors, something that is not necessarily taken fully into account by methods textbooks. Though Weiss, for example, acknowledges that 'a bad interview, like a good one, is jointly produced by interviewer and respondent', he identifies the interviewee as a rational choice actor that has not been fully convinced to participate in the interaction: 'the respondent who is unresponsive may not be convinced that candour is without risk. Or the respondent may just feel that there is no potential profit in participating in the interview and therefore no point in cooperating with it' (1994: 145, 141). This envisaging of the interview as an exchange may fail to acknowledge the true complexity of the interview encounter.

*Ethics procedure and ethical considerations*

Interviewees were sent an information sheet when I contacted them about their participation. If they agreed to be interviewed, I either sent them a consent sheet online if the interview was being carried out over Skype, or brought a consent sheet to the interview, if carried out face-to-face. This consent sheet was split into two sections, the first section to be completed before the interview, and the second section afterwards. The first section covered: whether they had read the information sheet; whether I had answered any questions they might have; an understanding of the voluntary nature of their participation; and permission for the interview to be recorded. The second section included: whether they would rather be named or anonymous; whether there were any details from

the interview they would rather be omitted; and whether they would like to receive their interview transcript.  I designed the consent sheet in this way because I believe it allows for a more informed notion of consent.   The second section of the consent sheet was designed to enable the interviewee to make informed choices and decisions, based on what had actually been spoken and discussed during the interview, rather than the interviewee having to make these decisions before the interview had taken place.

My study might be seen as unusual in its decision to allow research participants the choice as to whether to be named or to remain anonymous, thus going against the usual standard practice of promising anonymity.   This decision was based on two main ideas.  Firstly, I wanted to be able to give my interviewees the choice to have their ideas attributed to them, if they so desired.  This notion of giving interviewees ownership over what they had said seemed important, as a way of attempting to equalise the researcher-researched relationship, rather than just 'using' the 'data' of my rendered-nameless research participants.  In hindsight, this conviction was perhaps rather naïve as I continued to exercise much power as the researcher in terms of my processes of analysis, selection, and ordering.  Nonetheless, naming research participants does encourage the researcher to think very carefully and consciously about issues of fair representation.  Secondly, the ideal of anonymity may be at odds with the new social norms that social media have heralded, including an increased culture of openness and self-representation, as opposed to privacy and restraint.  During my Masters dissertation, I had given people this same choice, and all except one of my eleven interviewees chose to be named, confirming for me that this might be a useful approach, and indeed one that was desirable among the researched community.  It should also be noted that there are additionally practical constraints, such as the difficulty of actually ensuring anonymity, especially given the nature of this particular research project and its focus upon a small sector of activity.

Whilst anonymity has often been taken as given in the social sciences, some recent scholarship has begun to challenge this. The taken-for-granted nature of research participant anonymity has been highlighted by Moore (2012), who excavates the history of anonymity to argue that it often served not to 'protect the vulnerable' but to exclude 'women and others from authorship and ownership of their own words, erasing them from the archive, even from history' (2012: 332).  Tilley and Woodthrope also highlight what they term the 'universal endorsement of anonymity' (2011: 197). For their own respective doctoral research projects, however, they came to the conclusion 'that anonymizing the detailed contextual information would be counterproductive as it would obscure how the respective sites were the unique products of local dynamics' (2011: 201).  Whilst they were aware of the potential risk this entailed of harm towards their research participants, particularly organisation employees, the decision not to anonymise was nonetheless taken.  Tilley's research into disability advocacy organisations, for example, decided that, in identifying areas of innovation and best practice, 'it would be beneficial to the sector [...] to clarify exactly where (and in what context) these organizations were operating' (ibid.).[20]  This has some resonance for my own research, having explored which kinds of Christian social action groups are responding to generational change most effectively.  However, my own personal positioning in relation to the very wide range of groups that this thesis has considered makes this rather more complicated, as will be later discussed in this chapter.

The standard reason for giving research participants pseudonyms, and rendering them anonymous in this way, is usually defended in terms of protecting these research participants.  During the course of my research, however, I began to more clearly recognise that ensuring anonymity might also serve the interests of the researcher and of academic freedom.  The social psychologist Vainio, responding to the rise in discussion of non-anonymity among ethnographers in particular, has

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[20] The general emphasis of the article, however, is on the difficulties of anonymity when it comes to the areas of dissemination of findings, knowledge exchange and impact.

similarly challenged the idea that anonymity is solely an ethical issue.   Vainio contends instead that

anonymity is valuable both for research and for researchers and that 'anonymizing research

participants has an influence on the overall quality of research and therefore is also useful when no

ethical risks are perceived, when participants wish not to remain anonymous or when their

anonymity cannot be guaranteed' (2012: 685).  She asserts that the assurance of anonymity

performs many important academic roles:

> First, ontologically, anonymity is a way of turning into 'data' what someone has said or
>
> written.[21] Second, anonymization as 'analysis' turns the participants into examples of
>
> specific theoretical categories, and as such is a part of the data analysis. Third, anonymity as
>
> 'independence' enables the researcher to interpret the data irrespective of the participants'
>
> wishes (ibid.)

The final role identified by Vainio became particularly resonant for me, as I experienced the

sensitivity surrounding issues of organisational reputation.  My decision to name and identify my

case study organisations felt necessary in practical terms, as they could have very easily been

identified by those with a knowledge of the Christian social action sector.  In addition, to limit this

identifiability would have been incredibly difficult and would have resulted in the erasure of so much

contextual detail as to render the case study organisations mere shadows of themselves and

therefore almost meaningless.  Despite this decision, however, the naming of the organisations

became a difficult issue for me, due to the fact that I struggled with how to represent them and with

my desire to be fair, but critical.  I will discuss in further detail below the sensitivities of

organisational reputation.

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[21] For Vainio, this allow researchers to gain greater distance and abstraction from a research topic that they
might feel otherwise close to (2012: 691).

Despite the difficulties, the decision to name the organisations still feels like the right one, in the interests of thick description and not making false promises to the organisations of anonymity. However, the naming of individuals now feels more troublesome to me, particularly in the case of organisation employees who wanted to be named, but also wanted to see what I wrote about what they'd said and how I interpreted their interview. There were a couple of times during the research when I became frustrated by the feelings of responsibility I was encountering due to the decision of some of my participants to be named. This sometimes felt onerous and burdensome in a way that responsibly representing the research participants of my Masters dissertation never had. This may be partly related to issues of power. Vainio is critical of some of the notions that have been advanced by those who have challenged taken-for-granted notions of anonymity, such as, for example, the idea that non-anonymity empowers and gives voice to research participants. Whilst Vainio disrupts idealistic notions of empowering research participants through reference to the power the researcher holds in the processes of analysis and publication, she has also highlighted how 'it is not automatically the researcher who holds the more powerful position' (2012: 692). Interviewing organisation employees who were older than me, and in some cases perhaps more dominant personalities, destabilised the idea that I, as the interviewer, would always be in the more powerful position.

Though I have respected the wishes of those interviewees who wanted to be named in this thesis (albeit using only their first names), I would be far more cautious about doing so in publication or other forms of dissemination. I would also be more reluctant in future research to give research participants the choice. Understanding anonymity as not just a question of ethics, vitally important though they are, but also one of research integrity – as Vainio proposes – offers a helpful framework for making such decisions. In future I think it would be useful to interrogate rather more whether naming participants might risk toning down an argument that would mark an important academic contribution. Considering the symbiotic relationship between protection of the researcher and

protection of the research participants also seems important. Over the course of this piece of research, I felt that at times the decision to name participants rendered both myself and them somewhat vulnerable.

Consequently, my experience of this piece of research has involved a significant process of learning about the delicate balance between responsibility towards one's research participants and academic responsibility, in terms of representation that feels truthful. Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured accordingly to interpret things in light of my analysis, whilst also, I hope, representing my interviewees in a way that is fair and responsible. However, this has at times felt a bit like a tightrope walk.

*Gatekeepers and organisational reputation*

As highlighted above, I remain happy in my decision to name the organisations I studied. In order to talk about the case study organisations in a way that felt meaningful, it was important to name the organisations, as to ensure organisational anonymity would have made it impossible to retain a richness of detail. Throughout this research, however, my experiences with some of the case study organisations raised sensitive issues surrounding organisational reputation. These experiences served to highlight the destabilising of traditional notions of gatekeepers, raising questions for similar research in the future. Individuals in both CARE and Tearfund respectively expressed the desire to either have the organisation given a pseudonym or to see what was written about them prior to publication. In the case of CARE, concern over their reputation can be seen as fairly understandable, given a certain amount of controversy surrounding their placement of young Christians with MPs. In the case of Tearfund, it felt more surprising.

CARE's initial desire for the organisation to be given a pseudonym was resolved through discussion with the organisation, but at the time raised thorny issues, such as: what about the people who had

happily talked to me about their experiences of the CARE Leadership Programme? And what about the information provided publicly on CARE's website? In the case of Tearfund, I had very varied experiences. Some Tearfund employees were very relaxed about talking to me, and about my research, while others seemed rather more nervous about organisational reputation and wanted to view anything prior to publication. This raises complicated issues about the relative power of employees within the same organisation to make such requests and, accordingly, of organisational gatekeepers. Social media makes this picture even more complex. Owing to social media, I was able to find research participants, while bypassing the organisation. Whilst this was freeing in many ways and allowed for far greater access than I might otherwise have been able to negotiate, it can also be seen to have resulted in a fairly uneasy 'in-between' situation. On the one hand, there was genuine enthusiasm for, and interest in, my research from young adults who had been involved with the organisation and, on the other, worries about organisational reputation from organisation employees, which could lead to caution and even suspicion about my presence as a researcher.

I have since wondered whether approaching organisation employees without discussing my research at a higher level within the organisation first was a little misguided or unwise. If I were to do similar research with organisations again, I would more carefully consider whether to approach people higher up in the organisation first in order to establish whether the research was going to be possible and whether or not the organisation was to be named. This could also have led to a more open dialogue about my role as a researcher and my relationship with the organisation, as well as my own personal motivations for conducting this research, a dialogue which could, where appropriate, have led to a more collaborative relationship with particular organisations. However, there are obvious potential drawbacks to such an approach, such as increased likelihood not to gain access. In addition, someone higher up in an organisation may lack the time for a conversation. However, it should be noted though that, whilst this section has found it necessary to discuss some of the problems that emerged owing to concerns surrounding organisational reputation, this was not

the case for the majority of interview participants.  Indeed, in most cases people were happy to talk openly about their experiences and opinions.

## 4.2 Strengths and limitations of these methods

The choice of interviews as the main research method for this research was largely an appropriate and successful one.  They allowed for the collection of rich data and insight, generating both intriguing similarities and differences between and within organisations.  However, as the account above suggests, there were some difficulties.  In addition, and in the context of concern about organisational reputation, I found that the interviews also yielded some 'silences'.  As a result, I sometimes felt that I wasn't always hearing 'the whole story'.  However, whilst this was of course frustrating as a researcher, it was also an illuminating process, in relation to learning about the nature of some of my case study organisations.  A sense that there were 'silences' was most notable in my interviews with the Tearfund youth team.  Out of all the interviews I conducted, the ones with the Tearfund youth team most left me feeling that I had been given an account that was in-keeping with their organisational language.  Certain phrases, for example, were often repeated, and there was a clear sense of a coherent narrative being consciously created.  In particular, there was a distinct lack of self-criticism and critical reflexivity about the practices and activities of the organisation, and a strong discourse of optimism and enthusiasm.  Situating Tearfund in their charismatic evangelical context enabled me to gain a better understanding of this and, though frustrating, this was an interesting and revealing process that demonstrates the Christian culture within which Tearfund operate.

### Other possible approaches

Whilst interviews were the most appropriate method for considering my research questions, they could have been effectively complemented by ethnographic research.  In future, I would be interested in incorporating more ethnographic methods into my research, as I think they would usefully add another layer of meaning.  I have also become increasingly aware of how much I enjoy

reading the 'rich description' provided by good ethnographic research and being given a more visual, sensory picture of a particular group or place. I did request to attend the Wilberforce Academy as a researcher, but perhaps unsurprisingly received no response to this.

## 4.3 Data analysis

Interviews were inputted into Atlas T.I, where they were coded. Atlas T.I allows for some fairly complex forms of data analysis, including some quantitative analysis. My use of the programme was rather simpler than this, corresponding with the interpretive nature of my approach to data analysis. I used Atlas T.I because it allowed all my interview transcripts to be stored in the same place. I also found helpful the way in which previously used codes were 'remembered' by the programme and thus could be easily used again. Data on the prevalence of different codes allowed me to get a sense of which themes were becoming predominant and which seemed to be more marginal. The storing of codes was something that wouldn't have been possible using a more basic programme such as Word. Individual transcripts were grouped into 'families' depending on which case study organisation they represented. These were further grouped into their case study pairings, so transcripts were considered in three groups of two case study organisations, corresponding with the chapters of this thesis. As the case study organisations varied immensely, it seemed to make sense to undertake data analysis in the context of these groupings. Very different codes ended up being used in different case study contexts. However, the nature of Atlas T.I meant that all codes were stored. This allowed me to develop a rapid sense of where the main similarities and differences lay between the organisational groupings.

Whilst I found Atlas T.I. useful, I am sceptical of some of the claims that have been made in its favour. In the introduction to a guide to using the programme, for example, Susanne Friese states that, in Atlas T.I., 'every step is documented according to strict rules so that the electronic HU[22]

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[22] Referring to the Hermeneutic Unit, in which all the data for a particular project are stored

means not only a tidier desk, but also a change from the art of *fortune-telling* to an understandable, *verifiable* technique of text interpretation' (2012: 12, my emphasis).  This seems both to deny and denigrate the forms of data analysis that developed prior to computers, and place too much emphasis on positivistic notions of verifiability.  Though Atlas T.I made the process of data analysis more systematic and methodical, my own particular interpretive lenses were as much present as they would have been using any other system, and I turn now to consider the relationship between my own personal positioning and this research.

## 4.4 Personal positioning- between 'insider' and 'outsider'

Like most PhD projects, the topic of my research has morphed and changed over time. Simultaneously, my own personal positioning in relation to my research has also shifted, and there has been a complex interaction throughout this process between these two changing dimensions. At the onset of this project, I intended to look purely at more left-wing or progressive Christian groups.  This stemmed from a sense of personal commitment both to a Christian faith and to social justice causes.  My Masters dissertation had explored Christian support for the Occupy movement, and approached this topic with a considerable amount of sympathy for the religious and political views offered by my research participants.

As the lens through which I was looking at my research topic increasingly became young people and generational change, the case for widening the focus in terms of the political and moral orientations of my case study organisations became more apparent.  As there were specific youth programmes being offered by conservative Christian organisations, it seemed that it would be worthwhile to study these organisations as case studies.  The fact that I didn't personally align myself with these groups did not seem like a sufficient reason not to study them.[23]  This meant that, instead of only studying groups that I 'liked', I have ended up having case study organisations of many types, the

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[23] I am very grateful to the sadly late John Urry for challenging me on this during my first year panel.

worldviews of some I agree with and others I disagree with.   As a result, my status as an 'insider' or 'outsider' became rather blurred.  Sharing few or indeed no values with the conservative Christian organisations, I was an 'outsider'.  By contrast, I attended the Christian Aid Collective regional launch in a personal capacity and have been a long-term member of the SPEAK Network, thus demonstrating features of an 'insider' identity.  It is common for sociologists to study a topic that they either have sympathy with or that they are highly critical of but nonetheless wish to understand.  My own research is perhaps unusual in combining both these tendencies.

However, even this complicated picture of simultaneous insider and outsider identity became yet more blurred and untidy.  Firstly, in the actual experience of doing interviews, I found myself sometimes building more rapport with someone who I shared few values with and less with someone who I shared many values with.  I really enjoyed most of the interviews I did with participants of the Wilberforce Academy, organised by the very conservative Christian Concern, and they yielded some of the richest data.  From having been almost reluctant to study such an organisation, I became very grateful for the experience that interviewing participants of such different religious and political views offered me.  Like many of my contemporaries, the notion of existing within an 'echo chamber' is a resonant one.  Most of my closest friends share my values, as do the friends and acquaintances that I see on a regular basis.  To interview people with such opposing views to me was a fascinating experience, which helped me to appreciate more the reasons that people might have for holding views that I disagree with.  Whilst I never came to identify as an 'insider' in relation to this community, I would sometimes feel more alienated and more of an 'outsider' after an interview with someone that was really involved in social justice causes that I also cared about. Naples' argument that 'we are never fully outside or inside the "community"; our relationship to the community is never expressed in general terms but is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in particular, everyday interaction' (1997 in Abramson

2010: 227) was thus a pertinent one.  Whilst this may apply more to ethnographic research, it was also the case through the interactions provided by my interviews.

Secondly, during the course of this PhD, I struggled at times with what felt like an uncomfortably blurred existence regarding my research topic and my own participation in various forms of religious life.  A personal frustration with the ways in which faith-based orientations towards social justice can fail to acknowledge issues such as individuals' constraints, limitations and capacity levels led to my gradual disengagement from many of the forms of religious activity that had previously played a significant role in my life.  In addition, I felt saddened and exasperated by the fact that in some of the faith communities of which I was a part academia was explicitly denigrated and I was made to feel guilty for the fact that I was engaging my analytical skills rather than 'getting out there' and 'helping people' directly.  As a result, I ended this project feeling like much more of an 'outsider' than how I had begun.  One significant challenge that this resulted in was trying to mitigate the effects of what was at times a fairly emotive process.  However, being able to take a few steps back from my own participation enabled me to gain some needed critical distance and a wider perspective on my research topic.


As these reflections have suggested, the notions of 'insider' and 'outsider' identity in relation to the study of religion lend religious identity a far more static quality than it actually possesses.  Religion as *lived experience* instead points to the fluid and unstable nature of such identity.  This can be illustrated by a few more examples derived from personal experience that serve to destabilise what it means to be an insider and what it means to be an outsider.  At a single SPEAK event, for example, I may enjoy the feeling of being an 'insider' as I chat with friends over a meal, but feel alienated when later on there is a group prayer session in which people pray aloud.  I am a member of a church, yet I attend irregularly, remain silent for parts – if not all – of the creed, and am rendered an 'outsider' by such demographic factors as being one of very few representatives of my age group.  In

the course of a single church service I may then slip from one form of positioning to another – from enjoying a sermon that resonates to realising that I am the only person present under forty who is neither a parent nor a young child. Religious identity then is something considerably complex, fluid and mutable and to study religion through a social scientific lens is to become increasingly aware of embodying what Warner terms 'insider-outsider simultaneity' (2007: 33), though in perhaps a rather more blurred form, where even these categories are unstable.

My own personal religious positioning was something that my interviewees sometimes asked me about. Whilst I did sometimes feel able to respond to this openly, as I saw it as a way of enhancing a sense of rapport or decreasing a feeling of imbalance between interviewer and interviewee, in certain situations I felt that being open about my religious positioning could hinder the relationship and make me seem less legitimate and trustworthy. In such situations, I tended to be fairly vague or non-committal, whilst avoiding being dishonest. Sometimes I would self-identify as a fellow Christian, but I became increasingly uncomfortable doing this. This was made more complicated by the highly varied religious and socio-political perspectives that my interviewees possessed, rendering my interactions with my interviewees fairly complex. As Arksey and Knight highlight, levels of individual self-disclosure do tend to vary according to each individual interview situation (1999: 103). It definitely was not as simple as responding in distinct ways based upon the particular religious positioning of the interviewee. For example, I was probably most open with a Wilberforce Academy participant that I had really enjoyed interviewing and found thoughtful, open and perceptive, despite very differing views to my own.

Of course, it was not just my own personal religious positioning – and the ways in which this informs or informed my social, political and moral views – that influenced the interactions I had with my interviewees. My class, race and gender also played a role. In terms of class, the vast majority of my

interviewees – like myself – were middle class, so there was no sense of a particular class gap

between researcher and researched.  However, I did sometimes experience interviews in which

highly-educated participants seemed to respond to my status as a PhD student by trying to impress

on me how much they knew, their academic credentials, or the depth of their thinking on an issue.

This could lead to a slightly strange dynamic that didn't feel like the 'natural' conversation I hoped to

generate.


Most of my research participants were – again like myself – white British.  For most of the case study

organisations this was probably largely representative of their demographics.  However, the

Wilberforce Academy – judging by its publicity materials, video footage and by the corroborating

accounts of my interviewees – attracts many young people from black and minority ethnic (BME)

backgrounds.  My Wilberforce Academy interviewees were not, however, particularly racially

diverse, which was a shame, as it meant I didn't gain access to the perspectives of black participants,

which may have been rather different.  Statistics from an Evangelical Alliance study into the

experiences of Christians between the ages of 18 and 37, for example, found that BME Christians

were more likely than their white British counterparts to hold conservative views about the kind of

issues that Christian Concern campaign about.  For example, 63% of BME Christians agreed with the

statement that 'abortion can never be justified (unless the mother's life is in immediate danger)',

compared with 51% of white British.  Similarly, 73% of BME Christians agreed that 'homosexual

actions are always wrong' and 'assisted suicide is wrong', compared with 46% and 53% of white

British respectively.  These statistics suggest that BME attendees may have been more likely to agree

with the views of the Wilberforce Academy than white British attendees, who made up the majority

of my interviewees.  I would identify the lack of BME interviewees as a resulting weakness of this

study.

I was not aware of any particular difficulties that resulted from my status as a female researcher. Whilst the Wilberforce Academy is very conservative, Christian Concern is directed by a woman and there seems to be little discouragement of female public speaking or leadership.  However, some of my male interviewees may have avoided certain more personal or 'taboo' topics, such as sex before marriage for example, as it might be seen as an inappropriate conversation to have with a young female.  Many evangelical churches encourage single gendered gatherings for the discussion of personal topics, so my positioning as a female may have inhibited certain kinds of discussion, encouraging the conversation to centre around 'safer' topics.

My personal positioning thus impacted upon this research in complicated ways, rendering the concepts of 'insider' and 'outsider' particularly slippery and unstable.

# Chapter 5 – Adult-forming:  the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy

This thesis charts a spectrum of initiatives with different approaches to engaging young people and varying degrees of response to generational changes in attitude and behaviour.  This chapter will provide in-depth analysis of two of my six case study organisations: CARE and Christian Concern, both of which, though to highly varied degrees, are predominantly concerned with a variety of morally conservative attitudes that might be termed 'family values', owing to their predominant concern with the family, the body and sexuality.  They also both have programmes for young adults – the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy.  I contend that, while these programmes do indeed succeed in attracting a small number of young adult participants, they have responded very little, if at all, to dynamics of generational change.  Considering the other thread that this thesis hopes to unravel – the interaction of organisational responses to generational change with their religious identities and the dynamics of religious change – I will suggest that this lack of concern with notions of generational change can partly be explained by the conservative Christian positioning of these two organisations.

This chapter will begin by providing an overview of these organisations and position them within the literature on Christian moral conservatism in the UK.  It will then go on to focus upon these organisations' programmes for young adults, the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy.  This will be structured around three key themes.  Firstly, attention will be given to the goals of these two programmes, which include promoting leadership; encouraging reflection on what it means to be a Christian in public life; and building a network.  The CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy demonstrate a preoccupation with change from the top, a notion that characterises both the way in which these organisations envisage change happening – correctly principled individuals having an impact through

their holding of influential positions – and the way in which these organisations interact with young people, an interaction that is primarily one-way and directional.  These goals are also outworked in two particular emphases: a narrow engagement strategy and an emphasis on prestige and academic credentials.  The imagined young adult subject is one that can be formed into a principled leader who will enter into institutional spheres of influence, and, through their embodiment of Christian values and virtues, be a catalyst for change.  There is a subsequent emphasis on the *formation* of correctly principled future leaders.

Secondly, I will consider, through the lens of the perspectives of participating young adults who I interviewed, how these goals are interpreted, negotiated and contested.  Thirdly, and finally, the chapter will explore how Millennials engage with the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy more generally and the degree to which the programmes resonate with their own worldviews and perspectives.  This enables a full consideration of how these organisations are engaging young adults – and whether they are responding to generational change – and allows for the voices of Millennials themselves to emerge.   In light of the significance of the organisations' religious positioning, this also follows the advice of such scholars as Irby (2013) to consider the ways in which evangelicalism, as a religious tradition, is actively contested and negotiated.

Exploring the ways in which young adults negotiate their experiences and participation, this chapter will draw particular attention to the multiple critical responses of the young adults who come into contact with these two organisations, which, I contend, can be explained partly due to the organisations' lack of consideration of the characteristics of the generation to which they hope to appeal.  Firstly, young adult participants placed high value on ethics of participation and discussion, which they largely felt were not adequately expressed by the programmes.  Secondly, the black-and-white moral discourse of Christian Concern in particular was challenged by the late-modern

subjectivities of the young adults in a process of 'nuancing'. Thirdly, the young adults had rather

different narratives of change to the top-down ones articulated by CARE and Christian Concern.

Instead, they demonstrated some elements of Henrik Bang's Expert Citizen and Everyday Maker,

though both were strongly inflected and influenced by religious principles.

## 5.1 Interviewees

This chapter draws on eight interviews, including five people who had taken part in Christian

Concern's Wilberforce Academy, the director of the CARE Leadership Programme and two former

Leadership Programme participants. As reflected upon in the methodology chapter, there were

some difficulties in making contact with both these organisations and some reluctance, particularly

from Leadership Programme participants, to be interviewed. This has led to some shortcomings,

particularly the small number of Leadership Programme participant interviewees. However, the

data provided even by this small number was very rich and illuminating. In addition, I did not

conduct interviews in order to make generalisations about a singular young adult Leadership

Programme experience, but rather to draw attention to the myriad ways in which young Christians

negotiated and interpreted their involvement.


The table below provides some key information about the interviewees.

| Name | Pseudonym? | Age | Programme | Means of interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Amy | Yes | 23 | Wilberforce Academy | Skype |
| Clare | Yes | 24 | Wilberforce Academy | Skype |
| Greg | Yes | 28 | Leadership Programme | In person |
| Jonny | No | 23 | Wilberforce Academy | Skype |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kush | Yes | 26 | Wilberforce Academy | Skype |
| Murdo | No | 30 | Wilberforce Academy | Skype |
| Temi | Yes | 26 | Leadership Programme | Skype |
| Director, Leadership Programme | Title only | Unknown | Leadership Programme | Phone |

## 5.2 Introducing the organisations

| | Christian Concern | CARE |
|---|---|---|
| **Issues of interest and concern** | Bioethics, education, abortion, equality and religious liberty, marriage and the family, Islam | Bioethics, education, abortion, equality and religious liberty, marriage and the family, prostitution, human trafficking |
| **Religious positioning** | Conservative evangelical with similarities to the US 'religious right' in tone | Conservative evangelical; more moderate in tone |
| **Political positioning** | Hopes to bring about change through influencing the law and policy. The current structures are seen as spiritually bankrupt and in need of reinvigoration | Hopes to bring about change through influencing the law and policy. Through the Leadership Programme, CARE has relationships with MPs across the political spectrum |
| **Organisational structure** | Limited company | Registered charity. CARE's programme for young adults- the Leadership Programme- is run through a subsidiary organisation, the Institute for |

## History

Of the two organisations, CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) has the longer history, having its origins in the Nationwide Festival of Light, an evangelical movement initiated to protest against signs of the 'permissive society', such as media portrayals of sex and a rise in pornography. The movement's main rally, which took place in Trafalgar Square on 25 September 1971, had an estimated 35,000 people in attendance (Whipple 2010: 319), and mobilisations attracting further thousands of people continued throughout the 1970s.  The Nationwide Festival of Light provoked much conversation and debate amongst evangelical Christians in the UK, including discussion about the need for ongoing Christian research and campaigning.  From these conversations – which involved key figures such as Orde Dobbie (who would become the first Chairman of CARE), Don Irving and Eddie Stride (who would take up subsequent positions of leadership), Peter Hill and Steve Stevens – Christian  Action Research and Education (CARE) was born in 1983 and moved to offices in Westminster in 1988.

Whilst CARE has attracted little academic attention, the Nationwide Festival of Light is a focus of sociologist Roy Wallis's 1979 work *Salvation and Protest: Studies of Social and Religious Movements* and has also received more recent attention by historian Amy C. Whipple in an article entitled 'Speaking for whom?  The 1971 Festival of Light and the Search for the "Silent Majority"' (2010). Both these works focus on the contradictions and tensions within the Nationwide Festival of Light and provide an illuminating context for considering the emergence of CARE.  The conflict that Wallis identifies is that between 'Holy Spirit directed' charismatic Christianity, which was open to fluidity and changes in direction, and a more conservative strand that stressed the need for clearer organisation.  Wallis highlights how 'the evangelical enthusiasts lacked patience with the slow, long-

term instrumentalism necessary for the pursuit of social-moralistic goals through pressure on legal institutions and agencies' (1979: 141).  The emergence of CARE can be understood through the lens of this conflict, CARE having adopted the long-term strategy of political advocacy and thus having positioned itself against short-sighted evangelical enthusiasm and ambition, a phenomenon that Warner (2007) argues characterised significant sections of the British evangelical movement during the latter half of the twentieth century.  One of CARE's early key figures, Eddie Stride, was one of those involved in the Nationwide Festival of Light who argued for the movement to take a more actively political stance, not just an evangelistic one (Whipple, 2010: 329).  The tensions highlighted by Wallis also suggest that CARE in some ways situated itself against certain charismatic elements of Christianity, instead positioning itself within a more intellectualist strand of evangelicalism.

Whipple's article also distinguishes between more politically-orientated and more evangelistic-orientated sections of the Nationwide Festival of Light, but focuses more on the movement's different, and contradictory, ways of understanding itself in relation to the British public more broadly.  Whipple identifies that an initial key strategy of the Nationwide Festival of Light was to position itself as the voice of the 'silent majority' (2010: 319), though this was challenging in the context of declining church attendance.  However, Nationwide Festival of Light publications in fact slipped over time from a desire to speak on behalf of the 'silent majority', seen to be possessing a latent sense of Christian 'decency', to appealing to the actively Christian minority.  In this way, Whipple situates the Nationwide Festival of Light within a changing religious landscape, in which considerable debate over processes of secularisation was combined with currents of evangelical optimism.  Such tensions are important for considering the origins of CARE and the Christian climate in which the seeds for CARE were sown.  The examination of CARE within this chapter will demonstrate how interplays between a 'religious' agenda and a 'secular' *modus operandi* continue to shape and characterise CARE as an organisation.

Christian Concern does not have as long a history as CARE.  Its roots lie in the Public Policy Unit within the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship.  This unit was formed in 2004, led by Andrea Minichiello Williams, and subsequently became known as Christian Concern For Our Nation (Walton at al. 2013: 54).  In 2008, it became an independent organisation, so as not to negatively impact upon the charitable status of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship.  In 2010, the name was shortened to Christian Concern.  Christian Concern has subsequently set up the Christian Legal Centre, a sister organisation which defends 'individuals and churches who have suffered discrimination and challenges because of their desire to live and work according to biblical beliefs'.[24]  Andrea Minichiello Williams is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of both Christian Concern and the Christian Legal Centre.

## Issues of concern, vision and ways of operating

Christian Concern and CARE share an interest in similar areas, including bioethics, education, abortion, equality and religious liberty, marriage and the family.  To this list, CARE add a focus on prostitution and human trafficking, whilst Christian Concern list Islam as an issue of concern, its presence in the UK having 'great repercussions for all of us'.[25]  CARE describes itself as 'a well-established mainstream Christian charity providing resources and helping to bring Christian insight and experience to matters of public policy and practical caring initiatives'.[26]  Its vision is to 'see a

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[24] http://www.christianconcern.com/about.  [Accessed 15.09.16]

[25] http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/islam.  [Accessed 15.09.16]

[26] http://www.christiansinpolitics.org.uk/about-us/partners/ [Accessed 15.09.16] (This seems to be no longer the description CARE use on their own website, but is still used in their description by multiple other organisations).  It is worth briefly mentioning the ambiguity of the term 'mainstream' used by CARE here. Sociologists of American Christianity have traditionally used the term 'mainstream Protestant' to refer to the US's historic Christian denominations, which are differentiated by scholars from more evangelical or 'fundamentalist' denominations or churches.  In this context, mainstream has connotations of theological liberalism.  In the context of UK Christianity, however, it is used rather differently.  Indeed, among UK Christians, 'mainstream' may well be interpreted in a more conservative way.  Peter Brierley's use of the term 'mainstream evangelical' in his surveys of English clergy and church-goers is contrasted with 'broad evangelical' and certain sources suggest that this use of 'mainstream evangelical' has been adopted by conservative Christians.  A 2004 inquiry by the Church of England into women bishops, for example, makes reference to Brierley's categories and suggests that this is a category with very high opposition to the ordination of women bishops (report available at https://www.churchofengland.org/media/39784/gs1557.pdf, p. 166. [Accessed 31/10/16]).  Anglican Mainstream, an organisation within the Church of England which promotes traditional values on gender and sexuality, defines their use of mainstream as follows: 'committed to promote, teach and maintain the commonly agreed Scriptural truths of the Christian faith, as expressed by the historic Creeds, the 39 Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer. These truths provide the foundation for the

society that has a greater regard for human dignity and increasingly reflects God's grace' and to

'equip individual Christians and the churches to act as effective "light and salt" in the local

community and nationally'.  It hopes to: provide clear information about important social and moral

issues; to help 'people to recognise the dignity and worth of every individual – from fertilisation to

life's natural end'; to inspire and help Christians to be involved in the democratic process; and

promote 'community-based initiatives that live out Christ's love and truth'.[27]  CARE works through

various platforms, including its Westminster offices and through local churches, which are seen as

their 'key partners'.  Visitors to CARE's website are given options to: stay informed; take political

action; take action through their church; pray; donate; and to contact the media.[28]  The website also

provides many informational resources, and also resources for church leaders.  Particular initiatives

that CARE either run or are involved with in partnership include: Pray for Schools; Open, a course to

equip churches to respond to women who have had an abortion; and the Keep Sunday Special

Campaign.


Christian Concern describe their vision as seeing the UK 'return to the Christian faith', rather than

the 'alternative ideas' recently embraced of 'secular liberal humanism, moral relativism and sexual

licence', the results of which are perceived to be 'widespread family breakdown, immorality and

social disintegration'.  The organisation hopes to deploy a 'biblical worldview' in order to become 'a

strong Christian voice in the public sphere, arguing passionately for the truth of the Gospel and

defending the historic freedoms that we have enjoyed in this nation for so long'.[29]   The organisation

has a policy team, who produce research materials and responses to government consultations.

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Anglican Church, the source of true unity and fellowship, and the basis of mission and service to a needy
world' (http://anglicanmainstream.org/anglican-mainstream-who-we-are/ [Accessed 31/10/16]).  Owing to
the complexity of this term, it is thus somewhat unclear what CARE means when they describe themselves as
mainstream. It may be the case that the word 'mainstream' here fulfils a dual purpose: to suggest a moderate
nature to non-Christians viewers of the website; and to suggest adherence to 'Biblical values' to evangelical
Christian visitors.

[27] htttps://www.care.org.uk/about-us.  [Accessed 15.09.16]
[28] htttps://www.care.org.uk/take-action [Accessed 15.09.16]
[29] http://www.christianconcern.com/about [Accessed 15/09/16]

There are possibilities to be individually involved, by joining the mailing list (currently consisting of 43,000 individuals and churches); lobbying; writing letters; joining demonstrations; and responding to consultations. People are also asked to pray and to donate, and there are informational resources online. Christian Concern also has several key specific campaigns and activities, including: Awake Arise, which hopes 'to encourage and equip the Church to engage with issues of vital concern to the nation'; Not Ashamed, launched in 2010, encouraging Christians to 'take a public stand for Jesus';[30] and Safe Haven, to 'protect those in the UK who want to leave Islam but fear the consequences of doing so'.[31] The Christian Legal Centre defends 'a wide variety of individuals and churches who have suffered discrimination and challenges because of their desire to live and work according to biblical beliefs'.[32]

## Discourse, worldview and religious positioning

Although they share some areas of interest, the ways in which CARE and Christian Concern express themselves are markedly different, and their similarities should not be over-stated. Whilst the tone of CARE's website and publicity is measured and considered, Christian Concern's rhetoric is far more incendiary and polemical. Discussing prejudice against Christian foster parents, for example, the Christian Concern website states: 'equality and diversity policies put in place by local authorities state that the sexuality of children in care should be respected and this has been interpreted to mean that potential foster carers must agree that homosexual behaviour is normal and support a child's choice to embrace that lifestyle'.[33] In this statement, homosexuality is positioned as a choice, a set of behaviours and a lifestyle, but not an ascribed identity. Discussing education, Christian Concern similarly identify 'pressure on schools … to promote homosexuality'.[34] The way in which CARE expresses its campaigning priorities uses more careful and somewhat 'kinder' language. CARE states for example that it 'seeks to uphold human dignity and to support the most vulnerable people

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[30] Ibid.
[31] http://www.christianconcern.com/campaigns/safe-haven [Accessed 15/09/16]
[32] http://www.christianconcern.com/about [Accessed 15/09.16]
[33] http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/fostering [Accessed 15/09/16]
[34] http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/education [Accessed 15/09/16]

in society',[35] while a volunteer-run sex education programme set up by CARE, Evaluate, states that 'whilst communicating that sex is *precious* and to be *valued*, we promote the ideal of delaying sexual experience until a *loving*, *committed* and *stable* relationship, ideally marriage' (my italics).[36]  CARE's statements, though also morally conservative, thus have an emphasis upon positive words and differ from the dismissive and angry rhetoric of Christian Concern.  Both CARE and Christian Concern share, however, a perception that Christianity in the UK is being persecuted.  CARE, for example, states that 'in recent years we have seen the Christian voice being marginalized with many concerning restrictions on Christian freedom of speech',[37] whilst Christian Concern similarly asserts that Christians in the UK are increasingly 'penalised for their faith in the public square'.[38]

CARE has a statement of faith, which is typical of those of other conservative evangelical groups, and includes: the sovereignty of God in creation, providence, revelation, redemption and final judgement; the inerrancy and authority of scripture; the universal sinfulness of man 'making him subject to God's wrath and condemnation'; the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice; 'the justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God, through faith in Christ'; the 'illuminating, regenerating, indwelling, sanctifying and empowering' work of the Holy Spirit; and the expectation of the Second Coming.[39]  Christian Concern's statement of faith has similar tenets, but is more fervent in its expression of some of them, such as, for example, the pronouncement that 'the Lord Jesus Christ will return in person, to judge everyone, to execute God's just condemnation on those who have not repented and to receive the redeemed to eternal glory'.[40]

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[35] https://www.care.org.uk/ [Accessed 15/09/16]
[36] http://www.evaluate.org.uk/about/what-we-say [Accessed 15/09/16]
[37] https://www.care.org.uk/our-causes/more/religious-liberty [Accessed 15/09/16]
[38] http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/religious-freedom [Accessed 15/09/16]
[39] PDF link from https://www.care.org.uk/about-us [Accessed 15/09/16]
[40] http://www.christianconcern.com/about/statement-of-faith [Accessed 15/09/16]

## Young adult programmes- the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy

Both CARE and Christian Concern have specific programmes for young adults, predominantly recent graduates and students. The CARE Leadership Programme, which has been run for over twenty years through CARE's subsidiary organisation the Institute for Faith and Culture, aims to 'equip young Christian graduates with integrity and excellence at the beginning of their working lives, fostering people of influence whose work will benefit our society'.[41] The Leadership Programme lasts ten months and participants spend four days a week in a work placement, the majority of which are with an MP though there are possibilities to be placed with an NGO. Each Friday, all the participants meet together for study days involving academic, theological and practical training. Applicants require a strong academic record, including a degree; should be recent graduates; and should be in agreement with CARE's statement of faith.

It is worth briefly expanding here upon the fact that the Leadership Programme is run by the Institute for Faith and Culture, CARE's subsidiary organisation, and that there is a complex relationship between CARE and the programme. The Leadership Programme is intended to have no relationship to the lobbying activities of CARE as a wider organisation, a barrier identified by the director of the Leadership Programme as a 'firewall'. This distinction is made so that that the Leadership Programme does not breach Charity Commission regulations, and, as a result, the parliamentary placements cannot be used as a lobbying platform. However, CARE's wider activities do in some ways influence the study element of the programme, as the study programme covers many social issues, some of which correspond with CARE's campaign interests. Greg highlighted this ambiguity, stating that, though 'genuinely, we weren't ever lobbied by CARE and the views that they have to hold those views and then to take those views into the workplace', there 'absolutely' were study day sessions that focused on CARE's issues of interest. Temi, however, pointed out that if they

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[41] https://www.care.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work [Accessed 16/09/16]

did have a study day focused on 'family and sexual ethics', CARE's approach to these issues was not

the main focus: 'they might mention what CARE has done, but it was never the focal point […] it was

never the source material'.  As a result, Temi felt that she actually didn't gain much knowledge of

CARE as an organisation through her participation in the Leadership Programme: 'we didn't know

the day-to-day [of] what they were campaigning on and we certainly were never asked to campaign

on it'.  The 'firewall' serves in this way to create a situation in which CARE have to be very careful

about expressing their views, thus producing a tension in terms of the values they presumably hope

to instil as part of the Leadership Programme.


However, this relationship undergoes a shift when participants become alumni of the programme.

Greg stated that he 'definitely' didn't have any further relationship with the Institute for Faith and

Culture, having completed the programme: 'I totally forget that they even exist really.  Essentially

they exist as an umbrella for that year'.  He did, however, have a continued relationship with CARE.

This demonstrates the extent to which the Institute for Faith and Culture has no identity outside of

or beyond the Leadership Programme, existing merely as a means to create the 'firewall'.  When

participants graduate from the programme they transition from having a relationship with the

Institute for Faith and Culture to being connected to CARE.


Christian Concern run an annual event for young adults called the Wilberforce Academy.  This is a

week-long residential course which takes place at prestigious locations, such as Oxford University

colleges.  The course aims to 'train and equip the invited students on what it means to proclaim

Christ in public life', in order 'to raise up the next generation of Christians who will take a bold stand

for Christ within their spheres of influence, whether in the church or in the marketplace'.[42]  The

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[42] http://www.christianconcern.com/campaigns/wilberforce-academy-equipping-the-next-generation-of-christian-leaders [Accessed 16/09/16]

Wilberforce Academy includes particular training in law, politics and education, and is run in conjunction with the US-based Alliance Defense Fund.

## 5.3 Conceptualising and contextualising Christian Concern and CARE

The choice of descriptors and terminology for organisations like CARE and Christian Concern is a thorny issue. A phrase, for example, like 'moral conservatism' might be seen as normative, or having critical or negative connotations. Within 'conservative' Christianity itself, a term like conservative may be rejected in favour of more positive-seeming alternatives such as Biblical, mainstream (as discussed in a footnote above) and orthodox.[43] However, these terms are equally loaded, with connotations of 'correctness', truth or historical grounding. The terminology of the 'religious right' or 'Christian right' is also problematic, owing to the inevitable association of this term with certain segments of Christianity in the US. A recent report by the Christian think tank Theos, which considers whether the UK has an equivalent to the US's 'religious right', concludes that, despite some evidence of greater coordination among socially-conservative Christian groups, there is 'no sign of the kind of tight-knit, symbiotic relationship between a right-of-centre political party and a unified Christian constituency emerging in Britain' (Walton et al. 2013: 8-9).

This report explores both CARE and Christian Concern as case studies. Walton et al. asserts that CARE, in its focus on such issues as abortion, bioethics and family life, does indeed fit the model of a 'religious right' group. However, in other ways, CARE does not correspond to this mould. CARE's interest in human trafficking, for example, takes it beyond the traditional concerns of the 'religious right'. The report also highlights CARE's 'longstanding relationship with MPs and Peers from across the political spectrum' and its 'determination to maintain links with all parties', which suggests that 'CARE is reluctant to become a politically exclusively right wing organisation, despite being labelled

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[43] I am grateful to my friend Jess Phoenix for alerting me to the existence of the preference for the term 'orthodox' within some Christian settings and for the fruitful conversation on Christian terminology that followed.

as such by critics' (Walton et al. 2013: 50).  Christian Concern, however, was seen to have more

parallels with right-wing Christian groups in the US, particularly in its 'black and white' worldview

that Britain is 'steadily walking away from Christian values and as a result is leaving itself open to

takeover from militant Islam' (Walton et al. 2013: 55).  In addition, as previously mentioned, the

Wilberforce Academy is organised in partnership with the US-based Alliance Defense Fund, an

organisation that can be situated within the American religious right (ibid.).

However, both CARE and Christian Concern exhibit significant differences from the US religious right.

Firstly, they do not demonstrate right-wing economic views and show no particular opposition to

'big government'; secondly, jingoistic nationalism does not seem to be particularly present; and

thirdly, there are few examples of Zionist, pro-Israeli and anti-Palestinian thought. In further

comparison to the US, 'those Christian organisations that are most shrill, narrow, defensive, or

theonomistic in their tone and focus [fringe groups such as Christian Voice] are furthest from the

political centre, whereas those that are closest to Westminster and Whitehall [organisations like

CARE] are the most measured, broad, positive and co-operative' (Walton et al. 2013: 88).

As a result, there are some considerable difficulties with regards terminology.  However, it is clear

that CARE and Christian Concern advocate values and beliefs that are in contrast to the attitudes of

mainstream society, particularly when this is considered generationally.[44]  For ease, the set of issues

that preoccupy CARE and Christian Concern are referred to throughout this chapter as 'family

values', as – despite some wider concerns – sexuality, abortion and marriage are the key touchstone

issues for both organisations.  In addition, even CARE's interest in human trafficking, for example,

can be interpreted in this way given CARE's preoccupation with sex trafficking, and the bodily

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[44] For example, the British Social Attitudes survey of 2012, found that 18% of those surveyed who had been born in the 1980s thought homosexuality was always or mostly wrong, compared with 21% of those born in the 1960s and 46% of those born in the 1940s (Park et al. 2013: 1).  Similarly, 28% of the 1980s generation thought people should be married before having children, compared with 62% of those born in the 1940s (Park et al. 2013: 10).

transgressions and challenge to family life that this represents.   Furthermore, both organisations

see the family as the cornerstone of society.  'Family values' is thus a term that can operate as useful

shorthand for typologising the issues about which CARE and Christian Concern campaign.  However,

this chapter will also refer to 'conservative evangelicalism' to refer to the wider context in which

CARE and Christian Concern are operating. Whilst the term conservative is not without its difficulties

– and, as previously discussed, may not be how such Christians define themselves – it is a widely

used term within scholarship on evangelicalism (see, for example, Warner 2007).  Used with the

caveat that the term doesn't necessarily have any correlation in a British religious context with

conservative economic views (see Walton et al. 2013), it remains a useful term.


Academic discussion of conservative evangelicalism in the UK is somewhat limited, compared with

the amount of scholarship devoted to its US counterpart.  Two particularly important contributions,

however, are Robert Warner's *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: A Theological and*

*Sociological Study* (2007) and David Bebbington's *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from*

*the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989).  In his work, Bebbington lays out the now classic definition of

evangelicalism, understood as combining the following characteristics: conversionism- the belief

that lives need to be changed; activism- expression of the gospel in effort; Biblicism- particular

emphasis on the Bible; and crucicentrism- stress on Christ's sacrifice on the cross (1989: 3).  This

work is useful in its refusal to consider evangelicalism, or indeed Christianity, as a sealed unit,

separate from the rest of society; instead it charts the influence of 'changing socio-economic and

political conditions' and 'successive cultural waves that have broken over Western civilisation since

the late seventeenth-century' (1989: 272, 273).  This drawing of attention to the impact of other

(social, political, cultural, and economic) currents is important and a tradition in which my own work

hopes to be situated.  However, there are problematic dimensions of Bebbington's work, most

notably a lack of focus on lived religion, as exhibited in the viewpoint that ideas move 'downwards'

from evangelical 'elites' (1989: 275).  This shares a resemblance to old-fashioned cultural

perspectives which emphasise the 'passing down' of 'high culture',[45] and serves to deny 'ordinary' religious believers of agency.  My own research distances itself from such an approach by exploring the ways in which religious ideas and identities are actively negotiated and constructed, whilst still trying to remain aware of the structuring and socialisation contexts in which this occurs.

Given its later publication date, the work of Robert Warner is probably more useful for this study. Warner identifies two key strands of English evangelicalism: conservatism and entrepreneurialism. He makes use of Bebbington's criteria, but stresses the varying prioritisation of these emphases, such that 'the entrepreneurial pragmatists major upon the conversionist-activist axis, even as the more theologically-oriented, whether traditional, cautiously open or progressive, major upon the Biblicist-crucicentric axis' (2006: 20).  Warner also charts the changing fortunes of these two trends in the late twentieth century:

> We shall argue not only that conservative identity was supplanted by entrepreneurial
>
> identity, for which its own fragmentation unintentionally opened the door, but that the
>
> entrepreneurial concern with pragmatic cultural re-alignment, coupled with the inevitable
>
> demise of its own exaggerated claims of imminent success, unintentionally opened the door
>
> for the rise of the new progressivism (2006: 16).

This is important, because it helps explain the sense of persecution that is either implicit or explicit in the rhetoric of CARE and Christian Concern respectively, the fortunes of Christianity having rendered their conservative Christianity a minority standpoint.  As CARE and Christian Concern do not fit into the entrepreneurial strand Warner identifies, this also suggests that we should not necessarily expect to see much cultural adaptation within CARE and Christian Concern.  By extension, this may result in youth programmes that do not operate within a consciousness of generational change, or a perceived need to appeal to young people using popular cultural forms and styles of expression.

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[45] Simmel and Veblen's theories of fashion, for example, stressed how fashions passed down from elites, an approach that has gone on to be challenged by other scholars, such as Blumberg, who drew attention to the grassroots development of fashions and trends (Campbell 1992).

There are also two recent and significant contributions to this field of scholarship. Peter Herriot's

*Warfare and Waves: Calvinists and Charismatics in the Church of England* (2015)[46] is illuminating in

its charting of conservative Christianity in the UK, albeit within the institutional confines of the

Anglican Church.  Herriot's 'Calvinists' are seen to possess a key discourse of being a persecuted

minority (2015: 102).  Herriot also draws attention to their narrative of being 'the *faithful remnant*

fighting for the biblical faith against the apostate church and the secularising world' (2015: 110).

This sense of persecution is one that has already been noted as existing within Christian Concern

and, in a more measured and moderated way, CARE.  As a result of this persecution, Herriot argues

that conservative evangelicals emphasise their own distinctiveness from other forms of Christianity

and from the secular world, providing adherents with 'a *unique social identity* which dominates the

self-concept of adherents, providing them with self-esteem, purpose, and meaning, both for their

lives and for the world in which they are lived' (2015: 139).  Within Christian Concern, in particular,

we might expect the Wilberforce Academy to try to fulfil such a role for its young adult participants.

Herriot also highlights the Calvinists' antipathy to 'most of late modern culture', due to the fact that

'as far as they are concerned, this only proves that they are on the right path' (2015: 176).  This again

suggests that there may not be concerted attempts to consciously appeal to a young, different

generation, as not being culturally adaptive or 'in-tune' may be perceived as a badge of honour.


Anna Strhan's *Aliens and Strangers: the Struggle for Coherence in the Everyday Lives of Evangelicals*

(2015), which charts the experiences of congregants of a conservative evangelical mega church in

London, is another helpful recent contribution.  In a theoretically and empirically rich volume, one of

the most striking findings is that there was a gap between the ways Strhan's conservative

evangelicals acted in different social situations, due to 'their simultaneous inhabiting of

differentiated social spaces suffused with differing moral norms' (2015: 85).  For example, whilst

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[46] Please note that my references to this volume refer to a pre-publication version. I am very grateful to Peter
Herriot for allowing me to access and make use of this copy.

they felt comfortable to proselytise on council estates, they were not as comfortable discussing their faith in the professional and upper-middle-class milieus of their workplaces.  Strhan's conservative evangelicals were thus seen to exhibit 'urban cultural fragmentation', such that 'in spaces associated with middle class privilege it is harder for evangelicals to go public with their faith' (2015: 94, 98).  Alongside strongly held moral principles imbued by their church, Strhan's research subjects also demonstrated subjectivities that were 'formed through a principle of toleration, in which expressing their views on such issues [e.g. sexuality] would impinge on another's right to live according to their own moral norms and disrupt the calm that urban indifference affords' (2015: 100-101).  These are fascinating and revealing findings that have resonance with the experience of my interviewees in this chapter.  In addition, Christian Concern's emergence should probably be understood in terms of the argument of Casanova, summarised by Strhan, that 'a response to processes of universalisation may be that groups whose lifestyles are disrupted by these processes seek to mobilise and re-enter the public sphere' (2015: 88).

## 5.4 Young adult engagement: the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy

### Forming principled leaders: the goals of the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy

The declared purpose of the CARE Leadership Programme, as stated earlier, is to 'equip young Christian graduates with integrity and excellence at the beginning of their working lives, fostering people of influence whose work will benefit our society',[47] whilst the Wilberforce Academy aims to 'train and equip the invited students on what it means to proclaim Christ in public life', in order 'to raise up the next generation of Christians who will take a bold stand for Christ within their spheres of influence, whether in the church or in the marketplace'.[48]  Drawing on my interviewees' accounts, this section will briefly explore the three key purposes of both the Leadership Programme and the

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[47] https://www.care.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work [Accessed 16/09/16]
[48] http://www.christianconcern.com/campaigns/wilberforce-academy-equipping-the-next-generation-of-christian-leaders [Accessed 16/09/16]

Wilberforce Academy: instilling leadership; encouraging young adults to be a Christian in public life; and building a network.  All of these purposes are inter-linked and feed in to a notion of 'change from the top' and of forming principled leaders.  This section will then explore how these purposes are manifested in an engagement strategy that is both narrow (rather than outward-looking) and focused on an appeal to prestige.

*Leadership and a focus on careers*

Both the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy share a focus on leadership and careers. For the Leadership Programme, this is self-evident from its name and Greg commented on the programme's purpose to create 'thinking' leaders, possessing 'conviction and integrity'.  The prominence of parliamentary experience within the programme demonstrates furthermore the focus on careers and Greg emphasised the process of exposing to parliament people who 'maybe will one day want to be a MP themselves and they can shape policy'. The director of the Leadership Programme referenced the number of Leadership Programme graduates in influential positons as 'testament' to the success of the programme.  It should also be noted that, in comparison to its nearest equivalent, the Buxton Leadership Programme, which includes participation in community social action projects, the CARE Leadership Programme focuses almost entirely on parliamentary experience (though a small minority of placements are with NGOs) and what the director termed the 'ivory tower' of parliamentary politics.[49]  CARE's careerist focus is also exhibited in its rigorous recruitment process, which is based on the selection process for gradate entry to the Home Office.  The selection day involves writing under pressure, multiple interviews (academic, personal, political/policy-based), a presentation in front of a panel and a group exercise.  Again mirroring the civil service entrance exams, Temi recalls having to 'assimilate….information from like a policy briefing that you were meant to then turn into a newspaper article, as if you were writing to your

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[49] For more information on the Buxton Leadership Programme, see http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/projects/training/buxton-leadership-programme/ [Accessed 16/09/16].  The Buxton Leadership Programme combines a Parliamentary placement, a church-based community organising placement and training/development sessions.  Their intake of participants per year is rather less than the CARE Leadership Programme (just three in the 2016-17 year).

local paper…and then another one where it was as if you were writing to your MP'.  The Wilberforce Academy also has a focus on leadership and careers, appealing to young adults who are in the fields of politics, law and the media, or interested in entering these sectors.  Discussion groups at the event were accordingly split by career-interest.   Murdo recalled the Wilberforce Academy's discourse of 'trying to get the Christian leaders together'.

*Being a Christian in public life*

Equipping young adults to successfully be a Christian in public life is the second key goal.  The director of the Leadership Programme placed particular emphasis on the Leadership Programme's intention to 'help young Christians think through what it means to be a Christian in public life'.  This is embedded into the structure of the programme, which combines the work placement with a study programme that provides participants with opportunities to learn about and discuss the following key themes:

- Term 1- the motivation for Christian cultural engagement and what this might look like in practice

- Term 2- political theory on Christian views on the role of government, democracy, nationalism, and criminal justice

- Term 3- topical issues, such as the role of Islam in public debate, the family, marriage, tax, and beginning- and end-of-life issues

The combination of the parliamentary placement and the study days serves the purpose of equipping participants for living out their faith in public life, partly by providing participants with experience of the public square and partly by equipping participants with means of theorising, and thinking about, their public engagement as a Christian.

There was an important discourse of influencing public life and thereby heralding cultural change at the Wilberforce Academy too.  Murdo, for example, highlighted the importance of a group who can articulate 'what the Christian community believe and say it in a way that will be heard by the general public and understood', whilst Jonny emphasised the 'need [as a Christian] to be fully part of the culture that we're in'[50] and that the purpose of the Wilberforce Academy was to 'mobilise young Christians to be involved in the public square'.  Wilberforce Academy lectures accordingly included reflection on ways of thinking about Christian engagement in the public square.  Murdo remembered talks, for example, on how postmodernism had developed and what this meant for being a Christian.

*Building a network*

Finally, both the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy placed emphasis on creating a network. The current director of the Leadership Programme identified this as a key priority, hoping to develop more 'targeted and facilitated' networking, as he advanced in his (relatively new) role. The programme commences with two weeks of induction, involving 'ice-breakers and getting to know the team' (Greg), thus beginning this process.  The Wilberforce Academy also places emphasis on building a network.  This is manifested in both the main yearly event (with the evenings during the week designated as networking time) and regular alumni events.  These 'refocus' days happen 'every couple of months, where previous alumni from all the different years get together for a day and talk, hear speakers, pray, worship together' (Clare).

## Manifestations of these goals

These goals, in interaction with the centrality of these organisations' Christian worldviews, are manifested in an engagement strategy that is both narrow and appeals to a sense of prestige (including academic credentials).

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[50] I would contend that this should be understood, in light of Herriot's ideas surrounding conservative evangelical distinctiveness, not to mean conforming to 'worldly' patterns but understanding and speaking into them.

*A narrow engagement strategy*

Both the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy share an engagement strategy that can be characterised, to some degree, as a narrow one. Firstly, both the CARE Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy publicise themselves through narrow channels. This is particularly striking in the case of the Wilberforce Academy. Murdo commented on the lack of publicity for the event, stating that 'at the time, it wasn't well publicised as I remember. I think it was fairly low-key, the publicity around it. I remember I got this email and I was trying to Google them and find out information about it and couldn't get much, couldn't get much at all'. Jonny echoed this, asserting that 'well, I tried to get as much information as I could from the website. I mean, there wasn't that much info about what it actually was really'. The lack of publicity about the Wilberforce Academy is probably partly a result of the controversial nature of Christian Concern as an organisation and the fact that their events have a history of courting negative attention.[51] Murdo, upon being asked why he thought there may have been limited publicity, responded in confirmation of this:

> Well, they actually told us why that was the case. They said that because they had these protesters at Oxford the year before they just wanted to keep that under wraps. I think they have difficulty finding venues that will take them. They like to have big, prominent venues – that's their thing – but the big prominent venues don't want to be associated with what they see as a fringe group and so they keep it all very quiet as to what they're doing, so that they don't attract complaints before the event.

Whilst CARE does not share with Christian Concern this fringe identity to the same extent, the Leadership Programme *is* publicised through very targeted advertising, the emphasis being upon established channels such as Christian festivals, Christian Unions and churches that CARE has a

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[51] See, for example, http://oxfordstudent.com/2012/03/22/lgbt-protest-against-exeters-anti-gay-conference/ and http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/uproar-in-oxford-as-trinity-hosts-christian-group-with-controversial-views-on-homosexuality-8550531.html [Accessed 26/10/16]

relationship with.  By contrast, the programme is not publicised at university careers fairs, in spite of the careerist focus and emphasis upon attracting applicants from the UK's elite universities.

Secondly, both the CARE Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy have an emphasis on the theological 'soundness' of prospective participants.  This again is demonstrated to a far greater degree by the Wilberforce Academy, interviews for which seem not so much to be based around assessing the skills and competencies of these individuals – and their subsequent applicability to be designated 'young leaders' – as checking that applicants possess an appropriate theology and worldview.  Murdo highlighted that:

> It wasn't a case of pay a fee and attend the conference, which is a sort of standard what you expect from most people.  This was a case of….you have an interview and if we like you and we feel you'd be a suitable person to attend the conference, you'll come for free.

Jonny, having been asked in his interview to discuss some contemporary political issues, including same-sex marriage (one of Christian Concern's key touchstone issues) from a Christian perspective, was told straightaway that he'd been accepted on to the programme, suggesting that he'd demonstrated a suitable set of Christian views as part of the interview.  This emphasis on suitability means that Christian Concern is, to a not insignificant degree, preaching to the 'converted', rather than entering into dialogue with a wider range of Christian young adults.  In this way, Christian Concern's strategy is not one of persuasion, or of courting wide appeal, but instead of gathering the small number of like-minded to form a network.  Whilst there may be some hope that this network will go out and influence others, participating young adults (as will be considered in more detail later in this chapter) were provided with a sense not so much of their persuasive powers as the strength of the opposition they would face.

This suggests that the emphasis on 'soundness' did not just stem from the perspective of building a network of like-minded people, but was also informed by Christian Concern's embattled, defensive outlook. Clare, for example, felt that her interview had been about 'checking me out as a person, making sure I was legit and not weird, not trying to try and root my way in to cause trouble'. Clare attributed this to Christian Concern being 'very wary about anything', confirming that Christian Concern's recruitment process is influenced by such a sense of defensiveness. From this worldview and perspective, building a small network of like-minded people makes sense as a key strategy. Furthermore, and following Herriot's comments on distinctiveness (2015), a feeling of being embattled and beleaguered is an important part of conservative evangelical identity-building.

The Leadership Programme demonstrates this kind of selectivity to a far lesser degree. The sensitivities of the parliamentary internship mean that the Leadership Programme must meet the criterion of political balance. Greg, for example, identified that 'they couldn't have it too one colour' in terms of the party-political allegiance of participants. However, Leadership Programme participants must affirm CARE's statement of faith. In addition, the application form asks applicants to provide written responses to such statements as 'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!', as well as to account for how they came to 'faith in Christ'. This application form would then hinder from applying young adults who self-define as Christians but might not feel comfortable with such questions.

*Appealing to prestige and academic credentials*

Both the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy appeal to a sense of prestige. This is demonstrated most strongly by the Wilberforce Academy and seems to be a particularly effective implicit strategy, whereby the choice of venue and elements of the programme help to lend proceedings a sense of legitimacy, and appeal further to participants as 'young leaders'.

Interviewees placed much stress on the Oxford college location and 'posh dinners' of the Wilberforce Academy.   Jonny, for example, recalled that 'on the final night, there was a formal, a really posh meal, which was nice', while Clare remembered 'a black-tie dinner with Lord Carey, the former Archbishop' in 'the Great Hall of one of the [Oxford] colleges'.   Amy also stated that the 'accommodation and the location was wonderful'.  Such elements seem to have both helped in creating a sense of legitimacy and enhanced within participants the sense that they were potential leaders. Clare's comments on the Christian Concern offices, for example, demonstrate the former: having seen some negative press on Christian Concern, she was reassured by their 'really smart and impressive' offices that were in a 'nice little corner of London'.  Clare also felt invested in and that her potential was valued:  'I guess I appreciated [that] we were in an Oxford College for three, four days; we had Archbishops come to speak [unclear] and by the end of it you did feel [that] other people out there actually really want me to do well and are willing to support me'.  Whilst this may exhibit something of an aspirational culture, it is worth mentioning that none of my interviewees expressed discomfort with their surroundings, suggesting that they possessed a certain socio-economic status whereby they were impressed but not intimidated.

Something that is central to both the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership Programme is an emphasis on studying and learning.  The Leadership Programme study days, for example, are described as being 'pitched at postgraduate level',[52] while accounts of the Wilberforce Academy stressed the academic titles of speakers at the event.  Murdo, for example, stated 'we also had a professor called Roger Trigg' and also made reference to 'Joe Boot, Dr Joe Boot' and 'Peter Jones, Dr Peter Jones'.  Given the controversial nature of Christian Concern's views, the use of likeminded academics seems to be one of their strategies to bolster a sense of the legitimacy of their views.  In this way, then, academic credentials are used to endorse the Christian Concern view of Christian engagement in the public square.

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[52] https://www.care.org.uk/leadership-programme/studies [Accessed 16/09/16]

*Implications for diversity*

It is worth briefly mentioning the implications for diversity of these programme goals and engagement strategies, which are especially apparent in the case of the CARE Leadership Programme. In a conversation with the director of the Leadership Programme, the particular hiddenness of class emerged. The director discussed political and religious diversity, alongside gender and ethnicity, but had to be prompted to consider class. He subsequently identified the programme participants as being predominantly middle-class owing to the fact that CARE targets the 'top 10-20 universities' and thus rely on the class diversity coming out of these universities. He also stated that he wasn't 'bothered…too much' by a lack of socio-economic diversity. Greg identified a subsequent 'strong Oxbridge culture'. The participants of the Leadership Programme can be accordingly seen to mirror the middle-class nature of much of evangelical Christianity in the UK (see Ward 1996; Smith 2015). By contrast, gender and race did not seem to be such a blind spot and rather an area of intentional recruitment, Temi having been told by an acquaintance prior to applying to the programme that 'they want more young women especially and more people from BME communities as well to apply'. This reaching out to a diversity of participants is not, however, reflected in the study programme content. The key texts (including Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*; Hunter's *Change the World*; Crouch's *Culture-Making*; Ferry's *A Brief History of Thought*; and C. S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*) demonstrate an old-fashioned canonical Christian academic tradition, in which contributions by women, non-Westerners or people of colour are all neglected, along with the different concerns and approaches such contributions might bring.

The Wilberforce Academy also targets university-educated young people, but seem to have more of a reach into BME communities than CARE, for whom recruiting a balance in terms of ethnicity seems to require more effort and intentionality. Clare explained how at the Wilberforce Academy 'there was quite a large group of people who kind-of half knew each other from a couple of London churches, like Black African churches'. A 'highlights' video from the 2015 Wilberforce Academy

demonstrates high levels of ethnic diversity.[53]  As explained in the methodology chapter, young BME

Christians show stronger rates of agreement with the kind of morally conservative positions

advanced by Christian Concern (Evangelical Alliance 2015).

## Understanding these strategies

These strategies should be understood as part of a long historical legacy of evangelical youth work.

Hylson-Smith contends that a focus on training up young evangelical leaders characterised the Bash

camps of the 1940s (1988: 312), while Manwaring highlights how the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now

the UCCF) adopted 'a view to evangelicals gaining influential positions wherever possible, with the

result that, in due course, they occupied posts of considerable influence' (1985: x).  Such findings are

echoed in the work of Ward on evangelical youth work, which identifies a focus on training up

leaders as its key characteristic (1996: 43).  Ward identifies that 'Christian youth work seeks to help

young people grow in the faith.  Growing in the faith is generally linked to a well-defined career of

leadership' (1996: 189).  Thus, adulthood becomes equated with leadership and this focus on

leadership – as well as a highly strategic approach – is shared by Christian Concern and CARE.


CARE, offering the old-fashioned model of engagement par excellence, should also be considered in

terms of the upper middle class (and indeed elite) origins of contemporary conservative

evangelicalism.  Ward has highlighted how in the second half of the twentieth century, conservative

evangelical Christianity grew largely through evangelistic work that focused upon young people in

universities and public schools (2003: 197).  The Bash camps represent a particularly strong example

of this decision to target socio-economic elites, in their focus on bringing the Gospel to public school

boys.  The historian Goodhew, for example, identifies that the Bash camps existed to provide a 'rich

source of "sound" men to promote the faith', in a turn of phrase that identifies clearly CARE's

lineage in such strategic thinking (2003: 87).  CARE, in many ways, is in fact strikingly similar to the

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[53] http://anglicanmainstream.org/wilberforce-academy-2016-apply-now/ [Accessed 26/10/16]

Bash camps, with slight concessions to diversity (such as gender and ethnicity) that represent responses to late-modernity.

## 5.5 Millennial responses

This chapter now turns to examine how the young adult participants of the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership Programme interpreted and negotiated their experiences, considering the agency of the young adults involved and revealing a set of complex views. This follows the advice of many scholars of religion, particularly those of evangelicalism. Courtney Irby's research (2013) on the reception of evangelical dating advice by young people in the US is one interesting example that demonstrates the degree to which evangelical youth actively negotiate religious teachings, even in the context of the more all-encompassing conservative evangelical sub-culture of the US. Irby finds that evangelical youth were either critical or more often merely indifferent to the Christian relationship advice given to them and contextualises this not as a rejection of religious teaching but in the following terms: 'the rejection, ignorance, or dismissal of parts of religious traditions by individuals does not necessarily indicate the rejection of religion because it is not conceptualised as a totalised system but one that is recreated by people within existing discursive fields and social structures' (2013: 179). This points to the complexity of 'lived religion' (McGuire 2008). Other work on evangelicalism and young people has similarly stressed the negotiated nature of transmitted evangelical norms. The work of Heidi Campbell, Gordon Lynch and Pete Ward on Scottish youth prayer meetings, for examples, asserts the need to distinguish between evangelical public discourse and 'the complex personal beliefs of individual Evangelical Christians' (2009: 222).

This section will first look at how young adults critically reflected on the three main goals of the programmes. It will then examine a further three key themes. Firstly, I will explore how Wilberforce Academy participants in particular placed more emphasis on discussion and participation than Christian Concern did. Secondly, I will consider how my interviewees actively

provided nuance to the kind of views they were exposed to, corresponding to the shaping of their subjectivities by the cultural values of 'secular' late modernity.  This was again particularly striking in the case of Wilberforce Academy participants, who expressed opposition to the 'black and white' perspective of Christian Concern and exhibit the 'struggle for coherence' that Strhan (2015) identifies as embodying the conservative evangelical worldview.   Wilberforce Academy participants demonstrated an awareness of their views as counter-cultural and possessing the capacity to offend, and, consequently, the need to behave in a loving and non-bigoted way.   Thirdly, interviewees offered narratives of change that were more in keeping with elements of Bang's conceptualisations of the Everyday Maker and Expert Citizen than the top-down change narratives offered by CARE and Christian Concern. Instead, most interviewees emphasised a more localised and grounded view of politics and disillusionment with, or apathy towards, party politics.

## Assessing the goals of the programmes

Wilberforce Academy and Leadership Programme participants critically engaged and challenged all three goals of the programmes.

### Leadership

Firstly, the accounts of some Wilberforce Academy attendees questioned whether leadership was in fact the focus.  Murdo, for example, was implicitly critical of the young leaders strategy, stating that 'they talk about Christian leaders and trying to get the Christian leaders together.  Now, leadership is a buzzword these days- everybody wants to be thought of "oh, I'm a leader", you know.  I'm not sure whether that is just trying to flatter the delegates or whatever to call them future leaders'.  Here, there is some suggestion that appealing to young adults as leaders is not so much a genuine agenda, as a strategy that appeals to individuals' sense of self-worth.

Secondly, participants of the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership Programme were not necessarily deeply impacted in terms of their career by their experience.  For Greg his time on the

Leadership Programme instead convinced him that he 'didn't want to go down that route of spending my life devoted to policy'. Murdo, when asked whether his participation had influenced his media work, responded:

> Perhaps. I certainly was in development of a web series about abortion beforehand and the ethics of it. The Wilberforce Academy did inspire me to continue with that a bit. However, it got put to the bottom of my pile and you know I've been working on other things since which have not really had the same connection to it. Probably yes, but not a large amount.

This suggests that, whilst Murdo found the Wilberforce Academy a positive experience, it did not particularly impact him in terms of his career. Within the context of a busy lifestyle, lessons learnt during the Wilberforce Academy seem to have become deprioritised.

*Being a Christian in public life*

Another key aim of the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy is to provide participants, with varying levels of prescriptiveness, with ways of thinking about how to be a Christian in public life. The Wilberforce Academy seems to have done this to a limited degree. Murdo found that his 'opinions were largely the same when I came and when I went', suggesting the Wilberforce Academy had not suggested to him new ways of thinking about issues. Kush's opinions also remained unaltered and he felt in addition that the content provided by the Wilberforce Academy was unsuccessful in framing the issue of how to engage as a Christian in public life:

> The core of what they were trying to convey was 'you should stand up for Jesus in the public square', without really defining what that actually meant, or what the idea behind that was, or how you should effectively do that with other people, or how that translates to the specific role that you have in your job or in your sector.

The Leadership Programme's goal to enable young Christians to engage in public life effectively, yet in a principled manner, also seems to have been accomplished to a rather limited extent. Interviewees struggled to make a link between the two different elements of the Leadership Programme, the 'secular' work experience and the study days. Greg, for example, stated that he was slightly frustrated that the study programme 'was all fairly theoretical and in the head'. He continued that 'I just didn't enjoy the cerebral bit […] I found it very disconnected from what we're actually all about in the church', elaborating that it felt like there was a 'very large gap […] between what we're talking about in our little room and real people on the ground'. Greg experienced the study programme as something lofty and abstract, and there was a sense that the Leadership Programme was not able to articulate in a clear way the applicability or relevance of the theory engaged with.

In addition, owing to the 'firewall' between the Leadership Programme and the lobbying activities of CARE more broadly, the parliamentary placement offers little opportunities for enacting Christian values, as understood by CARE as an organisation. In the context of the placement, the faith of the participants is probably only impactful to the extent that it has implications in terms of inter-personal behaviour in the workplace. However, as participants cannot lobby, their social, political, ethical and economic values - influenced and informed by their Christian faith- cannot play a role. Temi perhaps articulated some of this ambiguity in her reflection that, though she felt that the Leadership Programme prepared 'young Christian graduates for roles in public life' 'exceptionally well', this felt like a 'by-product' of the programme. She continued 'everything caused that to happen [being prepared for public life] – the environment you're in day to day, the work you're doing in your placement, but I'm not convinced that the programme was actually the source of that'. Here, Temi hints at processes of personal development that were perhaps less intended by the programme and certainly not embedded into the study days.

*Building a network*

Another key strategy of both programmes is to build a network.  Wilberforce Academy attendees, even those who had not necessarily enjoyed the overall experience, appreciated meeting other people at the event.  Kush, for example, stated that 'the staff facilitating those sorts of connections and making sure that people were actually networking, for want of a better word, that was good, that was fun', while Clare also enjoyed the 'honest, open networking' and identified meeting 'loads of really interesting people' as a highlight of her attendance.  However, the efforts of the Wilberforce Academy to create a network did seem to be constrained by some structural factors.  Firstly, the event has a short timeframe.  As Jonny articulated, 'we only had three days together, so it kind of… after a while, it kind of…you get used to normal life, don't you?'.  Secondly, the network is geographically dispersed, Murdo highlighting the fact that 'we all leave, we all go to our own places'.  Thirdly, alumni events are all held in London, which hindered the further participation of some of my interviewees.  The alumni events hold the potential to increase a sense of community.  Murdo commented, for example, that when he did attend an alumni event he felt 'a bit more part of it than usual', while Clare appreciated having something 'you can go back to'.  However, for several interviewees, the London location of the alumni events was a reason for not attending, leading to feeling a 'little far out [in geographical terms] from the centre of things'.


Given the dispersed nature of the Wilberforce Academy community, there was some use of social media, but this appeared to be limited.  Murdo, for example, commented that, whilst they were 'all connected by Facebook', he would 'very rarely […] actually say anything or comment or do anything' and that he was more of an 'observer than a participant'.  Kush also identified his online engagement with fellow Wilberforce Academy attendees as 'occasional'.  Much generational scholarship has stressed the role of social media in young people's everyday lives, and furthermore its potential capacity to connect people and foster civic and political engagement (see, for example, Kahne et al. 2014).  However, Murdo and Kush's accounts hint at far more passive forms of social

media activity.  Whilst much literature on social media considers what people *do* in online spaces, lack of activity may be just as interesting, and helps dispel overly exaggerated accounts of the power and centrality of social media.  The accounts above reveal far more dispassionate and apathetic forms of engagement.

It is also worth considering that the Wilberforce Academy's aim may in fact be less to connect young adults to each other as to connect *selected* young adults – those who engage *correctly* with the issues – to Christian Concern.  This was the interpretation offered by Amy, who felt that the Wilberforce Academy seemed less interested in 'creating a network of Christians who would go into positions of influence, but connect with each other and really encourage each other in their faith' as picking out a few individuals 'as really interesting people, as in people who will think the same way and will act the same way, and then they invest in those people'.  From Amy's perspective, then, the Wilberforce Academy acted not so much as something to connect people but as a selection weekend.   Clare was a contrary voice to this, stating that 'I think it is trying to encourage a whole group of young people to go out there and make a difference.  I think, from their point of view, if that difference happens to be helping with one of their [Christian Concern's] projects, then that's even better […] but I don't think it's as cynical as that'.  This difference of perspectives can perhaps be understood in light of Amy's postgraduate study that had led her to be fairly cynical about the agendas of NGOs.  Christian Concern's polarising discourse also means that the Wilberforce Academy can easily alienate people, who subsequently choose to have no further involvement. Kush, for example, stated that he probably wouldn't consider himself 'strongly affiliated with them' and wouldn't have 'much more contact with them', having felt frustrated at the Wilberforce Academy's framing of issues.

As for the Leadership Programme, its director, Greg, and Temi were all in agreement that the networking and alumni work of the programme could be improved.  The director of the Leadership Programme identified this as a key priority, while Temi felt that CARE were 'better at staying in touch with us [Leadership Programme participants] than they are at connecting us with each other'.  She also expressed that 'more could be done than just like, you know, one reception a year'.  Owing to the far lengthier and more intensive experience of the CARE Leadership Programme, however, Temi unsurprisingly identified that she had made very good friends through the programme, while Greg still felt strongly connected to CARE.

*Equipping and empowering*

It is, however, worth mentioning that there were several accounts of participation having led to a sense of confidence and a feeling of being invested in.  This was not at all universal, with Amy, for example, identifying that 'it's more of a case of [Christian Concern] connecting people to their own agenda, of "who can I get to do what I want?" rather than "who can [unclear] filled up and encouraged in what they are doing?"'.  Nonetheless, several interviewees seemed to be encouraged by their experiences.  Clare in particular felt more confident as a result of her participation in the Wilberforce Academy:

> I remember going back to my church a few weeks later and […] someone asked me what I wanted to do.  And I said 'I don't actually know what I'm doing yet, I'm graduating, I'll be going back to my parents, but I know I want to go and change the world'.  And he went 'that's stupid.  What do you mean?  You should have some more practical… That's not a very…You should really lower your expectations, Clare'.  And I went 'no, no I don't need to. I'm going to go and change the world'.  And I remember thinking 'before Wilberforce, I really wouldn't have felt confident to say that.  Before it was just me trying to do something.  But after that, I thought no, there's loads of people like me that want to go change the world that are my age, that don't really know what they're doing.  No, you're wrong, actually.  I'm

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going to go and do it. Shut up'.  […] I think at that point I really realised how much it had

encouraged me to be more confident about what I wanted to do.


This increased confidence, by virtue of attending the Wilberforce Academy, can be partially

understood in the context of the church that Clare was attending at the time, which held an

'expectation that women were the wives and the mothers'.  Perhaps surprisingly, given its otherwise

conservative values, the Wilberforce Academy doesn't seem to support traditional gender roles in

terms of either workplace or church life.  Clare thus contrasted the Wilberforce Academy's focus on

careers as 'a really important expression of faith' with her experience of being surrounded in her

church by women 'who do want to be stay-at-home mums'.  This mirrors Aune's findings concerning

the difficulties posed by evangelical Christianity for working women, with adherence in fact declining

'among those whose lives do not fit the older pattern of marriage and full-time motherhood' (2008:

288).


The Leadership Programme also seemed to empower young adults, as Temi explained:

> It seemed like once they believed that you wanted to make a difference in public life and use
>
> your faith to do so – or that your faith was the impetus to do so – than they really invested
>
> as if you would […] It was – it seemed very like once they'd decided to take you on, they
>
> really were going to invest in you.

It is important to point out that most comments on having been empowered came from women,

and this theme is mirrored in the following chapter, where I will discuss its significance in greater

length.


## Valuing participation and discussion

As well as some critical negotiation of the goals of the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership

Programme, young adults also placed positive emphasis on certain values that they situated in

opposition to their experiences.  All interviewees placed strong stress on the values of participation

and discussion and, at times, this led them to be critical of their experiences of the programmes.

The Wilberforce Academy had a stronger emphasis than the Leadership Programme on receiving

input rather than discussion, something that Wilberforce Academy attendees were critical of.

Murdo highlighted this:

> It was all a lot of conferences, a lot of talking.  I mean, they're very keen on the fact that it's
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> not a conference; that's what they call it- it's 'the creation of a new network of people'.  But
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> frankly in my opinion, it's a conference.  You get together, you hear lectures on a variety of
>
> topical issues and there's some discussion

This suggests an implicit sense of disappointment at the high level of input rather than direct

participation, consolidated by Murdo's later comment that he wished 'they'd had more' of the

discussion time 'and less of the talking actually'.  Clare also valued the time that was allocated to

talking to other attendees,   commenting that 'finding a whole group of people you could chat to

about being really career-driven or really focused or really wanting to achieve something in

particular was very encouraging'.  By contrast, she found some of the talks 'a bit irrelevant'.  As well

as little time allocated to discussion, it was also to some degree monitored.  Clare highlighted that

'there was a mentor there in each group, like a member of the Christian Concern team'.  This could

suggest that the main purpose of the Wilberforce Academy is indeed providing a platform for the

elaboration of Christian Concern's ideas, rather than equipping young adults.  Clare found that the

quantity of input received in fact meant that she had little 'time to think: what in this is actually

helpful?  What in this is right?  And what in this should I be doing something about?'.  The emphasis

placed by Wilberforce Academy participants upon the value of interaction and discussion with their

peers highlights changing notions of how information is transmitted, from an emphasis on a one-way

flow to a participatory exchange of information and ideas; and also corresponds with findings that

this generation values participation (Flory and Miller 2008).

In addition, the input-led nature of the Wilberforce Academy led to a situation in which most participants did not voice any views that would be deemed contrary to Christian Concern's worldview.  Murdo, for example, highlighted that the limited time for discussion led to the following situation:

> I think that if we'd had time to really talk properly, we'd have found areas of disagreement but because we were all on our best behaviour, we were all polite- you know, if someone said 'oh, I thought this was really good', we would all nod 'oh yes, yes, absolutely, it was brilliant'.  So it was just at a fairly shallow level which is perhaps unfortunate, but at the same time it prevented any fisticuffs arising, so that's good. Yeah, it could have been a lot deeper, these discussions.

Murdo stated further that 'if there was someone there who didn't agree they would have kept quiet', suggesting that the Wilberforce Academy did not particularly create an atmosphere that was convivial to difference of opinion.  The account provided by Amy, who particularly disagreed with the approach of the Wilberforce Academy, confirms this impression:

> I felt that instead of training us to be individuals with a faith going forward and living out our faith, instead it felt it was very much they were trying to push one-track minded 'their beliefs are the only beliefs and they're right'.  It was very much so as well if you had any questions and you wanted to query things, that wasn't really encouraged.  And that's not an environment I like.  I like questioning things and discussing.

By contrast, the CARE Leadership Programme prioritises discussion in its study days, the director stating that they are 'never very lecture-y'.  Whilst the discussion is facilitated by the programme director, Greg felt that the high quality of discussion was due to the programme participants: 'I think it was the highest academic… Not because of what CARE said, but because of the people in my group, the vast majority were at Oxbridge'.  Discussion also sometimes featured disagreement, in contrast to the ways in which disagreement was 'hushed' by the nature of the Wilberforce Academy.

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Greg, for example, highlighted disagreement on the role of the state and government spending priorities, while Temi remembered key differences around attitudes such as 'people should work if they can work'. Both Greg and Temi were, however, keen to stress that there was also unity. Greg commented that people behaved with unity 'towards each other' and Temi identified high levels of 'consensus' and 'harmony'. This emphasis may be a result of a Christian culture that values unity over difference.

## Nuancing

There was also a process of nuancing, which was particularly apparent among Wilberforce Academy participants, who demonstrated a reaction against the 'black and white' worldview of Christian Concern. In this way, they demonstrated subjectivities that had been influenced by the values and attitudes of the social and cultural milieu of their peers. Firstly, there was an expressed need for sensitivity. Murdo, for example, reflected on the need for caution in approaching such issues as homosexuality and same-sex marriage:

> These things have to be treated with such care and such caution, because people label themselves homosexual. It's not like they are, what would you say? - a boxer or a … a hiker or a …a traveller. These things are things that you do, but they're not defining you. Whereas people define themselves by their sexuality, and when you go then and say 'well it's wrong to do or it's wrong to be homosexual', they feel that you're not getting at their actions, but getting at their very person, very being. I think because…because they identify so closely with their own sexuality to the point that they don't see it as something separate from themselves but something absolutely central to their own being. I think as Christians we therefore have to be so, so careful with what we say to avoid giving them offense,

because we don't think it gives offense, but it does really, quite, deeply, I think, to a lot of people.[54]

This contrasts with the more polemical discourse of Christian Concern. However, Murdo still identified himself as in agreement with the 'actual basic fundamentals' of Christian Concern's views, thus making it a matter of nuance.

For Clare, the requirement of sensitivity was given extra weight due to her having a gay friend, something that gave a 'personal face' to what, for Christian Concern, is a more abstracted societal problem. Prior to her Wilberforce Academy interview, Clare stayed at her gay friend's house, and her account of this reveals how her faith interacted in complex and, for Clare, confusing ways with the realities of her contemporary existence:

> CLARE: And [before the interview] I had to stay overnight with a friend that night who was gay. And we were chatting there, sitting watching 'The New Normal'; I don't know if you saw it
>
> EW: oh, I think I remember it. Can you describe it?
>
> CLARE: It's about two gay men who are trying to start a family. I don't think they're married at the start of the programme; I think by the end of the programme they're married, maybe. And they're trying to have a child through a surrogate and all of that
>
> EW: that's right yeah
>
> CLARE: And so that's what I'd been doing the night before my interview, staying with my gay friend [...] watching this. And then the next morning I got to the interview and they asked me what I thought about gay marriage and I thought 'well, I'm just going to be up front, this

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[54] It is worth commenting here that Murdo's repeated use of the word 'they' does serve to create a distance from the issue of homosexuality, viewed as something experienced by distant others.

is what I spent last night doing'.  […] And so I kind of had a strange…kind of cross-over in the interview where I thought 'eugh'.

When recounting her experiences of the actual Wilberforce Academy event, Clare referenced this again: 'some of the campaigns made me feel a little uneasy, that's probably the right word. Sometimes I thought "is that the most loving?", or I thought "how would I feel if my friend that I'd stayed with before the interview was with me viewing the same thing?"'.  Clare's gay friend thus featured as a reference point against which some of Christian Concern's standpoints were measured, but also a cause of discomfort and unease, in which the coherence of the worldview that Christian Concern was attempting to establish was destabilised.   This led to Clare adopting the uneasiness of a more nuanced version of Christian Concern's views.

Secondly, attendees of the Wilberforce Academy also challenged Christian Concern's *approach* to particular issues, advocating, despite shared values, the worth of other approaches.  Within these accounts, the sensitivities of these issues were again emphasised, and particular focus was given to a more relational response.  Jonny, like Murdo, identified that he was in broad agreement with Christian Concern, but felt that, in their attempt to present 'what they perceive to be *the* Christian response' to certain issues, they were 'one-dimensional' and 'maybe at times…a little sort of dismissive of any arguments against theirs'.  Jonny elaborated on this in the context of the touchstone issue of abortion.  Whilst Jonny was in 'complete' agreement with Christian Concern's premise and would 'defy any Christian to come up with an argument supporting abortion', he felt that there were 'multiple responses' to the issue beyond 'just telling people that an unborn child is an unborn child and that they're murdering one if they have an abortion'.  Instead, Jonny highlighted such responses as 'providing support to women in crisis pregnancies'.   Jonny was also critical of Christian Concern's 'simplistic' view that 'any church leader who doesn't speak publicly about it is

too scared to or doesn't have enough Christian conviction', referencing his own church leader, who held the perspective that abortion was a very difficult issue for him to get involved in as a man.

Clare exhibited a similar mixture of agreeing broadly with Christian Concern's views on issues but not their approach:

> With the abortion campaigning, I thought 'is this the most loving way to be going about this?' […] And I remember thinking 'I'm not ok with gay couples getting married. Civil partnership works in the same practical way, but isn't the same as a marriage in a church. And I think I'm not really ok with gay marriage. But civil partnership's fine- they should be able to talk about their love for each other and commit to each other and that's fine, but I'm not quite sure I'm happy with it being marriage'. But they were very black-and-white 'no, no gay people shouldn't be allowed to have civil partnerships. They shouldn't be allowed to be together'. So there were some things I thought 'I think this is more of a grey area, and you're making it black and white […] I'm not sure it's as binary as you think it is'. And I think maybe making people angry isn't always the best way to get their attention or their support. There's a more loving way to go about it.

Amy similarly, despite agreeing 'with their stance broadly on all of their issues', disagreed with Christian Concern's 'very aggressive' response to 'sensitive issues' such as homosexuality and abortion. She expanded that 'the way that they [Christian Concern] wanted to campaign and the way that they wanted to deal with those issues just removed the heart out of getting to know the people. And actually Jesus loved everybody'. In contrast to the love of Jesus, Christian Concern's approach was not seen as particularly loving: 'they were just going to stand up for what the Bible says […] rather than supporting and lobbying people and working alongside [them]'. Expanding on this later in the interview, Amy explained that, though she wouldn't agree with abortion, she felt the Christian Concern approach of 'showing photos of aborted babies to women walking to an abortion

clinic' was 'just disgusting' and 'horrifying'. For Amy, it was important that instead Christians should

be 'really relating to the people who are making those decisions'. Similarly, Amy was 'strongly

against' same-sex marriage, but 'I don't think gay people are evil, I don't hate them […] I like to see

people as people'.

These findings are very resonant with Strhan's study of a conservative evangelical megachurch,

which found that congregants experienced tension as a result of their 'simultaneous inhabiting of

differentiated social spaces suffused with differing moral norms' (2015: 85). Thus 'as the teachings

of the church rub up in increasing tension with modern norms of equality and members of the

church become increasingly conscious of their being labelled as intolerant and judgmental, they

struggle to speak, as they are simultaneously shaped as modern, secular subjects, valuing norms of

privacy and tolerance' (2008: 202). In contrast to Strhan's research subjects, however, my

participants did not seem particularly to 'narrate their subjective fragmentation according to biblical

narratives of sin. This enabled them to draw these fragments together into an overall pattern of

meaning that shapes their sense of self' (2015: 85). Rather, they either expressed more of the

discomfort observed by Strhan, or alternately firmly rejected discourses like Christian Concern's in

favour of ones that felt more 'loving' and 'caring'.

The theme of 'nuancing' was not so apparent within the interviews with Leadership Programme

participants, probably partly due to the more limited role that CARE plays within the programme due

to the 'firewall' and partly a result of CARE's more measured and less polemical stance towards the

issues. Both Temi and Greg did, however, express some reservations towards CARE as a wider

organisation, albeit highly diplomatically. Temi commented that she had some disagreement with

CARE and felt 'that they could be more flexible on certain issues, or just not address them, because I

just don't think that they're necessarily that big a focus'. She added carefully, 'but then I don't work

for CARE and I'm not the person who set it up.  So I do get that just because I think that's not what I'd focus on, doesn't mean that it's not what they want to focus on'.

Greg's view of CARE as a wider organisation was rather muddled.  Whilst he identified CARE's staff as 'amazing people' and defended CARE from such mocking acronyms as 'Christians Are Right-wing Extremists', he was critical of some of CARE's practices, particularly CARE participating in 'the same conference as what the papers call a pray away the gay conference'.  Similarly whilst Greg identified CARE as 'amazing' in terms 'of their intentions and what they're all about', the following interview excerpt shows Greg quickly distancing himself from wholesale agreement with the organisation:

> EW: you've mentioned that you would perhaps hold values in common with CARE as an
>
> organisation.  In your cohort on the Leadership Programme would you think that many
>
> people would share those values as well, or was there quite a lot of disparity?
>
> GREG: Did I say that I hold values in…?
>
> EW: some of them, like some agreement on for example trafficking or stuff like that?  Sorry
>
> GREG: oh yeah, yeah, yeah.  Because I wouldn't in some of their stuff.

When asked to elaborate on the values he was less in agreement with though, Greg was careful not to denigrate the organisation. Though he was unsure about CARE's stance on same-sex marriage, for example, he stated 'it's easy to caricature their [CARE's] values, which I wouldn't want to do' and continued to try and explain CARE's position: 'I do really think the family thing is important and they just include the gay marriage stuff in their work on that, because they feel it's an attack on the core fabric of society'.  This demonstrates again the sensitivities of these issues.  Greg was keen not to be aligned with what might be thought of as a bigoted set of views, but he also didn't want to express disloyalty towards CARE, an organisation that he is indebted to for valuable work experience.

## Narratives of change

Both the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership Programme emphasise a vision of change whereby change occurs predominantly from the top, involving legal and policy procedures.[55] By contrast, attendees of both programmes articulated different narratives of change. Against a backdrop of apathy and ambivalence towards political parties, my interviewees expressed alternative visions of change that focused on the church, the local and the personal. The young adults who had participated in the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership Programme thus articulated different visions of change to those of Christian Concern and CARE, providing evidence of elements of Bang's Everyday Maker and Expert Citizen, though these are heavily filtered through a faith-based lens. Faith is the crucial frame through which these young people think about change and how to bring it about. This infuses such theoretical contributions on citizenship as Bang's with a slightly different flavour and complicates the picture. This section will conclude by examining how, despite these important faith-infused alternative change narratives, participants' accounts of what their faith looked like in everyday life prioritised obviously 'religious' practices. This ties in with a larger theme of the struggling emergence of alternative political narratives.

*Disillusionment from party politics*

Like Bang's Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens, my interviewees did not find their 'primary political identity' in party politics (2005: 172). There was evidence instead of some cynicism towards party politics, and political ambivalence. Clare, for example, stated: 'the nearer you get to an election, and the more politicians want votes, and […] the more it becomes about what they can do for you and about supporting people like you'. Clare found it difficult to support any particular political party as a Christian:

> But there's no party that really as a Christian you can fully support. … Every party, once you
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> start looking at their policies, you could support them enough to vote for them, but you

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[55] Though there are some exceptions, such as the presence of Abort67 at the Wilberforce Academy who have a more activist identity.

couldn't support them enough to work- to represent them.  There isn't really a party that

you could wholeheartedly be member of as a Christian currently the way things are, or I

don't feel there is anyway.

Greg also identified that he was 'really not party political' and also commented, like Clare, on the

importance of his Christian identity over party identification: 'Well, I would define myself as a

Christian and that transcends all those boundaries and therefore if the conservatives have an idea

that I think is in line with what the Kingdom of God is and is about justice for the poor and all those

things, I'm behind it 100%'.

Greg also seemed to imply that the Leadership Programme's focus on parliamentary experience was

slightly old-fashioned.  He suggested that the programme could be improved by widening the

placement opportunities to include more placements in business and with social enterprises,

because 'if they're really talking about influencing culture and I think if they want to entice a new

generation in, then social enterprise would be the way to do it'.  The director of the Leadership

Programme identified that establishing placements in business, media and law was a key area of

possible future development for the programme.  However, this retains a focus on careers and high-

level change, and ignores Greg's emphasis on social enterprise as something that would resonate

with a younger generation.

*Alternative narratives of change*
There was a key trend towards articulating alternative narratives of change.  This was done by

shifting the focus on to the church, the local or the personal.

For Greg, the study days, with their focus on theoretical approaches towards Christian engagement

in the public sphere, felt very 'disconnected from what we're actually all about in the church'.  Greg

thus had developed less interest in a 'strategic and institution-level' approach, his own response

being characterised by 'thinking more practically and much more church-orientated'.  Young

Christian evangelicals may well find themselves in large, active churches, with many opportunities

for social and community involvement.  In fact, the director of the Leadership Programme identified

that one reason for reduced applications for the Leadership Programme was that there was a new

proliferation of church internships, providing Christian graduates with a wide array of church-based

opportunities to gain experience.

There was also a focus on the local.  Clare identified herself as being 'more concerned with social

justice and what that means in my particular area'.  Clare expanded:

> You can change the world of one place pretty easily.  It doesn't stop me wanting to go
>
> change the world, but I'm learning you can do it in lots of different ways.  […] So I'm kind of
>
> learning you can change someone's world or a community's world quite easily actually, just
>
> by listening and caring.

Greg also endorsed a focus on the local, as he felt that the realm of parliamentary politics could only

produce piecemeal change.  Greg was thus more interested in 'shaping [his local area] and making a

difference in people's lives here, rather than spending a 30 year career in parliament in getting

though two bills that are then changed when the next government comes in'.  Kush also articulated

an emphasis upon the local, commenting on the importance of seeking 'the full flourishing of

wherever you're based'.

There was also a focus on the individual, which was manifested predominantly through an emphasis

on evangelism and love to others.  Murdo, for example, highlighted the need to 'go out making

disciples of other people' and to 'expand the kingdom of God, by bringing other people into the

kingdom of God, and so we try to reach out with the gospel so that other people too might see the

light and be saved'.  Clare expressed the need to 'love people more': 'would as many people want to

get abortions if they felt like they had another option? I've got lots of friends who –acquaintances – who abortion feels like the only option.  So, loving and giving your support [unclear] is probably actually more productive than shouting at them outside a clinic'.  Kush commented on being 'called to have a faithful impact, regardless of what it is and of what your position is' through a role 'where you serve faithfully and bring the influence that you have, through all the people that you are in contact with and the things that you have influence over can be shaped in such a way that they are serving the kingdom of God and bringing glory to Him and flourishing to the nation'.  Central to Kush then was a notion of how individuals 'have an influence, in a way, have an impact on your surroundings.  And that you're placed in the middle of something and that you model a particular way of life, which is different'.

The personal was also evoked in terms of lifestyle actions, but this was less common and expressed most clearly by Greg:

> What that looks like in my daily life is trying to live my personal life faithful to Jesus, but it's about- it's about standing for what I- we would call the Kingdom of God in everyday life, whether that's individual lives and making a difference in individual lives, or whether it's spending our money in a certain way, or whether it's engaging in certain conversations about societal things.

Greg reiterated the role of financial spending: 'There's another quote that says something like "every time you spend money you're voting for the kind of world you want to live in" – so that's a political decision about how you spend your money.  All of these things are political decisions'.

*The struggling emergence of new political narratives*

As these alternative visions suggest, young people seem to reject the top-down version of change that CARE and Christian Concern present. However, there is a struggle for emerging political narratives to come into being. Despite these alternative visions, the word 'politics' possesses a strange identity both as a 'dirty word' and as referring to something incredibly demarcated. Definitions of the political continued to be influenced by the sphere of party politics and narrowed accordingly. This was seen through a widespread view that their participation in either the Leadership Programme or the Wilberforce Academy was not political. Murdo, for example, did not see attending the Wilberforce Academy as political: 'I guess my involvement with politics has been through [a particular] party and I had finished all of that before I ever heard about the Wilberforce Academy'. Jonny similarly, having articulated a broader view of politics of not just being about party politics but about 'knowing about, thinking about, discussing issues', didn't see the Wilberforce Academy as political: 'no, not really. No, I don't think so […] I guess I saw it more just as a …a kind of a training conference. I wouldn't say it was political. I wouldn't say that attending it was political'. Kush similarly felt that 'there were political aspects certainly, but I wouldn't have considered that my involvement there was political'. Greg understood the Leadership Programme to be political 'in a wide sense', but shifted between such a perspective and narrowing his definition of politics, as seen in his statement that he was 'not interested in politics explicitly – it was about international development and NGO work'. Here it seems that international development is not considered political, because it is not associated with the 'proper' politics of the parliamentary realm.

This sense of compartmentalisation or segmentation was also evidenced when interviewees were asked about their faith in everyday life, which, despite the way they had articulated faith-inspired visions of change narratives as described above, was understood in ways that emphasised 'obviously religious' practices. Jonny, for example, whilst stating that his faith 'informs everything that I do probably', then went on to focus on prayer, 'pursuing holiness, so through reading the Bible, reading

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other books', and trying to 'encourage and support others in their faith'.   This stress on 'obviously religious' practices was echoed by Amy, who stated that her faith meant 'praying, praying for friends, praying with my husband, reading the Bible or Biblical books and reflecting on Scripture and then generally everyday life, I probably wouldn't say it makes a whole lot of difference'.  Clare also emphasised prayer, explaining 'it means … deciding whether to apply for a job, I would pray about that first and try and work out if that was something I should be doing'.  When reflecting on faith in her everyday life, Clare highlighted how 'God is where I turn to for my support, for my encouragement'.  This hints perhaps at the extent to which, because of the narrow set of social concerns embraced by conservative evangelicalism, such Christianity cannot be easily incorporated into the fabric of everyday life beyond the 'obviously religious', as it is orientated around a list of unspoken, but taken-for-granted, negative pronouncements, such as 'don't have sex before marriage' and 'don't be gay'.

## Correspondence with the concepts of Bang and Bennett et al.

In the many ways highlighted above, my interviewees distanced themselves from the institutional narrative of change advanced by CARE and Christian Concern, none of them being particularly state-orientated in their approach to political change-making.  The alternate political discourses they expressed reveal some, albeit limited, similarities with Bang's notion of the Expert Citizen, such as the embracing of a form of project identity and preference for dialogue.  However, they also demonstrate tendencies of the Everyday Maker, such as focusing upon the local.  Despite these shared features though, my interviewees did not exhibit broad conceptualisations of the political and, though committed to change-making in their local and personal spheres, continued to see the 'political' as something related predominantly to party politics.  Whilst Bang's Everyday Maker and Expert Citizen capture elements of my research participants' political identity, the accounts explored in this chapter do not fit neatly into either category, instead demonstrating cross-over and complexity.

In their opposition to receiving input, and desire for peer interaction and discussion, Wilberforce Academy and Leadership Programme participants exhibited characteristics of Bennet et al.'s 'actualising' citizen.  However, owing to the nature of their Christian faith, a rhetoric of responsibility and duty was also significant.  This highlights the importance of considering political identities alongside the other worldviews and values that they operate in conjunction with.  Religious faith, in particular, might be seen to be a particularly important lens through which such identities are filtered.

## 5.6 Effectiveness

As this discussion of Millennial responses to their experiences has highlighted, the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy do not seem to be very effective in engaging young adults.  They may manage to attract young people, but they do not seem to have the kind of impact that they would like to have.  In particular, Leadership Programme and Wilberforce Academy participants did not necessarily seem to feel equipped as Christians in public life.  Furthermore, there was much disagreement about the kind of agenda they were exposed to.  Though this chapter has drawn on a small number of interviews – and the small amount of respondents who are former Leadership Programme participants could be seen as a weakness of this study – it is striking that many of the critiques and dissatisfactions are around similar topics.  From these critiques, the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy were judged to be ineffective: in their top-down narratives of change and lack of focus on the local and personal; in the lack of value placed upon participation and discussion; and in their black-and-white moral perspectives.

## 5.7 Conclusion

CARE and Christian Concern demonstrate little conscious response to generational change, a feature of their identity that results from, and corresponds with, their conservative evangelical positioning.  Their focus on leadership and influence also situates both the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy within a long lineage of evangelical youth work.  As a result, Millennial

participants expressed critical views of their experiences.  They valued discussion more than it was

offered by the programmes, expressed more nuanced conservative views in keeping with their

exposure to late-modern values of tolerance, and embraced alternative narratives of change that

placed greater emphasis on local communities and the church.

# Chapter 6 – Youth-empowering: the Christian Aid Collective and Tearfund Rhythms

The previous chapter explored two organisations – Christian Concern and CARE – who, despite having specific programmes for young adults, exhibit little conscious response to generational change, something that can be seen as coherent with conservative evangelicalism's oppositional stance to cultural change.  However, as a result, interviews with Millennials that had participated in the Wilberforce Academy and the Leadership Programme revealed a range of critical responses that suggested that these programmes were sometimes at odds with the subjectivities and sensitivities of participating young people, even those with broadly shared values.  This chapter explores two organisations, Christian Aid and Tearfund – two large and well-established Christian international development NGOs – that, by contrast, demonstrate a plethora of active responses in recent years to what they perceive as key generational changes.  This has resulted in the establishment of specific young adult initiatives, the Christian Aid Collective and Tearfund Rhythms.[56]  The emergence of both these initiatives in the same year (2012) and shortly before I commenced this research was one of the empirical sparks for this project, highlighting what seemed to be an interesting development within the world of faith-based organisations and one that was deserving of study.

This chapter will begin, similarly to the last, by giving an overview of Christian Aid and Tearfund, before providing some more in-depth detail regarding both the religious and the international development contexts within which Christian Aid and Tearfund operate, and that are crucial for understanding the trajectories of these two organisations.  Particular attention will be given to the charismatic evangelical positioning of Tearfund and the historic liberal Protestant tradition of Christian Aid, both of which can be seen to influence the shape and levels of success of their youth

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[56] Tearfund Rhythms has recently been renamed Tearfund Lifestyle.  Owing to the fact that this happened when I was nearing the end of my PhD and all my interviewees had referred to Tearfund Rhythms, I have retained the name Rhythms here throughout for ease.  This shift is intriguing, however, as it makes clear the focus of activity.

initiatives in various ways.  Furthermore, I will contend that the emergence of the Christian Aid

Collective and Tearfund Rhythms should be partially understood in the light of what might be

considered a 'troubled' international development sector that has necessitated different approaches

to engaging publics with global development causes.  The chapter will then go on to briefly describe

the key multi-fold strategies that Christian Aid and Tearfund have adopted in order to engage

Millennials, focusing on the provision of: trips abroad; face-to-face work; digital engagement; and

two specific programmes aimed at a small number of young adults each year – the Christian Aid

Collective internship and the Emerging Influencers programme.  I assert that these strategies are

underpinned by three central guiding principles: firstly, a discourse of building a 'community' or

'movement'; secondly, an emphasis on the voices of young adults and a desire to be youth-led; and

thirdly, the encouragement of small actions and lifestyle change in what I term the 'politics of the

everyday'.  Furthermore, all of these should be seen as conscious responses to generational change,

in which the imagined young adult subject desires to have their voice heard, has the power to

influence their peers, and is looking for ways to incorporate social justice concerns into their

everyday life.  At the heart of all these principles is a desire to empower young adults.


Unlike the participants of the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce

Academy, the interviewees for this chapter expressed far less disillusionment with their experiences

and more agreement with – or indeed internalisation of – the organisations' own narratives.

Considering the question of how effectively these organisations are responding to generational

change, Christian Aid and Tearfund can be seen to have responded a great deal to generational

change, which has resulted in them engaging young adults to a highly successful degree and

producing narratives that clearly resonate with their young adult participants.  This is particularly the

case when considering Tearfund, largely due to the clearly charismatic evangelical Christian context

within which Tearfund is operating and that is more convivial to Tearfund's activities than is the

more challenging Christian context that Christian Aid find themselves negotiating.  However, the

effectiveness of both initiatives is constrained by the fact that they are part of large bureaucratic organisations.

## 6.1 Interviewees

The table below provides some key information about the interviewees whose interview data makes up the majority of this chapter.  I encountered few difficulties recruiting interviewees from Christian Aid and Tearfund, though, as reflected upon in the methodology chapter, I did experience some concern about organisational reputation from Tearfund.  In addition, my interviews with Tearfund staff seemed to recount a particular organisational narrative, rather than much critical self-reflection.  Whilst this was frustrating on some levels, it was also revealing of Tearfund as an organisation and of the charismatic evangelical context in which they operate.

| Name | Pseudonym? | Role | Means of interview |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amelia | Yes | Former Emerging Influencer (TF) | Skype |
| Ben | No | Internship Officer, Christian Aid; also former Christian Aid Collective intern and Tearfund Emerging Influencer | In person |
| Chris | No | Higher Education Manager and Head of Volunteer Internship, Christian Aid | In person |
| Dionne | No | Head of Church Advocacy, Christian Aid | Telephone |
| Eli | No | Former Emerging Influencer (TF) | Skype |
| Hannah | Yes | Former Christian Aid Collective intern | In person |

| Ian | No | Acting Director, People and Organisational Development, Tearfund (formerly Director, Corporate Strategy) | Skype |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kiera | No | Head, Youth and Emerging Generation Team, Tearfund | Skype |
| Maddie | Yes | Former Christian Aid Collective intern | In person |
| Pippa | No | Church Youth Manager, Christian Aid | In person |
| Phoebe | Yes | Former Emerging Influencer (TF) | In person |
| Sarah | No | Head, Integral Mission Initiative, Tearfund (formerly Head, Global Volunteering, Tearfund) | In person |
| Thom | No | Former Christian Aid Collective intern | In person |

## 6.2 Background to Christian Aid and Tearfund

| | Christian Aid | Tearfund |
|---|---|---|
| **Issues of interest and concern** | Global poverty and inequality, especially climate and tax justice | Global poverty and inequality |
| **Religious positioning** | Historically supported by liberal Protestant churches. Tentative recent attempts to engage | Charismatic evangelical |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | evangelical Christians | |
| **Political positioning** | Combines fundraising and disaster relief with high-level advocacy work. History of being outspoken and political in its campaigning | Also involved in high-level advocacy work, but this is more understated |
| **Organisational structure** | Registered charity | Registered charity |

## Christian Aid

*History*

The origins of Christian Aid stem back to the aftermath of the Second World War, when a meeting of British and Irish church leaders was held in order to respond to the European refugee crisis. They named themselves Christian Reconstruction in Europe, and became a department of the British Council of Churches, where it was renamed the Department of Interchurch Aid and Refugee Service. In the 1950s, the organisation shifted its focus, to also support development projects in Africa and Asia. The first Christian Aid Week (a national fundraising drive) occurred in 1957. In 1964, the name was changed to Christian Aid and by the 1970s, Christian Aid was working in forty countries. Christian Aid now operates in approximately fifty countries and in 2007 the organisation's annual income was £86.5 million.[57]

*Aims, goals and vision*

Christian Aid's vision is that 'the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty'. The purposes of the organisation accordingly are: to 'expose the scandal of poverty'; to help 'root [poverty] out from the world'; and to 'challenge and change structures and systems that favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised'. Christian Aid lists its values as: love and solidarity; dignity and respect; justice and equality; cooperation and

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[57] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/history/ [Accessed 22/09/16]

partnership; and accountability and stewardship.  It considers the 'fundamental cause' of poverty to be 'the misuse and inequality of power'.[58]

Christian Aid's development practice aims to be: non-discriminatory, in that it 'exists to help those in need – regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality'; carried out in partnership, both in terms of working through and with overseas partners and seeking cooperation with institutional partners; and professional, through measuring impact and being accountable.   Christian Aid also operates through 'an integrated approach to poverty eradication – working on humanitarian relief, long term development, specific advocacy issues and campaigns for change and influence'.[59]   Christian Aid's two largest current campaigns are on climate justice and tax justice.

*Religious positioning*

Christian Aid's website describes their work as being 'founded on Christian faith and powered by hope'.  The organisation is thus motivated by a faith position, which understands ending poverty as 'an imperative from God' and an act of 'practical love and care for our neighbours'.   Whilst the organisation is 'proud of our Christian identity and heritage', it also has central principles of not linking aid with evangelism and taking 'seriously interfaith and intercommunity dialogue and cooperation'.[60]  Christian Aid employees do not need to be a Christian in order to work for the organisation.

The nearest thing to a statement of faith (it is not referred to as such) on the Christian Aid website considers the 'gospel of good news to the poor and [...] the vision of a new Earth where everyone lives in justice, peace and plenty'.  It continues by highlighting 'the teaching of Jesus Christ, who commanded his followers to love their neighbour and work for a better world. Jesus identified with

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[58] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/aims/our_aims.aspx [Accessed 22/09/16]
[59] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/aims/our_aims.aspx?Page=2 [Accessed 22/09/16]
[60] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/what_we_stand_for/Life_before_death.aspx [Accessed 22/09/16]

the poor, excluded, weak, sick and oppressed. He said he wanted everyone to have life, abundantly, hence, "We believe in life before death"'.[61]

### *Political positioning*

Christian Aid describes itself as 'a voice for the poor, not afraid of getting political' and consequently they 'campaign for change, challenging structures and systems that make and keep people poor'. Their website is clear that this 'does not mean getting involved in party politics but it does mean confronting with the truth people who have the power to change things'.[62] Christian Aid also proudly identify their 'radical' history of political action and campaigning (a word used by both Pippa and Chris).

## Tearfund

### *History*

Tearfund was formed as a committee within the Evangelical Alliance[63]- the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund Committee- in 1968. This led to a separate organisation, Tearfund, which became a registered charity in 1973. In 1994, Tearfund established its Disaster Response Unit and it is now among the UK's top ten emergency relief agencies.

### *Aims, goals and vision*

Tearfund believe that 'when a community lifts itself out of poverty, everything changes' and describe 'Tearfund's call […] to follow Jesus where the need is greatest'. Key to Tearfund's approach to poverty is working through local churches, because 'they're Jesus' body on earth, ready to care for the whole person - and the whole community - inside and out'. However, there is a commitment to serving 'those living in poverty, regardless of race, gender, nationality or religious belief'. Tearfund

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[61] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/what_we_stand_for/Life_before_death.aspx [Accessed 22/09/16]

[62] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/what_we_stand_for/Life_before_death.aspx [Accessed 22/09/16]

[63] The Evangelical Alliance is an umbrella body of evangelical organisations and churches in the UK. It encompasses nearly 4000 churches.

see themselves as operating at the intersection between 'spiritual passion' and 'professional excellence'.

Areas of operation and interest listed on the website include: poor communities; marginalised groups; vulnerable adults; children; the local church; community empowerment; gender and relationships; education; conflict; disasters; HIV; injustice; climate change; hunger; clean water and toilets; healthcare; and livelihoods.[64]

*Religious positioning*

Through the centrality Tearfund places upon working through churches, it is clear that Tearfund's evangelical faith is at the heart of what they do. Tearfund is motivated by the 'unending compassion of Jesus'[65] and a gospel that 'has the power to transform lives and heal communities'.[66] The church is the operating force of their work because it is seen as a 'powerful and transformational force, vital to freeing people from poverty regardless of race, religion, nationality or gender'. Local churches are also considered to 'have the potential to change lives – bringing new perspectives, helping heal emotional scars, offering hope and togetherness'.[67] Integral mission is the central guiding theology of Tearfund's work, defined as 'the church living out its faith in Jesus in every aspect of life'.[68] Tearfund's faith as an organisation is central in its language, with phrases such as 'God's provision for Tearfund's development' and 'God's direction' peppering the content of the website.[69] This means that Tearfund have a clear sense of being provided for and that they are doing 'God's work'.

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[64] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us [Accessed 30/09/16]
[65] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/history/ [Accessed 30/09/16]
[66] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us [Accessed 30/09/16]
[67] Though not the focus of this PhD, I think it is worth just mentioning the criticisms that could be levied at this approach, such as the negative role that can be played by churches in international development contexts. The role of churches in exacerbating stigmatisation of people with HIV/AIDS might be an example, or church teaching against contraception.
[68] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/why_the_church/ [Accessed 30/09/16]
[69] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/history/ [Accessed 30/09/16]

Tearfund has a Statement of Faith, which emphasises Tearfund's evangelical Christian identity and is affirmed by all Tearfund employees.  The statement asserts belief in: the Bible as the word of God; God as creator; human sin; human worth; and Jesus as Lord and Saviour.[70]  Ian was very clear about Tearfund's evangelical identity: 'we are evangelical.  We are all evangelical Christians […] We raise money from evangelical churches and we work through evangelical partners across the world, so that is who we are'.  He continued that 'we're very clear about our evangelical Christian beliefs and we are uncompromising in that'.

*Political positioning*

Tearfund's website has a less explicit focus on campaigning and challenging the structural roots of poverty than does Christian Aid's.  For every £1 given to Tearfund, seven pence goes towards 'challenging unfair policies', 'because poverty is also top-down, we campaign in the UK and globally for fair policies to support – not harm – the poor'.[71]  In my interview with Ian, he explained that advocacy was harder to 'sell' to Tearfund's supporters than more traditional relief and development work.  He commented that 'raising money for that kind of stuff [advocacy] is very hard, so you have to just put aside part of your budget and not talk about it very much to your supporters, because we believe it's the right thing to do'.[72]

## 6.3 Contextualising Christian Aid and Tearfund

### Religious context

The current – and predicted future[73] – trajectories of Christian Aid and Tearfund can only be understood with reference to the different Christian contexts they are respectively operating in. Christian Aid's traditional supporter basis lies in the UK's liberal Protestant churches, such as the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, and the less evangelical or conservative elements

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[70] Statement of faith available as a download from
http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/why_the_church/ [Accessed 30/09/16]
[71] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/where_your_money_goes/ [Accessed 30/09/16]
[72] This is considered in greater detail below.
[73] As will be discussed in Chapter 7

of the Church of England.  In 2005, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church

represented two of the three most rapidly declining denominations in the UK (Brierley 2006: 30).

Furthermore, these churches are not where the majority of young church-goers are.  Independent,

Pentecostal and new churches attract the greatest numbers (as a proportion of church-goers) of

those in the 20-44 age group (Brierley 2006: 246).  As Christian Aid's current list of sponsoring

churches reveals, however, Christian Aid have evidently tried hard to ensure they do not receive

support purely from their more traditional supporters, and that they have had to reach out to

different kinds of churches. The list of current sponsoring churches includes: the Council of African

and Afro-Caribbean Churches; Fellowship of the Churches of Christ; New Testament Assembly; the

Seventh Day Adventist Church; Church of God of Prophecy; and New Testament Church of God. [74]

This reaching out to more evangelical and Pentecostal churches can be seen to mark the current

endpoint of a 'vociferous debate over the last decade' over 'the "Christian" in Christian Aid', which

ended in the decision that Christian Aid is indeed a Christian organisation (Chris).


Whilst Dionne was positive about the possibilities of Christian Aid engaging with evangelical

churches and viewed it as being no more challenging than the conservative wing of the Church of

England, there was more pessimism from others in the organisation.  Chris identified that a

particular evangelical discourse – based around such statements as having a 'heart for the poor' and

being 'Jesus people' – was unrepresentative of how 'Christian Aid is in the field, so we can't talk

authentically in that way'.  He continued that it was 'pretty hard' to engage young people in

evangelical churches, 'because it's not who we are […] and the language we use, it marks us out [as]

not of that tradition'.  As a result, Chris felt that Christian Aid occupied a problematic faith

positioning, whereby 'we are not Christian enough for very evangelical Christians and we are

certainly not secular enough for people who aren't of faith […] those who we appeal to most […] that

kind of liberal, traditional Christian church, are unfortunately dying out very, very quickly, so we

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[74] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/aims/sponsoring_churches/ [Accessed 26/09/16]

don't have a place anymore as easily, and especially with young people'. Chris identified that young

people do not go to the kind of churches that make up Christian Aid's support basis, as young people

were 'either in very evangelical churches [...] or they don't go to church'.

Despite this, however, the Christian Aid internship programme successfully attracts a number of

evangelical applicants and participants. This has resulted in a situation that can be troublesome for

interns who come from a liberal church background that is more representative of Christian Aid's

historic support. Hannah, for example, spoke about being attracted by Christian Aid's 'open' faith

and subsequently struggling with the 'more evangelical' faith of some of the other interns. Hannah

highlighted how on the trip abroad 'there were times when everyone was praying out loud and that

was an environment I'd not actually been in'. Thom also commented on the fact that 'during the trip

there was quite a focus on prayer and on reflecting on things from a Christian, a Biblical point of

view [...] And having prayer circles and things is not something I'd experienced before, so it made me

feel a little bit uncomfortable'.

In contrast with Christian Aid's Christian positioning, Tearfund is operating in a clearly defined and

delineated evangelical Christian space, working through evangelical churches as partners abroad,

engaging the evangelical community in the UK, and speaking a clearly evangelical language.

Tearfund's faith identity should be understood in the post-Lausanne evangelical context, under

which Tearfund operated with a 'new, radical understanding of what it means to bring good news to

the poor, caring for their physical as well as spiritual needs'.[75] The significance of the 1974 Lausanne

Conference has been noted in the literature, with Warner highlighting that Lausanne 'reconceived

global mission for moderate evangelicals as a synthesis of evangelism and social action', heralding

such notions as 'integral mission' (2007: 97).

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[75] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/history/ [Accessed 26/09/16]

Whilst Christian Aid's religious context looks increasingly less favourable for them, Tearfund staff identified that their evangelical world was changing in positive ways for Tearfund, though the existence of an evangelical tendency towards optimism should probably be noted here (see Warner 2007). Sarah identified a shift from twenty years ago – when Tearfund had a role in saying 'church, wake up and care about the poor' – to today, when 'the church has woken up'. She continued that 'I think the church is now asking "how?" and so that's the area I think Tearfund is trying to speak into. Like "I want to change the world, I want to make a difference, but I don't know how to do that"'. Kiera agreed that there was increasingly an 'appetite for equipping, I think, more than convincing, and I think previously there maybe needed to be a bit more convincing'. She stated further that the current evangelical young adult generation 'understand that God is a God of the poor', meaning that Tearfund do not have to 'bang a drum that "God cares about the poor, God cares about the poor"' and outlining the 'Biblical basis of why you should care about the poor', but can instead be focused more on how to respond. Kiera did acknowledge, however, that Rhythms was consciously 'targeting the warm audience [...] so our focus would not have been Christians that needed convincing that social engagement is a deep part of Christians' responsibility' (Kiera).

Owing to its strong evangelical basis of support, Tearfund was seen by several Christian Aid staff to be more successful. Ben identified how Rhythms would be 'far better known' than the Collective and that this stemmed partially from the fact that 'their festival presence, and particularly on stage, is far stronger and that gives you more credibility'. This demonstrates the evangelical nature of the Christian festival scene in the UK and how Tearfund, with its evangelical identity, is far more able to shape the festival agenda. Kiera highlighted how Tearfund were often 'invited to speak at a lot of the national Christian youth events'. Hannah, who took part in the Collective internship, also commented that 'I don't know how they [Christian Aid] can engage church youth and compete with Tearfund [...] a lot of the churches that we might try to approach or try to get the youth involved in Christian Aid are already kind of like "we're involved in Tearfund"'. Whilst Christian Aid staff and

interns mentioned Tearfund on several occasions during the interviews, Christian Aid was not mentioned by Tearfund staff and Emerging Influencers.  This suggests that Tearfund may feature on Christian Aid's radar as a 'competitor' to some degree, but this is not mirrored by Christian Aid being considered in such a way by Tearfund.  This would seem to provide further evidence of Tearfund occupying a rather more comfortable place in the contemporary Christian landscape of the UK.

There is a small, but rich, literature on charismatic evangelicalism in the UK, which can help provide further contextual insight into Tearfund.  Following Warner, Tearfund can be understood to occupy space within what he defines – contra conservative evangelicalism – as 'entrepreneurial evangelicalism'.  Warner understands this charismatic strand of evangelicalism to reflect 'the neoliberal social context', continuing that 'the voluntarist- individualism of evangelicalism is particularly correlative with a culture of personal autonomy: the less rigidly conservative aspects of the tradition readily adapt to the individualist-expressive culture and are melded by it' (2007: 140, 141).  Another significant aspect of Warner's work that is relevant here is his acknowledgment of evangelical heterogeneity and contrary voices within evangelicalism: 'evangelicals are invariably less homogenous, more capable of diverse, competing and even contradictory initiatives, than their advocates may wish or their opponents may fear' (2007: 142).  This is important because it demonstrates the need to be cautious of evangelicals' own discourse, whilst also revealing what may be an evangelical tendency to underplay narratives of difference and disagreement.  This resonated with my own experience of interviewing Tearfund staff and young adults who had participated in the Emerging Influencers programme, all of whom emphasised positive aspects over alternate narratives or critiques.

Herriot's work on the charismatic elements of the Church of England is also useful for contextualising Tearfund, and the spheres they operate in.  Herriot highlights a charismatic belief system that mirrors 'the contemporary cultural emphasis on the individual self', alongside values

that 'are in considerable agreement with many elements of contemporary culture' (2015: 188, 240). This focus on the self within charismatic evangelicalism has also been highlighted by Hunter who identifies a 'growing preoccupation' within evangelicalism with 'self and self-fulfilment, with feeling and emotion rather than [the] traditional doctrine of repentance' (summarised in Hunt 2005: 14). Herriot also highlights charismatic culture's compatibility with youth culture and its favouring of 'flexibility over structure, freedom over constraint, innovation over tradition, and spontaneity over restraint and rules' (2015: 170). Such factors mean that charismatic Christianity is often successful in attracting young people, as it resonates with the cultural influences and values that they experience in their everyday lives, and Herriot contends that it also provides young people with compelling narratives of personal and social identities (2015: 240). Herriot also charts an increased tendency among charismatic Anglicans to get involved in social action, but the continued difficulty posed by such concepts as 'justice' (2015: 220). Many charitable activities are thus based on:

> The belief that showing love and care to needy people is an evangelical demonstration of God's love for individuals. The underlying assumption appears to be that it is the individual who is the recipient of God's love, and that enhanced justice follows from the increasing number of individuals whose needs are met. This individualist perspective plays to the organisational strengths of the congregation within its local community, as well as to the traditional evangelical protestant emphasis on the relationship of the individual to God. It relieves the congregation of the need to engage in political activity aimed at reducing the structural causes of inequality (2015: 161).

Elisha has also highlighted, albeit in the context of the US, the evangelical concern with such values as 'charity, compassion and community empowerment' over social justice (2008: 446). The stress placed upon the church and local community over political advocacy on Tearfund's website would seem to demonstrate this, Tearfund's advocacy work being more understated for the reason that it might alienate supporters.

## Development context

There is a wealth of literature (as well as contributions from a practice perspective) that considers the role of international development charities, as well as a smaller amount that explores public engagement with international development issues. This is useful for exploring the second important context in which Tearfund and Christian Aid are operating. Firstly, the 'professionalisation, bureaucratisation, and rationalisation of the humanitarian "firm"' (Barnett and Weiss, 2011: 20) has been noted. Though this has longer historical roots, Barnett and Weiss argue this process has intensified post-1989, such that humanitarianism has become institutionalised. Hilton et al. have highlighted similarly that in the NGO world 'face-to-face member participation in voluntary associations has increasingly been displaced by a more distant, "cheque-book" relationship between NGOs and their supporters' (2011 in Darnton and Kirk 2011: 25). This means that the development sector has been institutionalised at the same time that many – though not all – modes of religious expression and political organising are becoming de-institutionalised. NGOs are consequently in the position of trying to engage publics with increasingly de-institutionalised religious and political identities and behaviours. Tearfund and Christian Aid's new initiatives should particularly be seen as examples of trying to create new ways to engage with a charity that don't fall into this 'cheque-book' model.

Public attitudes to international development have also been considered by several policy and practitioner reports. Darnton and Kirk (2011) identify that, despite such factors as the growth in social media, key 'moments' like Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History, and global commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, there has been little change or development to the UK public's attitudes to global poverty since the 1980s. A report written by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) calls this the Live Aid Legacy, contending that the doom-laden images of Africa provided by Live Aid 'maintain a powerful grip on the British psyche' (2002: 3). Other continuing effects of Live Aid, the report argues, include: an image of developing countries as full of helpless victims dependent on the

West; false senses of superiority and inferiority; notions of the powerful giver and grateful receiver; and confidence in out-of-date knowledge (VSO 2002). Many of these beliefs serve to create an image of global poverty that 'conveniently fails to take account of any Western culpability' (VSO 2002: 11). Recent statistics showed that 24% of the UK public reported feeling 'very concerned' about global poverty (Darnton and Kirk 2011: 6). This level seems to have remained relatively stable over the twenty-first century. However, DFID suggest that the number of 'active enthusiasts' for UK support for international development is decreasing, whilst the number of 'disapproving rejecters' is increasing, and that this has occurred since the recession (Darnton and Kirk 2011: 18).

The state of public engagement with development issues has been more strongly critiqued by critical development scholars such as April Biccum – who refers to the '"Hollywoodisation" of advocacy' and draws attention to development's incorporation into neoliberal discourse (2010: 1) – and Lilie Chouliaraki (2013). Chouliaraki highlights the emergence of a 'post-humanitarian age', characterised by the instrumentalisation of aid and development; the retreat of 'grand narratives' of solidarity; and the increasing technologisation of communications (2013: 2). Chouliaraki argues that this has resulted in a self-oriented morality, such that 'doing good' for the benefit of 'distant others' becomes combined with a logic of activism that 'feels good' (2013: 3-4). Chouliaraki suggests that motivation for solidarity is thus increasingly the emotional state of the Western donor or activist rather than the vulnerability of the non-Western suffering 'other' (2013: 17).

As a result, Tearfund and Christian Aid are operating in a complex development landscape. In particular, Tearfund and Christian Aid can be seen to be responding against the 'Live Aid legacy' by attempting to engage their supporters in the structural causes of poverty. As Ian from Tearfund expressed, Tearfund's recent strategy is to 'engage people more deeply with the causes of poverty', and move away from a 'transactional' relationship with supporters, while Dionne recognised that

agencies from the Global North sending aid to countries in the Global South won't break the cycle of poverty and spoke about a shift from charity to justice. However, this shift was understood to be an incomplete one. Ian, for example, explained that there was a tension between 'short-term fixes' and 'longer-term solutions' and that, whilst Tearfund was interested in the latter, the former - such as responses to disasters – were the 'easiest thing to raise money for'. As a result, Ian felt that, despite his desire for Tearfund to become more of a movement, the organisation was 'still very much in the charity model right now'. Tearfund's ideal way of operating was seen to be constrained by the fact that 'the UK public – and the majority of our Christian supporters – have in their heads more of a kind of charity mind-set, much more comfortable with us digging wells, giving out food, educating children' (Ian). Dionne also recognised the difficulty of engaging publics with structural issues, as messages of 'feeding a child so she survives' are most successful in fundraising terms.

The extent to which this post-aid shift has not been accomplished is revealed by elements of both organisations' online self-description. Christian Aid's director, for example, describes Christian Aid as crossing 'divides of religion, race and nationality, acting as *the good Samaritan*',[76] demonstrating an image of benevolent paternalism from the Global North (my emphasis). The history that Tearfund includes on its website, meanwhile, stresses particularly Tearfund's role in disaster response, stating that 'today Tearfund is among the UK's top ten emergency relief agencies' and highlighting their role in several 'famous' disasters.[77] As highlighted above, advocacy work receives only a small fraction of Tearfund's budget.

The experiences – and indeed emergence – of the Christian Aid Collective and Tearfund Rhythms should be seen through both of these contextual lenses. Thus, whilst Tearfund is operating in a clearly delineated evangelical sphere which is seen to offer many opportunities, Christian Aid is

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[76] http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/what_we_stand_for/Life_before_death.aspx [Accessed 01/02/17]
[77] http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/history/ [Accessed 01/02/17]

operating in a religious environment that feels more challenging.  The emergence of the Collective and Rhythms should also be seen as one element of a wider response to the call for changes to the international development sector.

## 6.4 Christian Aid and Tearfund's young adult engagement strategies: Tearfund Rhythms and the Christian Aid Collective

Christian Aid and Tearfund's young adult engagement strategies are multi-faceted, involving many different elements.  The central components are: face-to-face work with young adults; digital engagement; internships or programmes aimed at a small number of young adults per year; and trips abroad.[78]  To a significant extent these different elements are united by Tearfund and Christian Aid's new youth 'brands': Tearfund Rhythms and the Christian Aid Collective.  Tearfund Rhythms was established in 2012, describing itself, upon launching, as 'Tearfund's latest initiative to help people explore how to live a life of justice every day', through the encouragement of 'small, everyday steps to change the way we live'.[79]  Its motto is #livedifferent (sic).  The Christian Aid Collective was launched the same year, through a series of regional events throughout the UK aimed at young people aged 18-25.  It aims to 'wrestle with the big issues surrounding global poverty; driven to inspire mutual learning, collective passion and joint action in solidarity with the world's poor'.[80]

Before exploring the different strategies of these two initiatives, it is worth mentioning that the Christian Aid Collective is the outcome of several years of experimentation with young adult work by Christian Aid.  Chris recalled how, when he first joined Christian Aid as an employee, Christian Aid's 'youth brand' had two initiatives, Pressure Works and Pressure Points, the latter being a programme

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[78] Due to a lack of much discussion of the face-to-face component of this engagement, this is only outlined briefly here

[79] This was the description provided on Rhythms' first (now expired) website (http://village.rhythms-dev.handsupstaging.com/).  Both Rhythms and the Collective have been rebranded (in the case of Rhythms, more than once) over the course of this thesis.  Whilst frustrating from the point of view of a researcher, this is indicative of the importance of image for these organisations.

[80] See http://www.fusion.uk.com/blog/798/5-ways-to-get-involved-in-social-justice-at-university [Accessed 30/09/16].  Again, this is the initial description from a now expired website.

for Higher Education students.  After this, Christian Aid 'brought in this lady who was the head of product marketing for the Sony PlayStation brand'.  This led to a different approach, which was more creative and 'secular', heralding a 'brand called Ctrl.Alt.Shift'.  Ctrl.Alt.Shift placed emphasis upon working with the creative industries as a way of engaging young people with what Christian Aid do: 'we worked with a lot of art installations, we worked with the Baltic Art Gallery and Sadler's Wells Dance Theatre and we made big films with big British directors' (Chris).  Pippa, a Christian Aid employee, highlighted how 'it was definitely not aimed at the Christian youth audience' and was intentionally 'risky' with an approach of 'try anything, try anything and see what happens'.  The Ctrl.Alt.Shift chapter came to a close when Ctrl.Alt.Shift released a statement about Israel-Palestine that embroiled Christian Aid in controversy regarding its non-political stance: 'that brand had to stop very quickly after that' (Chris).

The Christian Aid Collective – the new 'brand' – should be understood in terms of its relationship to Ctrl.Alt.Shift, characterised by simultaneously trying to retain what Ctrl.Alt.Shift did well and, on the other, trying not to make the same mistakes as Ctrl.Alt.Shift, by repositioning the youth brand in terms of its relationship to Christian Aid.  Firstly, then, the Collective took on board some of the positive lessons learnt by this earlier initiative.  As Chris expressed, one of these lessons was on the importance of image:

> 'Cause young people today don't have brand loyalty, they will go…If they're passionate
> about development work, then they will go to whatever campaign or website that they
> perceive is going to do the most good, and part of that is if it's cool to be a part of it, so if it
> looks good, if the T-shirts look good, if ….if it's sort of cool to be a part of that movement.  So
> much of it is image.

Chris identified that Ctrl.Alt.Shift had 'looked like a brand you wanted to be a part of'.  This had developed from a strategy that established their competitors to not be other NGOs but brands such

as Nike and Apple, and a desire to build Christian Aid's youth movement into a similar 'lifestyle brand' (Chris).

Secondly, the Collective have ensured that they are more fully integrated as part of the wider Christian Aid organisation. This is partly due to a process of organisational re-thinking over the last few years as to whether Christian Aid is a Christian organisation or not. Pippa highlighted 'a bit of a stage where it [Christian Aid] was trying to work out whether it should remain very much a Christian organisation or whether in order to keep going and grow in supporters, that we needed to…I'm almost reluctant to say distance ourselves a little bit, but maybe even change the name - not focus so much on us being a Christian organisation'. The eventual outcome of these discussions was the decision 'that Christian Aid very much is a Christian organisation, that 99 or so per cent of our supporters are either based in churches or are very supportive of churches' (Pippa), which led to a return to focusing on church youth and Christian young adults. As a result of Christian Aid repositioning itself as a 'definitely' Christian organisation, Ctrl.Alt.Shift seemed less appropriate, 'something that no longer fitted in with what we were doing' (Pippa). The Christian Aid Collective is thus part of this new identity and the subsequent re-focus on 'church youth' (Pippa). Pippa explained how the Collective is 'unashamedly part of Christian Aid and trying to mirror what the wider organisation is doing but we hope we're doing it […] in a way that's modern and relevant'. Chris echoed this, stating that Christian Aid 'is built into the name', so that the Collective can 'be very much a part of Christian Aid and move forwards in that way'.

## Face-to-face work

Both Tearfund and Christian Aid value face-to-face work with young adults through church youth groups, student groups, and at festivals. For Tearfund, this is carried out centrally through their Youth and Emerging Generation Team, whilst for Christian Aid the 'hands-on relationship work with young people' (Pippa) is provided by the regional offices, the head office of Christian Aid being

responsible for 'producing the resources and the direction that we want the youth work to be going in'. The regional Christian Aid work with young adults is provided predominantly by Christian Aid Collective interns, who are seen to 'provide us with the ability to meet young people' (Ben).[81] Both Rhythms and the Collective have organised events for young adults, the Collective holding its first national weekend gathering in March 2014. They also encourage face-to-face interaction between their young adult supporters. Rhythms promotes the establishment of Rhythms Hubs, defined as 'local expressions and out-workings of the Rhythms community',[82] while the Collective provides Eat, Act, Pray resources (including recipes, discussion points and suggested actions) for young adults to use with friends or groups of which they are a part.[83] Chris stressed, however, that the Collective was not particularly supportive of separate local or student groups:

> If there's a certain amount of students within any campus that want to do development
> work, then it just feels reductive to have loads of different societies. Find them and support
> them as individuals and they'll go to their SCM group or their SPEAK group, and they will do
> stuff that you don't need them to be wearing the Christian Aid logo [for] or anything.

## Digital engagement

Whilst face-to-face work is an important part of Tearfund and Christian Aid's young adult engagement strategies, digital engagement is also significant, and demonstrates most clearly the desire of Rhythms and the Collective to appeal to a younger generation. A central part of their digital engagement strategy is separate websites for young adults, the main features of which are multi-authored, participatory blogs that are updated regularly. The websites are consciously branded towards younger people and demonstrate an aesthetic that mirrors social media platforms aimed at this age group, such as Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr. The images below demonstrate these similarities.

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[81] The internship is explained in more detail below.
[82] https://www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/295671/emerging-individuals-follow-up-coordinator [Accessed 02/01/17]
[83] http://www.christianaidcollective.org/eat-act-pray [Accessed 02/01/17]
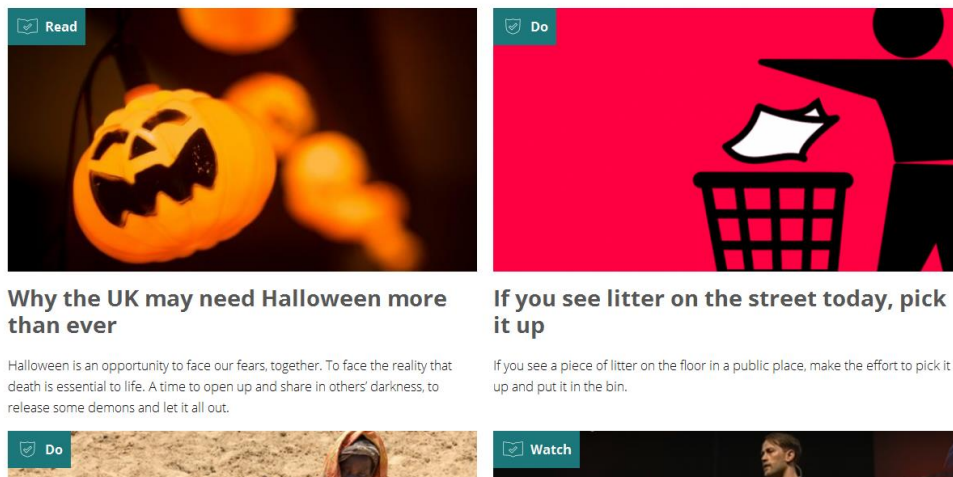
*A screenshot of the Tearfund Rhythms website [Accessed 31/10/16]*
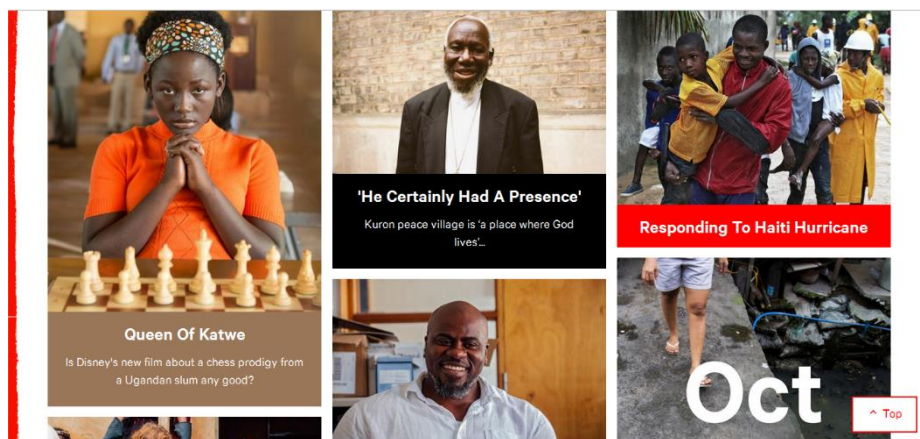


*A screenshot of the Christian Aid Collective website [Accessed 31/10/16]*
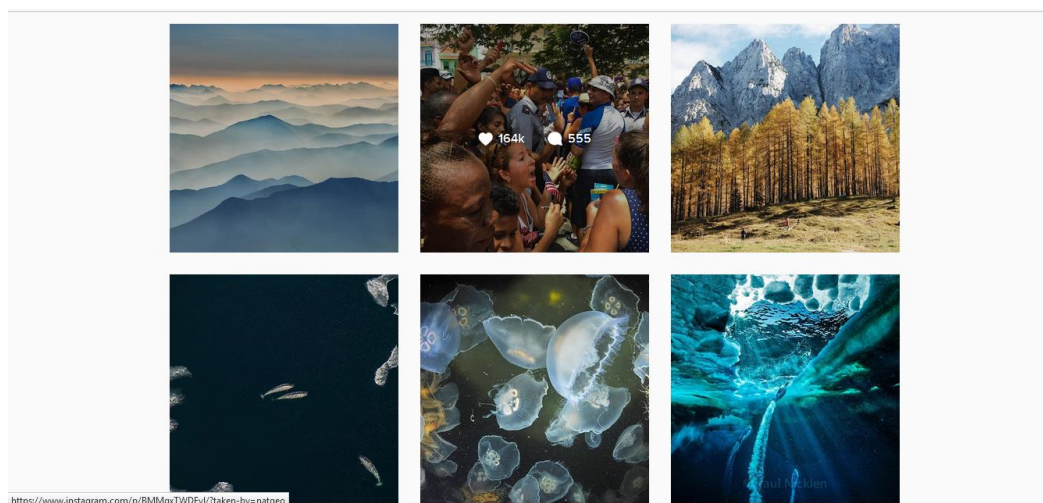


*A screenshot of National Geographic's Instagram account [Accessed 31/10/16]*

A central strategy in order to appear fresh and young is also appealing to young adults to contribute

content.  The Collective invites the participation of 'strong, passionate writers, photographers, film-

makers and generally creative young people to contribute to our Collective community',[84] while

Rhythms asks 'got a suggestion of a brilliant new action?  Or want to join the conversation by writing

an article about something you're passionate about?  We'd love to hear from you'.[85]  The Rhythms

site also links to a downloadable writing guide, which situates the Rhythms blog as a 'hub of brilliant

content produced by people like you; the dreamers, thinkers and activists of this community' and

provides a list of guidelines and tips.[86]  There is also a Rhythms app, which enables members to sign

up and complete designated actions, and the Christian Aid Collective launched an app for Lent 'that

asks people to do things every day- little acts of service and stuff and we ask them to share that on

social media' (Chris).[87]


Ben explained that the Collective's digital engagement was seen as a way to continue the

relationships established with young adults through the Collective's face-to-face work: 'that [the

website] is where we're regularly posting new things […] so that's how we can keep momentum

going'.  For Tearfund, the Rhythms app was seen as a way to operate in a late-modern context in

which 'the digital world augments people's lives'.  Kiera continued, however, that creating

'meaningful engagement online' was a challenge and that it was difficult to capture and maintain

people's attention in a media-saturated world.  The frequent rebranding of the Rhythms' website

might be seen as a response to the latter challenge, though may simultaneously contribute to it

appearing less meaningful.

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[84] http://www.christianaidcollective.org/got-longer.  [Accessed 31/08/15  (Link now expired)]
[85] https://lifestyle.tearfund.org/contribute/ [Accessed 30/09/16]
[86] Downloadable from https://lifestyle.tearfund.org/contribute/ [Accessed 30/09/16]
[87] An analysis of the content of the Collective and Rhythms' blog posts is included later in this chapter.

## Emerging Influencers and the Collective internship

Both Christian Aid and Tearfund also have specific programmes for a small number of young adults each year. It was young adults who had participated in these programmes that I decided to interview, as they were the most easily identifiable and had had the most contact with the organisations. By contrast, the online communities highlighted above were rather more nebulous.

### *Emerging Influencers*

The Emerging Influencers programme is a one-year mentoring scheme for young adults seen as 'exceptional individuals who have the potential to bring real change through their sphere of influence'.[88] This programme previously operated through invitation, whereby Tearfund selected and invited individuals they had come into contact with. This has changed in the last couple of years, however, to an application process. This has enlarged the size of the yearly cohort, expanding from a small group of around 12 per year to a larger group, of around 30. The people I interviewed had all taken part before this change of strategy and so had all been approached by Tearfund, having been abroad with Tearfund or done some work experience with them. Emerging Influencers sign a commitment which sets out 'the parameters and the hopes and the expectations of this mutually beneficial relationship', such as spending 'one or two hours a week' on their chosen project (Eli).

The Emerging Influencers programme encourages young adults to run a project during the year of participation. This project might include elements of fundraising, awareness-raising and/or campaigning. Phoebe explained that 'the whole idea of Emerging Influencers is to think about: what am I good at? What am I passionate about? Who is my sphere of influence? So then what can I do in that sphere of influence to make a difference? And they would encourage you to either create something yourself or to get involved with a current campaign that Tearfund are running'.

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[88] https://lifestyle.tearfund.org/emerginginfluencers/#video [Accessed 30/09/16]

Participants are supported through this programme by the Tearfund Youth and Emerging Generation Team.

Whilst the Emerging Influencers programme is largely self-led, Tearfund does organise two weekends away for participants, one at the beginning of the programme and one in the middle. The focus of these weekends is on 'how your faith relates to […] international justice' (Ben). Phoebe explained that there was little discussion of her project and instead 'the focus was "think about what you're good at, think about what your heart's for, think about what God's heart's for"', the predominant questions thus being 'who am I? What are my skills? Why is social justice important to us and to God?'. Eli highlighted that this took place in a generally 'conversational kind of environment'. The programme ends with a celebration day, during which, at the end of Phoebe's year, participants went round the Houses of Parliament.

### The Collective internship

The Christian Aid Collective has an internship programme, which employs, on a voluntary, expenses-paid basis, about fifteen interns per year. Interns are based in different regions of the UK to facilitate face-to-face encounters with local youth and student groups. Maddie explained that the internship role predominantly involved getting young people 'interested in global issues, campaigning issues, and to run workshops, do talks, to spread the word about it and try and get people passionate about wanting to stand up for things that are wrong in the world and make change'. Hannah reiterated the importance of establishing contacts with 'youth leaders […] and schools and colleges' and trying to 'connect with as many different groups as possible throughout the year […] and getting them involved in campaigning'. This was a fairly independent role, Hannah reflected, that depended a lot on the intern's ability to make connections.

All interns are given both a supervisor in their regional office and a mentor elsewhere in the organisation, who offered more 'emotional […] and pastoral' support (Thom). The internship starts with a two-week trip to a Christian Aid partner abroad, during which all the interns are together before being dispersed among Christian Aid's regional offices. There is training throughout the year, which includes preparation for the trip, de-briefing from the trip, and training on specific skills, such as public-speaking or media skills, or on particular issues, such as HIV/AIDS. The internship also involves two week's work experience in a department of the Head Office chosen by the intern.

### The trip abroad

Another key element of Christian Aid and Tearfund's young adult engagement strategy is the provision of opportunities to travel abroad with the organisation. The primary way to go abroad with Christian Aid, as a young adult, is through participation in the Collective internship, for which the trip abroad functions as a key motivation and incentive for young adult applicants. By contrast, Tearfund offers many trip abroad experiences which attract, though are not exclusively aimed at, young adults. Sarah estimated that in the year 2014-2015, the trips abroad sent around three hundred young people abroad to a Tearfund partner. Some of these trips are offered through the International Citizen Service (ICS). There are several programmes, ranging from a gap year programme which lasts for six months and short-term programmes which are between two and six weeks.[89]

## 6.5 Appealing to Millennials

The subsequent sections explore what I have identified as three 'guiding principles' that were either implicit or explicit in the young adult engagement strategies of Rhythms and the Collective. All of these should be seen as ways in which Tearfund Rhythms and the Collective imbue their strategies with values that are seen to appeal to Millennials and thus construct an imagined young adult

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[89] The trip abroad will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, as an interesting case study of young adult engagement.

subject that is attracted by community and opportunities to participate and use their voice, and is

interested in ways of living out their values in their everyday life.  I will outline these principles

briefly and then explore the way these guiding principles are enacted through the trip abroad.

Throughout, evidence will be provided regarding the internalisation of these guiding principles by

the young adults involved.  Attention will also be drawn to any critiques offered, though these are

noticeably less prevalent than was the case of the Wilberforce Academy and Leadership Programme

participants.  In addition, unlike the way in which Wilberforce Academy and Leadership Programme

participants' critiques were centred around several distinct key themes, the limited amount of

critiques provided by Collective interns and Rhythms Emerging Influencers were more disparate and

largely pragmatic rather than particularly ideological in nature.

## A. The ideal of a 'community' or 'movement'

Both the Collective and Rhythms encompass a rhetoric of a community or movement, which

corresponds to an observed strong generational attraction to such ideas (Thurston and ter Kuile

2015; Flory and Miller 2008).  This is self-evident in the name 'Collective' and also through Tearfund

Rhythms' first blog site,[90] entitled 'the Village Square', demonstrating a strikingly romanticised

notion of the community ideal (see Dawson, 2004: 76).  Ben and Chris explained that they also

described the Collective as a movement, Chris stating that 'we always called the Collective a

movement and hoped that we would be a movement'.  Such uses of the terms community and

movement should be understood, following Bauman, in terms of community as project, rather than

reality (2000: 169).  This was understood by both Christian Aid and Tearfund staff. Ben commented

on the challenge to 'start making it [the Collective movement] a reality', while Kiera reflected on the

use of 'community' as 'an aspirational word' for Rhythms.  Chris also highlighted that he didn't think

they had 'a lot of young people who'd say "oh yeah, I'm part of the Christian Aid Collective"', and

Maddie illustrated the intangibility of the Collective community when she stated that 'it's more of a

life attitude […] I think you can be part as much as you want'.  However, participating in the

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[90] The Rhythms website has undergone several changes in its short existence.

Collective internship did lead to a more tangible sense of community and several former Collective interns had established strong friendships with their cohort of participants.  Maddie, Hannah and Thom were all in touch with other Collective interns, Thom commenting that 'I'm still good friends with pretty much all of the interns.  I would still see them fairly regularly'.  Despite this, though, Collective interns demonstrated little sense of identifying with the Collective. Hannah, for example, stated that she supported Christian Aid but didn't feel so 'engaged with the Collective'.  Ben also explained that 'there isn't so much tangibility around who the Collective are and what the movement is'.  Partly, this demonstrates the difficulty in forging a separate or distinguishable identity when the Collective is so evidently connected to Christian Aid, a large and recognisable charity.[91]  Emerging Influencers experience less time face-to-face together than Collective interns.  Phoebe highlighted how only having two weekends away with the other Emerging Influencers meant that she didn't form particularly strong connections: 'I mean, yes, we have similar links and we're doing the same programme, but you know'.  The 'dispersed' nature of the Emerging Influencers was also highlighted by Eli.

Whilst Tearfund and Christian Aid had strong discourses organisationally of building a community or movement, several Collective interns had instead developed more of a rhetoric of building a network, voicing frustration that this had not been fully realised.  Hannah commented that 'that's maybe something they could improve on I think.  You've got this amazing network of people – the interns have gone on to all sorts of amazing stuff all over- in Christian organisations, in NGOs, and then in other organisations. Maybe harnessing that a bit more would be good'.  Maddie also felt that a more formal and intentional intern alumni community would be beneficial: 'I couldn't go and send emails to all the interns from the past six years or anything.  I think the youth team were working on something like that.  That would be nice, if they were'.  Thom highlighted as well how it would 'be useful from a work point of view [… to] build a kind of network of former interns'.  Though Ben

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[91] It should be noted that this is an intentional strategy, based on the experiences of Ctrl.Alt.Shift

expressed the view that building an 'intern alumni network' was a Christian Aid Collective goal, there was not a significant organisational rhetoric around this idea.

A couple of interviewees stated that, though the blogs are intended to be a participatory and multi-authored voice of the community, they in fact seemed rather homogenous, with a strong sense of a particular Rhythms or Collective voice.  Hannah, for example, stated: 'they kind of speak with the same voice – the Christian Aid Collective voice.  And because we're trying to build a movement of diverse people- young Christians all over, it's a collective, it's good to have different voices and different opinions'.  A website analysis of the content of the blogs did indeed find that a trip abroad with Tearfund or Christian Aid was the most prevalent topic for both blogs,[92] and it seems likely that these would demonstrate a particular perspective that corresponds with organisational understandings.

## B. Empowering young adults and becoming youth-led

A central aspect of the young adult engagement strategies of both Rhythms and the Collective is a focus on both empowering young adults, including an emphasis on the power that young adults have to influence their peers, and being more youth-directed and youth-led.  This stems from a key organisational view that Millennials desire to use their voice and seek out opportunities to be empowered as active citizens.

*Empowerment*

There was a significant rhetoric, particularly expressed by Rhythms, about the creation of an empowering platform for the engagement of young adults.  Kiera highlighted two key ways in which Rhythms hoped to be an empowering space.  Firstly, Rhythms focuses less than Tearfund as a wider

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[92] Blog analysis involved looking at all blog posts posted on the Rhythms and Collective websites between April 2012 and the end of 2013.  During this time, Rhythms published 225 blog posts and the Christian Aid Collective 101.  Of these, there were respectively thirty and twenty that specifically focused upon a trip abroad with the organisation.

organisation on requests for financial donations, which was seen to be inherently empowering for a less financially stable or affluent demographic.  Kiera explained:

> What Rhythms did is it created this really quite empowering place, where we were … the kind of asks that were coming or the invitation that was coming was things that anyone can do.  So we're not just asking you for your finances, be it through giving or traveling, but we are putting loads of things out there which you can respond to that is within your means, so you don't have to have income – or it's not solely income-based to be able to engage with a charity like us.

Rhythms thus hopes to empower young adults through offering forms of engagement that are deemed to be accessible and less alienating for the target demographic.

Secondly, Rhythms also hopes to enhance young adults' sense of capability and agency.  As Kiera expressed, 'one of our big hopes is that young people, young adults, feel really equipped to engage with the issue of justice and poverty'. She further added that 'it would be really exciting if young people, young adults, within the church were speaking and equipped to speak and empowered to speak on these issues and living them out'.  Kiera's correction of herself from 'young people' to 'young adults' in both these examples serves to confirm this sense of granting young people agency, the term 'young adults' attributing to youth a greater sense of capability.  Similarly, Rhythms hopes to challenge young adults not just to be 'passive recipients' but 'proactively doing something' themselves (Kiera).  There is also a focus on 'not trying to teach people information' but 'trying to teach people to think […] we're moving to a space where we're trying to say "how do we help you think critically? How do we get you asking the right questions?" and stuff like that' (Sarah).

Several Emerging Influencers highlighted feeling empowered as a result of their experience.   For Amelia, this was particularly connected with a sense of being given *permission* to do something:

I think a lot of time people- and particularly, I think particularly girls- are waiting for

permission.  So they're like 'oh, I have this really good idea, but, you know, can I?  Or should

I?' […] a lot of the time people are just waiting for someone to say 'yes, go for it, you can do

it'.  Um…and I think that was really good, because Tearfund just came right up to me and

were like 'we believe in you, go for it, you can do it'

Phoebe also felt empowered by the programme encouraging her to 'just do something about' the

things that she cared about 'rather than just talk about it the whole time', which she felt 'changed

me' and 'grew me'.  Phoebe also appreciated the independent nature of the programme: 'It was

very much "go, think about something, do it, we'll be alongside you, but we're actually not going to

do it for you, we're not going to create a project just so we can say all of our emerging influencers

did something" so I really enjoyed that aspect of it'.  The independence of the programme was also

appreciated by Eli, who felt he benefited from learning from his failures and successes.  As Amelia

perceptively highlighted, empowerment does seem however to be a slightly gendered discourse,

something that emerged from interviews with Wilberforce Academy participants as well.  This might

reflect an evangelical context, in which women's roles are sometimes minimal or clearly delineated,

but may also reflect a wider societal context.

Others, however, struggled with the self-led nature of the initiatives.  Ben, for example, felt that

'people possibly didn't do as much' in the Emerging Influencers programme as a result, while Phoebe

described her slightly disappointed realisation that 'the level of involvement that Tearfund would

have in my project [was] a lot smaller that I actually thought they would have'.  In the context of the

Collective internship, Maddie commented on the 'difficulty with it being very much under your own

steam to generate the work and connections'.  Thus, there was also a desire for support, alongside

satisfaction in acting independently and in a self-led fashion.

Empowerment seems to have replaced the traditional focus on leadership as a discourse, despite the occasional comment, such as Pippa mentioning young people becoming 'leaders in the future'. Tearfund demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of leadership than CARE and Christian Concern, and highlighted the potential to be a leader in many different spheres of life.  Kiera, for example, commented on the hope to have 'people […] leading in their spheres on thinking about this, so if that's in business, or if it's in the church or if it's in the home'.  Kiera also recognised that the term 'leader' could be alienating to young adults and that, whilst the Emerging Influencers programme was about harnessing young leaders, 'we didn't want to call [it] a young leaders programme, because we didn't think everyone identifies themselves as a leader'.  This would resonate with Murdo's scepticism of the Wilberforce Academy's use of the term 'leaders'.  However, as Kiera's comment makes clear, the Emerging Influencers programme *is* still about encouraging young leaders, but has attempted to 'market' this more accessibly.  It is not just a change in discourse though, as it also contains a more grassroots narrative of change, particularly in the idea of 'the power of the peer', which heralds a different vision of influence to that of occupying high-level positions.

*The 'power of the peer'*

Not only does Rhythms hope to empower the young adults it comes into contact with, it also hopes that this will lead to a ripple effect of influence through the 'power of the peer'.  Kiera asserted that 'we have a strong belief that the demographic that we are talking to […] have all the ability and creativity to live differently and make a difference, and they are just – or probably much more- inspiring to their peers than we ever will be'.  Kiera elaborated further on her 'belief that they will lead and they will lead in their area, and so actually, you know, if other people want to follow in they can do that through their peers, rather than us having to bang a drum that God cares about the poor'.  The belief in the 'power of the peer' is particularly manifest in the Emerging Influencers programme, with its aim to support individuals to galvanise and inspire their 'sphere of influence'. The Christian Aid Collective also places emphasis on peer-to-peer influence, particularly in the

Collective internship, much of the work interns do being centred around them influencing their peers, or those just slightly younger than them. Chris highlighted that 'peer-to-peer education and stuff is better than old people coming in' (Chris). Central to this is an *imagined young adult subject* who is most influenced by their friends and the peers around them. Also important is a narrative of change that places emphasis upon individual, relational influence, rather than strategic notions of influence. This notion of influencing those around you – particularly prevalent within the discourse of Rhythms – may correspond with Tearfund's charismatic evangelical positioning, a worldview that places much emphasis on ideas of personal transformation (see, for example, Herriot 2015).[93] It is also perhaps a product of what has been recognised as an increased emphasis on ordinariness, with Tatarchevskiy drawing attention to how 'the internet often incorporates "ordinary" citizens into the same roles celebrities would have played in the past: drawing attention to a particular cause, making non-profit organisations seem legitimate and their claims visible' (2011: 302).

Tearfund Emerging Influencers particularly demonstrated the internalisation of this discourse. Eli commented that 'I know that on one of the weekends away we were told that 16-25 year olds are statistically most influenced by other 16-25 year olds' and continued that he felt that 'Tearfund were trying to reach other people through us, but also at the same time invest in us'. Amelia similarly stated that one of the things that she liked about the programme was the way 'it inspired… student-aged people to inspire others and really invested in individuals, realising that actually for 18-25 year olds, their biggest influences are their peers and so no matter how hard a big charity might try to be cool, and, you know, reach out for students and young people, actually people are going to listen to their friends'. Amelia valued learning how to 'encourage other people to do things that they're passionate about'. The 'power of the peer' was thus something highly understood by Emerging Influencers, demonstrating Rhythms' success in creating a clear and persuasive narrative.

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[93] Whilst this focus on the individual has been identified as a specific feature of charismatic evangelicalism, it is worth mentioning that the influence of the charismatic movement has been widely felt within evangelicalism as a whole, meaning that this may in fact be a more prevalent tendency within evangelicalism generally.

*Youth-delivered content and becoming youth-led*

Empowerment and peer-to-peer influence are partly achieved by a strong emphasis on content

produced by the target demographic, particularly on the Rhythms and the Collective websites.  Kiera

explained that young adults are 'writing a lot of the articles' for the Rhythms blog and that the

intention of the website was to 'host a conversation that is generated from, by the audience' and is

'the voice of the demographic'.  This was felt to enhance a feeling of empowerment because the

content is 'coming from them'.  The Collective website also has a lot of contributions from people in

the target demographic and Chris highlighted the desire to 'invite artists and writers and people who

are creators – I guess young creators – to create the stuff for us, rather than dictating it'.  There was

also an intention, from the Christian Aid Collective particularly, to see young adults have an

influence in the wider organisation.  Ben and Chris talked about the desire to establish a youth

panel, whilst Pippa commented that 'what would really be ideal is to have young people sitting on

the board of Christian Aid'.


However, when it came to whether Emerging Influencers and Collective interns felt they had a voice

in influencing the direction of the organisations more widely, the evidence was less clear.  Both Eli

and Phoebe commented that they didn't have opportunities to give feedback anonymously about

the Emerging Influencers programme, while Maddie considered that it would have been difficult to

make her views on the Collective internship 'heard much higher up, with senior management'.

Maddie continued that, as a result, she didn't really feel like the interns had a role in shaping the

direction of the Collective: 'in terms of long-term strategic goals of the Collective, I don't know'.

Hannah, when asked whether she felt she'd had a voice in Christian Aid more broadly, responded:

> I don't know if I used my voice.  I don't know.  Maybe not so much, but I think they were just
>
> launching it and they knew the direction they wanted it to go in.  I don't know.  They
>
> probably had feedback from us having done the internship and stuff that they might use to

improve stuff.  I don't know.  […] I don't think I really did that, but I don't know if that was

me, rather than them.  I don't know.

Interestingly, Hannah here places the focus on herself, reflecting more on the fact that she didn't

use her voice than on the seemingly limited opportunities she was offered to provide feedback.  It is

possible that a similar process is present here to the accounts of Leadership Programme

participants, involving a disinclination to criticise a programme that has provided valued work

experience.

There were also examples of organisational discourse in which the emphasis slipped from focusing

upon young people taking the initiative to instead positioning the charity in a paternalistic role.

Pippa, for example, stated 'we would like to hope that […] they know that if something's happening

in the world, they could- they'll get some information from us that will help explain it and yes, just

that we can help them with their thinking and just help them become active citizens'.  The focus

here on 'helping' young adults is in slight contradiction with alternative goals such as 'empowering'

or 'challenging', and places Christian Aid in a role of disseminating certain ways of understanding

current events.  In this emphasis upon the dissemination of information, the Christian Aid Collective

positions itself in a role of helping to form 'dutiful', rather than 'actualising' citizens, to use Bennett

et al.'s (2011) terminology.

## C. A 'politics of the everyday'

A central facet of both Tearfund Rhythms and the Christian Aid Collective's ideology is that politics is

not just something that happens when you vote or visit your MP (though there may be some

emphasis on this), or something otherwise connected with the parliamentary political realm, but is

embedded in the decisions and choices of individuals' everyday lives.  Whilst these acts are not

explicitly stated to be political, they are granted agency as acts that have the capacity to bring about

change.  Lifestyle change was something particularly emphasised by Tearfund Rhythms, as Sarah explained:

> I'd expect them to change some of their lifestyle habits, so really simple things – buying more Fairtrade, and being aware of how their consumer habits will impact.  So people will hopefully shop in charity shops more, cycle more, recycle more, because they are aware of the impact of the choices that they make.

For the Christian Aid Collective, lifestyle change was also seen as important, though more alongside other things, such as awareness and campaigning.  As Pippa expressed, the Collective's ideal supporter is 'somebody who really engages with the issues and wants to find out, but also you know is willing to take actions, is willing to stand up and speak out when they see an injustice, but also very much that they reflect that in their own life, in the way they behave or lifestyle actions and choices as well'.  Pippa went on, however, to comment that 'the way I consume, the way I choose to live my life, the way I travel, it all influences'.  The greater focus on a politics of the everyday demonstrated by Rhythms should at least partially be understood in relation to the charismatic evangelical context that Rhythms operates in, which focuses upon the self as an 'actualising' identity.

The politics of the everyday was also clearly internalised by my interviewees. Amelia, for example, stated that 'everyone thinks if you want to change the world, you have to move to sub-Saharan Africa and make your own clothes and live with orphans.  You don't.  You can change just by using your wallet wisely'.  She elaborated on how the everyday context was full of opportunities and possibilities to embody a particular set of values and live out politics:

> It's this idea of what you do makes a difference and where you invest your money and where you buy your clothes and where you buy your food and what you eat and how much you drive- just little things- and everyone's like 'well, one person couldn't make a difference'

and you're like 'well, try'. So I think the ordinary person can start changing habits, little

things like, you know, Meat Free Mondays is a thing- so don't eat meat on a Monday- or

reduce your carbon footprint by taking the bus instead of driving. […] It's like 'actually, these

things make a difference'. And give your money to charities that you believe in and which

have integrity. And campaign. And petition. And write to your MP.

The focus on everyday life and small actions brings together a set of several key ideas: firstly, an

emphasis on being conscious of the 'Other' in everyday decision-making; secondly, living out faith in

the everyday; thirdly, accessibility; and finally, the creation of habits. These represent the ways in

which this focus was explained and understood, especially by Rhythms. The focus on the everyday

should also, however, be firmly situated within more general trends towards this kind of activity

(see, for example, Barnett et al. 2011), and towards this orientation (for example, Giddens 1991).

### Consciousness of the other

A consciousness of the other was a key way in which the everyday was politicised. Whilst the trip

abroad enables actual physical contact with the distant impoverished and marginalised other, this

strategy encourages instead a form of 'thought' connection, in which this distant other is brought

nearer and into young adults' everyday decision-making:

> So having a generation of young adults that are living differently and living consciously of the
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> other and of the person- so thinking about them on their Monday morning, thinking about
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> the people around the world that we're connected to and even dependent on- they made
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> our clothes, they, you know, harvested the food that we're going to eat, and that that is
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> feeling really connected (Kiera).

This mental connection forged with others renders the impact of the action less important than the

consciousness involved in making a decision: whether or not the action actually makes a difference,

the notion of thinking about the planet and the less privileged in a single moment's decision is

conceptualised as significant. This corresponds with the argument of Luke Bretherton, a political

theologian, that small actions like purchasing Fairtrade products – which have been critiqued by other theorists (see, for example, Chouliaraki 2013) – enable 'albeit in limited ways ordinary political actors to express neighbour love and pursue a just and generous global good' (2010: 176).  In Chapter 8, I will engage with these ideas more critically.

*Faith in the everyday*

Kiera, explaining the thinking behind Rhythms, stated that the focus had become creating a 'framework to join up some dots between faith, justice and lifestyle' and that Rhythms believes 'really strongly in a link between Jesus, justice and lifestyle, so how does our everyday choice – how does our everyday lifestyle impact those in poverty and how do we, as people of power, live differently to make that better and fairer and more just?'.  The focus on the everyday – and on everyday decisions and actions – thus also becomes an active embodiment of faith.  Kiera, for example, reflecting upon faith in her everyday life, said that it meant that she would 'try and think of the other as much or before I think of myself and that would mean, that would have an impact on how I shop, on how I consume, on how I use my money, how I use my resources, on how I open my house or not'.  McGuire has highlighted how evangelicals 'exert considerable effort to sacralise mundane space and time' in order to 'make the sacred present and accessible within the everyday' (2008: 77).  Invoking faith in the processes of everyday decision-making can be seen in this light.

*Accessibility*

The focus on small actions was also partly a result of trying to make engagement more accessible for the target demographic.  Ben spoke about the focus on small actions being a result of the financial instability of the young adult age group: 'I guess it's something they can actually do, whereas if you ask financially, it's not as easy, so there tends to be a focus on actions'.  Focusing on Christian Aid's suggested actions to combat climate change that were specific for young adults – eating less meat, eating less dairy, cycling and buying no plastic or nothing new – Ben reflected that 'especially for young people it [lifestyle action] does play a part'.  Kiera similarly stated that lifestyle action 'is a

really accessible way for people to engage with these issues'. Kiera explained that the focus on such things took Rhythms away from the 'traditional […] asks that charities or international NGOs or people like us ask young adults and that is primarily money-focused, so either you say "give to us financially, 'cause we need to generate income" or "go on an overseas trip with us", which is also a lot of money'. Consequently, Rhythms was seen as providing '"an alternative way to engage" [the words of a research consultant] with a charity like us'.

## The creation of habits

There was also stress on the beneficial effects of regularly repeating small actions, and the creation of habits was a key element of Tearfund's understanding of how lifestyle change could have a wider impact. For Kiera, the rationale for focusing on everyday actions was less about the significance of a single action, but a cumulative effect whereby 'small steps in your everyday […] build sort of habits of righteousness, or righteous rhythms, or things that bring disciplines into our lives that help us become the kind of people that help love the world better, or change the world'.

## The 'politics of the everyday' as a change-making activity

This creation of habits was seen to have the agency to effect change, Kiera continuing that 'if we repeatedly do these, we're building rhythms in our life that impacts global poverty'. The notion of lifestyle change having the ability to bring about wider change was also stressed by Ian, who stated that they needed 'people who want to change their lifestyles in order to change the world and to change the system around them, the economic system, the political system'. Sarah also highlighted this link between lifestyle change and changing the world:

> What the world needs isn't a bunch of people just putting their hand in their pocket and
> giving some money to charity. The world doesn't just need some tick box 'I've done my
> good deed for the day'. The world needs people to live differently. If we're consuming at a
> rate as if we had five worlds, or whatever it is, and we only have one, and if we're expecting
> to continue to raise people to a higher standard of living, then that requires some sacrifice

and some different thinking about…So I think what Tearfund are trying to do is to create a

community and a movement of people who are committed to pursuing a just, and fair world

and are prepared to live differently to make that happen and so a lot of that is how do we

develop great lifestyle habits and rhythms in our lives? […] How do we think about what we

consume and what we buy to eat, to wear, the fact that our mobile phones are made from

materials that are trafficked and have the finger prints of slavery on them?

Whilst the creation of an ethical lifestyle was seen to be a way to help solve some of the world's

problems, it was also conceptualised as a process of personal growth and transformation.  Sarah

highlighted that 'if you want to change the world, you first have to become a sort of person who can

change the world, so I think the focus has become a lot more in recent years about what person are

you becoming'.  She continued: 'we're interested in discipleship, what are you doing with your life

and how are you doing it?  What are your doing with your thought life? What are your doing with

your prayer life?  How are you doing with your consumerism life?'.  Here, the young adult subject is

considered as one ripe for this sort of personal development, and the creation of certain rhythms of

life is part of this process.  Again, this can clearly be situated within the therapeutic, self-oriented

culture of charismatic Christianity, even if the process of self-making endorsed by Rhythms is also to

some degree other-orientated.  The Collective's comparative lack of focus on 'becoming' can

perhaps be understood in relation to the categories of Christianity suggested by Heelas and

Woodhead, Christian Aid's traditional supporter basis fitting into the category of 'congregations of

humanity', which are the least subjectivised, with attention being directed primarily outwards.

Charismatic evangelical churches by contrast are identified as 'congregations of experiential

difference', focusing more upon the individual (2005: 18).


As stated above, the focus on the politics of the everyday was largely expressed by my young adult

interviewees, especially Emerging Influencers.  The main criticism of this focus on the everyday was

offered by Hannah, who, speaking about her experience of the Collective internship, expressed that she didn't particularly witness people engaging in a deeper way with structural issues: 'I want to see people engaging more in changing systems and using their faith to engage with politics and corporations and asking questions of them, not only in giving money and fundraising and praying and all that'.  For Hannah, the forms of action suggested by the Collective did not seem to go far enough to create wide-scale change.

The 'politics of the everyday' largely, however, provided a form of effective engagement for a group of Millennials that were disenchanted with parliamentary and party politics.  Thom, for example, perceived the voting system to be 'very strange', while Eli considered that 'I actually … I think in some ways imbibe the general consensus of our generation.  That is, I personally feel disenchanted with politics and so I do not at all identify with any political party'.  Maddie also commented that she was 'generally cynical and unconvinced by many, many politicians'.  In this way, and similarly to the previous chapter, my research participants did not find their political identity in party politics.  They instead demonstrated some correspondence with Bang's Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens in that 'they do not engage primarily in order to give voice to repressed interests and identities, but rather in order to help to empower people and *develop their own identities* as well as their capacities to act in solving common concerns' (Bang 2009: 11, my italics).  There were also further similarities with the Everyday Maker, such as thinking globally and acting locally, and being motivated less out of a sense of duty or to gain influence but to self-develop (Bang 2009: 131).  However, I found little evidence of 'pleasure orientated and … fun-seeking' forms of civic engagement (Bang 2004 in Marsh et al. 2007: 102).

## D. Guiding principles in action- a case study of the trip abroad

The trip abroad, though not initially intended as a subject of analysis, emerged throughout the interviews as a significant area of interest, and one in which several of the guiding principles

identified in the previous few sections came to be enacted.  Firstly, the trip abroad was conceptualised as an opportunity to facilitate for young adults a personal, embodied encounter with the impoverished Other, which was seen to have the potential for personal transformation among the young adults, ideally expressed later in the enacting of a politics of the everyday.  Secondly, the experiences of the trip abroad provided speaking and blogging material for participating young adults.  This links into the participatory ethos of Rhythms and the Collective, empowering and enabling young adults to speak confidently about a subject that they might otherwise feel ill-equipped to engage with.  It is also worth briefly mentioning that the trip abroad functions as a major incentive for Christian Aid Collective intern applicants. As Maddie stated, the trip abroad 'sold the internship' to her.  The trip abroad also represents one of the major ways in which young adults come into contact with Tearfund's work, as they seek out a Christian 'gap year' experience.  Many Emerging Influencers are people who had previously been on a Tearfund trip abroad.

*Personal transformation through encountering the impoverished Other*

People who had travelled abroad with either Tearfund or Christian Aid placed considerable emphasis on the significance of a personal encounter with poverty.  Maddie, for example, stated that they 'saw real, real extreme poverty', while Sarah recalled how 'poverty hit me flat on the face […] It shocked me and I think it really grabbed my heart'.  This personal encounter with poverty was seen to be crucial in leading to a change of attitudes.  Sarah asserted: 'I think the personal connection takes it away from being someone else's problem and makes it yours, because as soon as it's your friend who has HIV, as soon as it's your friend who doesn't have electricity, I think it blows your worldview open a little bit and it's impossible to ignore'.

The trip abroad, through a direct personal encounter with poverty, was thus seen to lead to personal transformation, a discourse that was also found to be central in Howell's (2012) study of Christian short-term mission.  Maddie, for example, stated that the trip abroad was 'very impacting in that it

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was so kind of extreme you kind of come back and you're like "I don't want to be the same, I want…something has to change"'.  Eli commented very similarly 'I was quite determined that I actually want to – I do want to change, I do want to see there being changes in my life, I do want to alter my mind-set, yeah, try and make sort of difference, or have some sort of impact in the long term'.  The impactful nature of the trip was also highlighted by Pippa, Christian Aid's Church Youth Manager, who commented that 'most of our interns are really switched on to the issues anyway, but then when they go out overseas somewhere and visit a Christian Aid partner as well, that's again another moment where you can really see the work in action.  It would be great if everybody could experience that'.  In Tearfund's discourse particularly this fed into their strong focus on lifestyle action.  Kiera hoped that 'people will be changed for their life really.  And so an experience with serving and working with a local partner overseas will be something that sticks with them when they return back and is outworked then in their lifestyle and career choices and values and where they spend their money'.  Sarah expressed similarly that she hoped that the trip 'shifts some attitudes, some behaviours'.

*Strengthening the voices of young adults*

As well as the trip abroad being seen as something to facilitate personal transformation, it also became something that strengthened the voice of young adult participants, with a focus upon telling the story of their experience.  This was particularly evident in the case of Christian Aid Collective interns.  Ben, for example, felt that the Christian Aid trip abroad had been 'massively useful': 'it's what I spent eight out of ten months talking about pretty much […] It wouldn't be the same without it'.  Thom reflected similarly that 'it was great to bring back stories from people that we'd met.  I used those stories at basically every talk I did- and the photos of me with people'.  Maddie similarly highlighted how, due to the trip, 'you don't have to come up with stories when you get back; they speak for themselves', while Hannah spoke about the trip being 'really invaluable because you see it and you can show pictures of it – "I went here and did this and saw this stuff"'.

The trip abroad thus enabled young adults' further participation in the organisation as active speaking and writing participants. The personal experience of poverty was seen to lend 'authority' to the spoken and written reflections of the Christian Aid Collective interns, as Ben expressed: 'it gives you also the authority when you go to speak that you're not talking about generic "I've read a trip report and turned it into a talk"; you're talking about "here, I was living here, these are the people I met and spent time with and shared food with"'. Thom stated, similarly 'I think if you've been out there and met someone, your audience tends to listen to you a bit more rather than if you've not experienced it first-hand'. For Hannah, this led to a sense of confidence, enabling her to answer 'a few awkward questions' because she had 'actually witnessed that work first hand'; 'we knew a bit more about it – *we'd been there*' (my italics), she continued.

The extent to which a two-week trip can really give someone 'authority' to speak on such a complex topic is, of course, a moot point, but what is important is that the trip, from initially providing young adults with a new and novel experience, becomes a way to further facilitate their participation, and in turn, through the emphasis on peer-to-peer learning and interaction, engage others in participation with the organisation. As Thom highlighted, the stories were used in the UK 'to encourage people to give more money, in some cases, or to campaign on a certain issue, to fill in a campaign action'. Hannah also commented that the process of 'sharing those stories' was used in order to encourage different groups she met to get 'involved in campaigning'.

These accounts correspond with Petersen and O'Flynn's findings, in the context of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and neoliberal subject formation, that acts of service are increasingly orientated towards the individual's personal development (2008: 203). They also share similarity with the study of international volunteering by Baillie Smith and Laurie, which suggests that there is a common process of 'simultaneously constructing the South in terms of continued "need" and defining

international volunteering in terms removed from development and centred on the *needs and experiences of the volunteer'* (2011: 549, my italics).  A common trend identified – which resonates with my own findings – is that participants in international volunteering are encouraged to educate the broader public on development issues based on their first-hand experience (2011: 553).  In another article that explores the specific experiences of young people who volunteered abroad with a British Christian mission organisation, Baillie Smith et al. argue that the promotional focus of international volunteering has increasingly become skills development rather than spiritual or material service (2013: 128).  Baillie Smith and Laurie go on to critically identify the Global South as having become imagined as 'a global playground in which … citizenship can be exercised, obscuring the unequal patterns of global interdependence that define the contours of that space' (2011: 555), while Howell has suggested that if an overseas encounter is framed in relational, personal terms it can be more difficult for young volunteers to see the structural and historical forces at work (2012: 24).

Among my own research participants, however, there were some critical voices regarding the trip abroad.  Ben, for example, was unsure whether the impact of the trip abroad for Christian Aid Collective interns out-weighed the financial costs of this activity: 'is it worth sending 20 people abroad for two weeks?  That's a big cost.  […] Is the impact that that's having, is it really worth it?'.  Ben continued: 'would it be it be better to not have the trip and have two more interns?  Like, what will deliver more impact?  […] I really don't know the answer'.  Hannah confessed to occasionally feeling uncomfortable on the trip: 'you kind of think is it worthwhile them spending all that money on sending all these young, white people out to go in groups.  And I think for some of it we did feel a bit uncomfortable, some of us, sometimes, turning up to these communities- a big van of young white people'.

The existence of these – albeit limited – critical voices stands in slight opposition to the findings of Baillie et al. that many young evangelical overseas volunteers exhibited development imaginaries that remained 'rooted in discourses of care, pity and charity, and Orientalist ideas of the global South as absence' (2013: 131).   Eli, for example, consciously tried 'not to project my own western ideology on to that people', thus demonstrating an awareness of his own particular positioning and standpoint, and how this might affect his own judgement.  This also demonstrates an understanding of cultural difference, which Howell's study of overseas short-term mission suggests is often undermined by an alternate focus on 'the transcendence of culture' (2012: 143).  However, there were only a few examples of the kind of discomfort expressed by Eli and Hannah.  A more common discourse involved praise of either Christian Aid or Tearfund's development practice.

## 6.6 Effectiveness

The above exploration of the guiding principles embedded in Tearfund and Christian Aid's youth strategies reveals both a conscious response to generational change and that these ideas were largely internalised by participating young adults, and subjected to limited critique.  From one perspective (another more critical view shall be offered in Chapter 8 when I consider the long-term sustainability of these initiatives), this suggests that Tearfund and Christian Aid are experiencing considerable success in engaging Millennials in a way that resonates with them, and which seems to correspond well with generational attitudes, behaviours and values.  Interviewees demonstrated considerable 'brand loyalty' towards the charity they had been involved in, despite organisational views that there is much distrust of 'Big Charity'.  Both Hannah and Thom praised Christian Aid's development practice, while Amelia claimed to be 'really passionate' about Tearfund's vision and Phoebe identified as having been a 'huge fan' of Tearfund from a young age.  However, there was also some evidence of bureaucratic constraints on the effectiveness of Christian Aid and Tearfund's activities.  The comprehensive responses of Tearfund and Christian Aid to generational change can partly be attributed to their status as large NGOs with a considerable annual income.  However, it is

their large, bureaucratic nature that in fact may sometimes constrain their objectives when it comes to engaging Millennials.

This was especially the case for Christian Aid, which faced particular difficulties in the development of the Collective due to Christian Aid's institutionalised, bureaucratised nature. For example, the regional distribution of Christian Aid's offices meant that Christian Aid Collective interns possessed what Chris saw as a 'slightly uncomfortable dual identity' as a result of being 'part of both the regional team and the Collective'. More importantly, Christian Aid interviewees highlighted the difficulties the Collective faced in terms of exercising autonomy as a result of being part of such a large charity, and the consequent high levels of bureaucracy. Chris commented that 'there's a lot of bureaucracy to get through' and that any significant change involves going through 'so many processes […] to do it'. For Chris, it was important that the Collective could be 'more nimble', and, in order to achieve this fluidity and flexibility, he commented that 'we need to free ourselves a bit from the bureaucratic restrictions of being part of such a large organisation'. Ben also spoke of the fact that being part of such a large NGO meant you were not always 'in the loop on certain things which we'd hope to be and that obviously means that people aren't thinking of us when certain things come up, so yeah, I do think that work needs to be done on that to improve our- people's awareness of us'. Maddie also identified the difficulty of being 'heard much higher up, with senior management' and highlighted, similarly to Ben, a lack of awareness within the organisation at large of the Collective, and specifically the internship programme: 'I remember that within the whole organisation not many people that worked for Christian Aid really knew about the internship […] it felt like they had no idea that we were interns and we were a thing'.

In addition, the changing nature of development work means that an NGO like Christian Aid increasingly receives funding from government and works alongside the private sector. Pippa

highlighted that as a result of such changes Christian Aid had lost some of the 'radical spark' it possessed in the 1950s and 60s and was instead increasingly seen as a 'solid, reliable, trustworthy organisation'. Whilst Chris saw the potential advantages of such an approach, he also realised that it precluded 'coming out and naming and shaming' and felt that the organisation needed 'to become so much more radical again', in terms of being 'able to speak with conviction of what we see in the world', feeling that Christian Aid was 'so meek now'.

Furthermore, both organisations shared a significant tension between serving, equipping and empowering Millennials and maintaining the wider organisation. This was expressed and manifested in different ways by the two organisations.

## Christian Aid

The tension between equipping young adults and maintaining the organisation was particularly apparent in Christian Aid and should be understood partly in relation to Christian Aid's religious context, which means that many of Christian Aid's supporters are older people. The ageing nature of Christian Aid's core supporters led to Chris conceptualising the Collective's role as 'safeguarding the future of the organisation'. A need for younger supporters means that the focus for Christian Aid cannot solely be on empowering young adults. Having learnt from the experiences of Ctrl.Alt.Shift, which did not do 'anything to increase Christian Aid's…You now, it was people who were with us, but that didn't translate into a supporter journey' (Chris), this notion of a *supporter journey* had emerged as a key organisational discourse. Pippa explained 'we talk within the organisation quite a lot about supporter journeys and where we've engaged young people or where we engage anybody at any stage and then how we take them on a journey so that they're supporters of Christian Aid for the whole of their lives'. Pippa continued 'from an organisational point of view, we would love to see that in terms of people regularly supporting us, either financially or in terms of our campaign actions and things like that'. For Pippa, however, it was also clear that

financial gain for the organisation was less a central objective than a pleasing side-effect: 'the primary objective of what we do is not to fundraise with young people, it's more about education and action, but when you educate and give people actions to do, fundraising does come in, so we are seeing an increase in fundraising as well'.

The need for *supporters* conflicted several times in my interviews with Christian Aid staff, both with discourse surrounding youth engagement and discourse around the organisation 'looking to work themselves out of a job basically' (Thom).  The former tension is shown clearly in this comment by Pippa:

> We do tell people about situations in the world and what Christian Aid is doing, but we want them to be thinking 'this isn't right, and I can do something about it', *not us telling them that they need to do something about it*.  We can show them ways that they can take action, but we want them to have that light bulb moment and *then they'll really be engaged with the work that we're doing.*  (My italics)

The latter tension seems to be a point of organisational discord.  Whilst Chris, despite his hope that interns 'retain a love for Christian Aid', reflected that 'all's that important is that this happens – that, you know, massive inequality and poverty in the world gets beaten […] maybe just we aren't the right […] maybe there are other people that can do it better', Pippa, by contrast highlighted how 'young people don't tend to just have one charity that they're interested in- it's the issues that they're interested in so whoever's working on those issues is the charity that they will be involved with.  So keeping young people's attention I guess […] that's a challenge'.

Discussion by Christian Aid staff about the Collective internship also demonstrates the tension between serving young people and servicing the organisation. Chris, for example, defined an internship as 'something that is better for the person taking it than it is for the organisation.  Only fractionally, but it has to be better for the person taking it, so they get more…they get a huge

amount of experience and training and they're more employable at the end of it and they're more confident at the end of it', but went on to express the view of the Collective interns being 'Christian Aid's best resource'. Ben continued this discourse, expressing his hope that 'the interns come out of it better than Christian Aid' by virtue of the experiences and opportunities that they have received. However, the fact that the internship is unpaid does mean that Christian Aid receives the full time labour of around fifteen young people each year with minimal organisational costs. The fact that the internships are unpaid also means that Christian Aid participate in an economy in which young people are increasingly expected to work for free in order to gain the requisite experience, a situation that has been critiqued for perpetuating inequality (Curiale 2010).

## Tearfund

There was a similar tension within Tearfund. Whilst Tearfund have a strong discourse of equipping young adults, their measures of success indicated a concern with organisational maintenance. Kiera, for example, highlighted that a successful case of a young adult's deep engagement with Rhythms included such things as 'they might have gone overseas with us, and volunteer with us'. A key part of this was a continued relationship and engagement with Tearfund, not just the issues: 'staying, so not leaving, so staying engaged or contributing to our programmes growing'. Kiera continued: 'we would love to see loads of people supporting Tearfund and supporting our partners' work, so that would be amazing, if there's people that are really connected to us and became life-long supporters for our partners' overseas work, in financially, through campaigning, through lifestyle'. This sense of staying connected to the organisation was understood by Emerging Influencers. Phoebe, for example, commented that the Emerging Influencers programme 'fits in with the whole "even though you might not make money on these people now, if you get them now, in 20 years' time, when they're making money, you're going to make money off them". It's quite a long term view and I don't think they necessarily always look at it like that, but I think it's a good strategy if that's how they do'. Interestingly, though, Emerging Influencers didn't necessarily receive this message. Ben,

for example, considered that the Emerging Influencers programme invested more in its participants than what Tearfund 'receive out of it', while Eli commented that there was no very clear 'message which they'd have liked us to hear, in terms of a kind of longevity, a more long-term relationship with Tearfund'.

Sarah shifted from discussing the kind of lifestyle choices she hoped young adults would increasingly go on to make to the impact for Tearfund: 'people will hopefully shop in charity shops more, cycle more, recycle more, because they are aware of the impact of the choices that they make.  I'd hope that people would give money to Tearfund'.  The way Sarah conceptualised this, however, was that, rather than money being the primary request from Tearfund, it was a result of a 'discipleship journey': 'when we talk to young people, the money and the campaigning should be the result of the stuff we're doing with them.  So yes we are asking for money, but in the context of this journey and movement'.  In this way, Tearfund hope to remove financial-giving from the framework of a distanced 'chequebook' (Hilton et al. 2011 in Darnton and Kirk 2011) exchange and make it more relational.  Sarah expressed a similar view to Chris's when she stated that 'I'd love Tearfund not to exist', though from the perspective of hoping for a future in which 'the church did everything that it needed to do around the world'.  Whilst Tearfund *does* exist, however, Sarah highlighted (in the context of supporting young adults after they had gone on a trip abroad with Tearfund) that Tearfund were concerned with 'what comes next' and 'obviously we want to point them to Tearfund's what's next'.  Sarah continued that they wanted to 'ensure that people stay connected and do keep journeying with Tearfund'.  Thus, for both organisations a concern with their self-maintenance was present in a complex interplay with their desire to empower young adults.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Far more than CARE and Christian Concern, Christian Aid and Tearfund exhibit a conscious strategy of responding to generational change and appealing to Millennials in fresh and interesting ways that

stress empowering this generation.  This is in-keeping with the fact that, unlike CARE and Christian

Concern, these two charities possess a religious worldview that is not antithetical to cultural

adaptation and assimilation.  As a result, there was far less critique offered by young adults of the

initiatives that they had got involved in.  Amongst Tearfund Emerging Influencers in particular, there

was a clear sense of a Rhythms language that had been internalised by the young adults.  This

'success' can be attributed to Rhythms' mirroring – in a social action setting – of key evangelical

attitudes and values, as well as Rhythms' ability to mobilise a large, young evangelical scene.  The

Christian Aid Collective has a less clear-cut Christian identity and a less clear change narrative,

rendering it a somehow less tangible and more blurred and fuzzy entity.  Both initiatives, however,

face some constraints to their effectiveness owing to the nature of Christian Aid and Tearfund as

bureaucratic organisations, as a result of which there may be a tension with organisational self-

maintenance.   In Chapter 8, the prospects of the Collective and Rhythms in terms of long-term

sustainability will be more explicitly and critically assessed.

# Chapter 7 – Self-organising: SPEAK and Just Love

The previous two chapters considered the specific youth engagement programmes of organisations with a wider overall range of activities.  Here, the focus of this thesis turns to two initiatives that have been set up *by* young adults *for* young adults.  These are the SPEAK Network, formed in 1999, and Just Love, formed in 2013, both of which were set up by students as Christian responses to social justice issues.  Following Warnell's definition of Millennials as being born between 1980 and 1995 (2015: 4) these two initiatives also clearly represent Millennial responses to social action concerns.  This chapter will accordingly consider whether these more youth-led grassroots groups offer distinctive alternatives to the young adult provision of the more established organisations considered thus far, and whether they might be considered more effective.

Like those that preceded it, this chapter will begin by outlining a number of aspects of the two organisations, including: their history; their purpose, values and vision; their organisational structure; their means of operating; their religious positioning; and their political positioning.  The chapter will then discuss three central ways in which both Just Love and SPEAK attract and retain members: by self-identifying as movements; by functioning as communities; and through an ethos of direct, active participation.  All three of these things mirror the emphases of Rhythms and the Collective, but, through the medium of local groups, are able to be more fully expressed.  Having explored these elements of Just Love and SPEAK, this chapter will also explore SPEAK and Just Love's narratives of change, which reveal the existence of far more differences between the initiatives.  Particular focus will be given to: both organisations' emphasis upon lifestyle change, but a slight sense of discomfort from SPEAK members regarding this; the centrality within Just Love of a discourse of influence and the ways in which Just Love members identify and are identified as young leaders or future leaders; and differing emphases on charitable activities and structural change, SPEAK placing the greater focus on the latter.

Subsequently turning to look at the effectiveness of these initiatives, I explore the 'flipsides' of the three central factors that attract young adults to SPEAK and Just Love. These flipsides include: a tension *between* community and participation; limits to inclusivity; and limits to democracy and participatory decision-making. The central contention of this chapter, which will be elaborated throughout, is that SPEAK and Just Love are in various ways constrained and limited by the very features that enable and define them. Whilst they offer forms of engagement that can be clearly differentiated from the others considered in this thesis, this does not necessarily translate to greater effectiveness. In addition, whilst SPEAK and Just Love represent Christian Millennial responses to social justice issues, they are not necessarily able wholly to escape the historical trends that characterise the contexts in which they operate.

## 7. 1 Interviewees

Similarly to the previous two chapters, this chapter is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews,[94] the interviewees being specifically chosen to represent a wide cross-spectrum of involvement in SPEAK and Just Love, from working for the organisations to more grassroots involvement, and from long-term involvement to shorter-term engagement. Whilst these interviews cannot hope to give a full picture of SPEAK and Just Love, which, by virtue of their nature as local, grassroots groups, are messy lived entities, it is hoped that this diversity of experience will give voice to a range of perspectives on the two groups and, indeed, the interviews for this chapter were very varied in terms of the insights that they offered. This diversity is, in and of itself, interesting, as it contrasts with the narratives provided by Tearfund Emerging Influencers in particular, which demonstrated greater similarity than difference (see the previous chapter). This similarity suggests that Tearfund Rhythms has been especially successful in creating a compelling and coherent language, which is easily adopted and internalised. Whilst Just Love interviewees demonstrate this

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[94] Whilst interviews are the main data used for this chapter, my analysis has also been informed by my own personal involvement over the past eight years in two local SPEAK groups and my attendance at ten national SPEAK events. However, the majority of this personal involvement occurred prior to starting this PhD.

to some degree, SPEAK accounts were far more highly varied, which corresponds with the fuzzy

multiplicity of identity that SPEAK demonstrates more generally.

| Name | Pseudonym? | Role | Means of interview |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alex | No | Committee member, Just Love Oxford | Skype.  With Helen |
| Clara | Yes | Committee member, Just Love university group AB[95] | Skype |
| Helen | No | Committee member, Just Love Glasgow | Skype.  With Alex[96] |
| James | Yes | Long term member, SPEAK.  Also worked for them | In person.  With Katie |
| Katie | Yes | Long term member, SPEAK.  Also worked for them | In person.  With James |
| Lizzie | Yes | Member, local SPEAK group | Skype.  With Theo |
| Rebecca | Yes | Long term member, SPEAK.  Also worked for them | In person |
| Rosie | Yes | Previous committee member, Just Love university group CD[97] | Skype/telephone[98] |
| Theo | Yes | Member, local SPEAK group | Skype.  With Lizzie |
| Tom | No | Founder, Just Love | Skype |

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[95] This Just Love group is anonymised and referred to later in this chapter simply as 'Just Love AB'.
[96] Owing to the different stages of their involvement, Alex's interview is drawn on substantially more in this chapter.  Whilst Alex had been involved in Just Love Oxford for a couple of years, Helen was at the far earlier stage of starting up Just Love at her university.
[97] This Just Love group is anonymised and referred to later in this chapter simply as 'Just Love CD'.
[98] Technical issues led to a change in communication platform.

As the table demonstrates, six of the interviewees were interviewed in pairs. This occurred where it made sense for this to happen, such as the interviewees being close friends or a couple. In the interests of anonymity and privacy, I don't specify the nature of this relationship for any of the pairs. Interviewing people in pairs brings with it both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that it can feel like a more 'natural' way of communicating and like more of a conversation than just interviewing people one-on-one. As all three sets of pairs had a close relationship, they had a natural rapport and way of interacting, which meant that my role as interviewer was rendered more hands-off, in a way that allowed for a more gradual and organic emergence of prevalent themes. The most valuable aspects of the pair interviews occurred when pairs conversed together on fairly complicated themes regarding their involvement in, or perspective of, the group, eventually coming to a conclusion together. This supports a constructionist view of the interview experience as one in which knowledge is co-produced, perspectives emerging, through virtue of the interview experience, that may not have been clearly articulated before. There were, however, also disadvantages. In two of the three sets of pairs, one person was markedly more dominant than the other, either due to their longer involvement with the group or to the fact that they possessed more confidence in verbal communication. Whilst the status of the pairs as either close friends or couples cautions against interpreting this as a result of discomfort with the pair interview situation, it did mean that the flow of the interview was sometimes disrupted when I felt forced to directly address the interview participant who was contributing less. Whilst this was useful – and at times necessary – to gain access to an alternative perspective, it did sometimes jar with the increased sense of 'natural-ness' that the pair interview otherwise provided.

## 7.2 Background to the SPEAK Network and Just Love

|  | **The SPEAK Network** | **Just Love** |
|---|---|---|
| **Issues of interest and concern** | Trade justice; climate change; the arms trade; agribusiness; corporate accountability | Homelessness; ethical living; human trafficking; food banks |
| **Religious positioning** | Roots in social evangelicalism. Increasingly post-evangelical identity. Ecumenical membership | Charismatic evangelical |
| **Political positioning** | Self-identifies as a "radical" organisation. Campaigns may critique government policy. Involvement in direct and creative action | Local, individual and global orientation. Not particularly state-orientated. Focus on local action and individual lifestyle change. |
| **Organisational structure** | Not-for profit company supported by a registered charity. Built-in structures for participatory decision-making | Becoming a registered charity. Has a board of directors and trustees. Student representation on trustee board |

### The SPEAK Network

The SPEAK Network describes itself as a 'network connecting together young adults and students to campaign and pray about issues of global injustice. Through bringing change to situations of injustice, we aim to share our faith in our all-loving, all-powerful creator: God'.[99]

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[99] This was SPEAK's long-standing description, which can be seen here on their Facebook page for example: https://www.facebook.com/TheSpeakNetwork/about/?entry_point=page_nav_about_item&ref=page_internal [Accessed 05/10/16]. However, SPEAK has recently changed the description on their website to the following: 'SPEAK is a national network of students and young adults who campaign and pray on issues of global justice. We are a campaign and activist company, charity and participatory network that aims to bring change. SPEAK began with Christian roots but in recent years has been working through side partnerships and networks'. See https://speak.org.uk/about-us [Accessed 05/10/16]. This is interesting as, while prayer is still listed as a central activity, belief in 'our all-loving, all-powerful creator: God' is replaced with a more vague reference to 'Christian roots'.

*History*

The SPEAK Network was formed in 1998.  It was set up by a small group of students at the University

of East Anglia who were members of both People and Planet[100] and the Christian Union, and were

perplexed by the lack of overlap between the activities of these two societies.  From a small number

of students at just one university, SPEAK grew through 'doing something at People and Planet

conferences, getting their literature on tables in a Chaplaincy during freshers' week, going to Soul

Survivor, Spring Harvest, UCCF events' (Rebecca).  It also wrote to CUs and developed a presence at

freshers' fairs.  SPEAK has hosted its own events since 2000 and three thousand people now receive

regular mailings from SPEAK.  Expressions of SPEAK have also developed abroad, in Nigeria, Hong

Kong and Brazil.[101]


*Purpose, vision and values*

SPEAK has thirteen core values: being Jesus-centred; believing in the Bible as 'inspired by God

and...there to Guide us in all matters of faith and conduct'; belief in the Holy Spirit, whose gifts 'are

for today'; community; sharing their faith; discipleship, through the cultivation of 'radical personal

holiness'; prayer; campaigning and speaking for justice, understood as 'part of the Great Commission

to make disciples of all nations'; commitment to the poor and the environment; empowerment; arts

and culture, as a way of 'communicating God's truth and justice'; a network ethos; and an integrated

philosophy, which asserts that 'all of these values are interlinked, and should not be separated'.[102]

SPEAK 'exists to support and empower' its members 'to achieve confidence in campaigning and

being part of the change they wish to see in the world'.[103]


It is worth quoting at length SPEAK's vision, which helps to capture many aspects of SPEAK's identity

and discourse:

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[100] A student organisation that campaigns on environmental and social issues.
[101] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 05/10/16]
[102] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/our-values [Accessed 05/10/16]
[103] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 05/10/16]

We want to see a mass movement across the rising generation. We want to see this generation positioned and equipped to bring spiritual, social, economic, political and environmental transformation. We want to see God's Kingdom established in all its different facets.

We want to see it in all our relationships, and in our lifestyle as a whole. We believe that in order to do this we need to NETWORK and work in connecting and bringing people together with a similar heart. Networking means that all are connected, and we can build unity in our actions and our prayers. In praying about situations of injustice and speaking out about the same things at the same time, we are able to make our call for change louder!

Speak is a not an organisation. SPEAK is a network, because we believe it takes all of us to recognise that we have a responsibility to those who are suffering as a result of global injustice. In the past we have spent long enough believing that an organisation will do it all for us, and that giving limited financial assistance to a charity is enough. However, global problems are more deep rooted, connected with unfair trade and debt, and many other issues.

SPEAK is not another organisation existing to soothe our consciences. SPEAK exists to stir the conscience of everyone. We act as a movement to stir people, especially the younger generation, into action and see them released as catalysts to motivate the church as a whole. It is not served up to you on a plate - it is up to you to take initiative. SPEAK is an evolving, dynamic movement of relationships.

The relationships formed within the Network are constantly sparking off new initiatives. We believe that we are empowered and resourced in relationship with God and in relationship with each other, rather than just through an organisation. It is difficult to box this movement, or to give a totally accurate neat description.

It's about being a motivational catalyst in areas of Christian community. It's about lifestyle.

It's about moving into action. It's about getting things going, creating an infectious

movement that seeks to change unfair power structures. It's about following Jesus. It's

about modelling something new, sharing our faith with people disillusioned by institutional

models of church and Christian community. It's about reaching people who are searching

spiritually.[104]

This vision and self-description reveals the complex and multi-faceted set of different activities and

identities that SPEAK involves, demonstrating a model that is perhaps hard to categorise.  In this

description, lifestyle, action, politics, religion and evangelism are all combined and intertwined.  As

Katie commented, SPEAK is about 'bringing the theology to it [campaigning] or bringing the

campaigning into theology – I don't know which way round it is, you know'.

*Organisational structure*

The SPEAK Network is a not-for-profit company that is supported organisationally by the SPEAK

Network Event Support Team, a registered charity.[105]   The Network support team currently employs

four people on either a full- or part-time basis.  SPEAK also has an advisory group and a council of

reference.  These bodies include representatives of many organisations, including 24-7 Prayer, Youth

For Christ, Tearfund, Jubilee Debt Campaign, UCCF, and the Oasis Trust, though individuals serve in a

personal capacity.  James described the trustee role as being a 'much more involved' role than the

usual experience of being a trustee, owing to the fact that SPEAK is 'missing a director-level of staff'

and that 'the manager would often be quite young and inexperienced and would need support from

trustees'.

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[104] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/our-vision [Accessed 05/10/16]
[105] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/legal-information [Accessed 05/10/16]. This organisational division was not
mentioned by any of my interviewees, but is stated on the website. This framework is probably the result of
restrictions to campaigning that occur due to charitable status.

As well as the decision-making powers of these more formal bodies, SPEAK also has participatory

decision-making channels which are open to all.  These take the form of Flower Model events, which

have occurred since 2002, typically twice a year, though less frequently over the last three years.

Flower Model aims to create 'a participatory forum [...] where SPEAK members could explore their

gifts and how they could participate within the Network, and help shape SPEAK's future'.[106]  Flower

Model is so called due to its 'petals', designating different teams that focus on one particular

dimension of SPEAK, whether it be the arts, campaigns, prayer, faith and spirituality, the network, or

SPEAK's international links. James commented that Flower Model weekends are 'a real expression of

the network.  People come together – it's open to anyone'.

*Means of operating*

SPEAK, as an organisation, functions through the medium of local groups, 'SPEAK links', and national

gatherings.  There is a small number of local groups, some of which are student societies and some

of which are city-based groups, though the latter are often made up of graduates who were

previously involved in university groups.  Local SPEAK groups 'exist to encourage each other in our

faith/spirituality and spur each other on in taking action for justice. They aim to be an expression of

community in the campaign scene and seek to share their faith in a God who passionately cares

about justice and vulnerable people'.  They are viewed as 'an expression of diversity, campaigning in

ways they feel are appropriate for their locality'.[107]   Local groups thus function autonomously from

SPEAK as a national organisation and can take many forms.  Lizzie and Theo's local SPEAK group

meets formally about once a month at a member's home to share a meal, while one of the members

leads a reflection or discussion.

'SPEAK links' are individuals who mobilise a group or organisation of which they are part – for

example, a church or Christian Union – to engage with SPEAK's campaigns, encouraging them to

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[106] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 05/10/16]
[107] Ibid.

realise the need for Christians to care about social justice issues, and promoting action. The SPEAK

Network also hosts annual national gatherings, Soundcheck in early spring and Vocal Training in

early autumn. Soundcheck is the most popular and, from 2011 to 2014, had an average attendance

of between 175 and 250 people. Vocal Training is a smaller gathering, which aims to 'equip and

empower the next generation of change makers to bring about global justice'. There have been 13

Vocal Training events since 2002, with an average of 50 people attending each.[108] In 2009, Music

SPEAKs was launched, which 'brings together artists from SPEAK and others connected to the

Network to promote the campaigns and use their art forms as a way to communicate issues of

justice'.[109]


SPEAK also has specific campaign foci, which it champions as a national network.[110] These include

the arms trade, climate change, agribusiness, trade justice, and corporate accountability. The SPEAK

Network's website outlines the background of all five main campaigns, providing information

alongside points for action, which vary from petitions to writing to your MP. These campaigns are

usually run in partnership with other organisations, though there tends to be a 'SPEAK angle on

them' (Rebecca). SPEAK campaigns aim to push for a specific policy change, to be rooted in faith, and

to contain both advocacy and awareness-raising.[111] SPEAK also played an active role in Jubilee 2000,

Make Poverty History and Enough Food for Everyone IF.


*Religious positioning*

SPEAK's religious positioning demonstrates the influence of many Christian traditions, involving

roots in the Christian Unions (which can be categorised as conservative evangelical), early influences

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[108] Until 2014, SPEAK followed this structure of a yearly Soundcheck and Vocal Training and biannual Flower Model events. In the last two years, however, this historical structure of network gatherings has been disrupted by many changes of staff. As a result, national gatherings have been less frequent, mainly consisting of a 'Peace Festival', which took place in early autumn 2015. There was also a weekend meet-up in April 2016, and there is an 18th birthday party planned for April 2017.
[109] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 05/10/16]
[110] Local groups have a great deal of autonomy and do not necessarily align their activities with the priorities and fociof SPEAK nationally.
[111] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 05/10/16]

of the charismatic movement, and a long-standing capacity to attract 'spiritual seekers'. While

SPEAK officially affirms the Evangelical Alliance's basis of faith[112] and describes itself as an 'openly'

Christian organisation, it states that it is 'fully welcoming to everyone from a variety of different

Christian backgrounds, those from other faith backgrounds, and those who do not ascribe to having

a Faith'.[113] National events thus often bring together evangelical Christians with those better

categorised as 'spiritual seekers'. Rebecca, a long-term member of SPEAK, identified that the

charismatic influence in SPEAK had diminished and that SPEAK has a 'large proportion' of members

who are 'quite disillusioned with church as it is'. She continued that 'a number of people have said

"I'm on the verge of giving up my faith- or was- until I found SPEAK"'. Rebecca felt, as a result, that

SPEAK was 'more attractive to more liberal' Christians. Thus, SPEAK can probably now be

categorised as having a largely post-evangelical identity, post-evangelicalism being defined by such

characteristics as church de-conversion, dislike of institutions and hierarchies, and increased dignity

given to intuition (Tomlinson, 1995). Another relevant feature is a 'desire to interact on a more

positive level with theologies and perspectives which do not come from an evangelical source'

(1995: 3).

Lizzie highlighted similarly that her local SPEAK group was a 'place where people who either consider

themselves Christian or have been but don't want to anymore but still like that to be a little bit part

of things can have that as part of their social justice without having to be part of "a Christian

organisation" that has an emphasis on certain doctrines and theology and evangelising and stuff like

that'. Lizzie felt that the Christian aspect of SPEAK was sort of 'floating around in the background

and it's maybe a whole six months where it doesn't come to the foreground in any way', enabling

the participation of agnostics and atheists. James identified SPEAK as 'incredibly ecumenical',

commenting that 'I've never, ever known anything anywhere as ecumenical as SPEAK and I probably

never will if I'm being completely honest'. He highlighted that the presence of people from many

[112] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/advisory-group [Accessed 05/10/16]
[113] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 05/10/16]

different Christian traditions at national SPEAK events was 'never, ever an issue' and, if there was

the slightest difficulty, based for example on different traditions surrounding the sharing of bread

and wine, 'people still understood and respected and valued how it was anyway'.  However, what

this also demonstrates is a difference between SPEAK's local and national manifestations when it

comes to its religious positioning.  Whilst local groups may be more nominally or loosely Christian (as

in the case of Lizzie's described above), SPEAK's Christian identity is more at the foreground at

national SPEAK events, prayer and worship being central elements of national gatherings.  This can

result in some people experiencing an uncomfortable sense of disconnect when they attend a

national SPEAK event.  Jonathon, for example, explained that, he was 'a little surprised at how overly

religious the event [Soundcheck] was' as his local SPEAK group 'wasn't heavily focused on religion'.
[114]  This was a little difficult for Jonathon, as he had 'never felt completely comfortable with praise

and worship' and didn't attend a church.


Historically, SPEAK has had a positive relationship with Christian Unions, being set up by CU

members, which helped SPEAK in its early years to 'gain access to UCCF and CUs around the country'

(Rebecca).  However, by the time Rebecca was working for SPEAK a few years later, some groups

were 'having real difficulty' with the CU, though 'it was totally hit or miss depending [on the

particular CU group]'.  In her local SPEAK context, Lizzie remarked on the 'unusual' nature of a friend

who attended both the local SPEAK group and the university Christian Union.  However, despite the

potential theological tension between the two groups, owing to the fact that 'the kind of people that

gravitate towards SPEAK are nearly always the people with very liberal theology', Lizzie felt that this

tension didn't particularly manifest itself, because 'SPEAK is small, keeps itself to itself quite a bit,

and doesn't get in the CU's way'.  This hints at SPEAK's fairly marginal role within the contemporary

student Christian world.  A recent study of student Christianity in the UK – Mathew Guest et al.'s

*Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith* – devotes just one sentence

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[114] Pseudonym. This statement was provided by a friend of mine.  I had several conversations similar to this after going to a Soundcheck event a couple of years ago.

to SPEAK (2013: 157), which confirms this idea of SPEAK's diminishing influence and presence within UK universities.

*Political positioning*

SPEAK identifies as a 'radical' organisation, stating that they are 'more radical than a lot of NGOs, who have [to] tone down their radical-ness in order to keep their professional edge, or their contributors happy'.[115]  Correspondingly, whilst SPEAK as a national organisation cannot easily condone such activities,[116] small groups of SPEAK members have been involved in high profile direct actions, such as barring entry to the London arms fair in 2013.[117]  SPEAK's left-leaning orientation is also demonstrated by the stance of some of their campaigns.  Their focus on food sovereignty, for example, positions SPEAK in alignment with Via Campesina - the international peasant movement from which the concept of food sovereignty originates – and in opposition to other perspectives such as food security, which might presume more orthodox ways of thinking about agriculture and economics, for example.

## Just Love

Just Love is an evangelical student organisation that exists to 'work to inspire and release every Christian student in the UK to pursue the biblical call to social justice'.[118]

*History*

Just Love is a very new initiative, which was formed in Oxford in 2013, when a group of Christian students 'wanted to live out their faith by pursuing the kind of social justice that they were reading about in their Bibles'.[119]   Their first project was a homeless outreach initiative, and the group

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[115] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/history-track-record [Accessed 01/02/17]
[116] See https://speak.org.uk/node/380 for SPEAK's statement/disclaimer.  [Accessed 07/10/16]
[117] See https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/usp/news/chloeskinner-1.311420 for an example of this coverage. [Accessed 07/10/16]
[118] http://www.justloveuk.com/home.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[119] http://www.justloveuk.com/history.html [Accessed 05/10/16]

launched officially in April 2013 with a Live Below The Line[120] week of fundraising. April 2014 saw

the forming of the second Just Love group, in Durham. Since then, Just Love groups have been

launched in Bath, Cambridge, Glasgow, Exeter, Norwich and St Andrews.[121] Tom Christmas, the

founder of Just Love in Oxford, now works full-time to expand Just Love across the UK. Personal

connections have played a significant role in the expansion of Just Love into other universities.

Helen explained how she'd known Tom 'from home and had heard about it in Oxford a bit and the

journey with that', while Rosie had started a Christian social justice society at her university, which

became a Just Love group when someone turned up to an event and 'his brother happened to be

one of the people who set up Just Love in Oxford'.

Central to Just Love's establishment and growth was a sense of there being a gap in terms of

opportunities for Christian students to get involved in social justice or social action, similarly to the

fact that the original SPEAK members had perceived a lack of Christian social justice organising at

their university. Upon returning to university from a trip to South Africa working with street

children, Tom had expected that there would be lots of opportunities to get involved in social justice

activities through churches in Oxford. However, he found instead that 'that wasn't really happening

very much and I think as I chatted to other people it became clear that there were a few people who

had this similar desire but there was nowhere to express it'. Tom and the other Just Love founders

felt, as a result, that there 'was a big disconnect between the just God and an unjust world and that

Christian students weren't really making that connection and weren't really doing anything about it

and trying to bring God's justice into the world and we felt that that was wrong'. From this, the

fledging group began to 'gather people who were interested', leading to a core team of around 15

people who started to envision what Just Love could look like. This sense of a gap had also been

experienced and perceived by others at different universities. Rosie commented on the fact that

'there wasn't really anything for Christian students to get involved with social action. There was just

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[120] Live Below the Line is a sponsored event, during which participants live on £1 a day for food.
[121] http://www.justloveuk.com/history.html [Accessed 05/10/16]

this massive gap in university societies and I couldn't understand it'.  Helen also mentioned that, on

arrival at university, she 'didn't see anything that really grabbed me that I wanted to get involved

with [with] social justice'.  This again hints at the erosion and decline of SPEAK's influence in the

student world, a theme which will be considered in greater depth later in this thesis.  As Oxford

University would have many social justice student societies, this also suggests the central

importance for Just Love's founding members of a specifically Christian response to these issues.

Whilst churches did provide some volunteering opportunities, this was not necessarily student-

appropriate.  Helen, for example, commented that 'my church does a lot of stuff but I felt that, as a

student, I couldn't really commit to doing everything that they were doing and I'd be going away for

half of the year, and I felt that that wasn't really fair to them volunteer-wise'.  The idea that churches

were not offering activities that were appropriate to students was also expressed by Tom, who

explained that:

> The church that I am at was doing some things but it was a lot of work in prisons and with
>
> ex-offenders and in terms of how suitable that was for students to engage with, they wanted
>
> people who could give year-round commitments to do mentoring and we were both in and
>
> out of town so often that it didn't work and probably too young to be able to do that
>
> effectively, so it wasn't the sort of thing that- when there's 200 students at that church –
>
> that they can all engage with.

In response to interest from students, the church did start 'a little social justice programme which

was just for a handful of us – for 7 of us – where we got fortnightly teaching on it and they tried to

place us with some projects around the city'.  However, Tom didn't feel that the churches were 'well

set up' to be able 'to mobilise hundreds of students'.[122]

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[122] This perceived gap is interesting, given the scholarly view that evangelical social action has increased.  As
Warner contends, 'if it could have been claimed in the mid twentieth-century that evangelicals were
indifferent to social action, the same charge could not reasonably be made at the century's end' (2007: 111).
However, the case that the activities on offer were inappropriate is interesting.

*Purpose, vision and values*

Just Love's vision is 'to inspire and release every Christian student in the UK to pursue the biblical call to social justice'. Just Love believe that 'standing with the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed is a fundamental part of the Christian faith'. Expanding on this vision, Just Love state that 'we want to inspire those who are not particularly confident about the place of justice within the Christian faith to move towards a place where they have a real heart for social justice, rooted in a fuller understanding of the character and commandments of our God. And for those who already see social action as an integral part of the mission of the church, we aim to release them – to encourage, equip and empower them to pursue the passions that God has given them'.[123]

Just Love's four core values are: living like Christ; unity and relationships; student ownership; and quality. [124] These are rather simpler and indeed clearer than SPEAK's long list of core values, and the emphasis on 'quality' is in evident contrast to SPEAK's focus on values such as creativity, hinting at an approach that perhaps aspires to be more 'professional' in nature.

*Organisational structure*

Just Love has four members of staff. Tom, the national coordinator, is supported by a Southern coordinator, a Northern coordinator, and an Eastern coordinator. Tom's current role as national coordinator involves 'trying to sort out our funding and finances, building up and chatting to the boards, and then the longer-term strategy, and developing my own knowledge of all these things so that I can give better input'. At the time of my interview with Tom (in the summer of 2015), Just Love was in the process of registering with the Charity Commission, which would make Tom a full-time employee.

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[123] http://www.justloveuk.com/our-vision.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[124] Ibid.

Just Love's four-person team is assisted in their work by a trustee board and an advisory board, both of which demonstrate a wide cross-section of influence from the evangelical Christian world, such as representatives of organisations such as Fusion, the London School of Theology, and Tearfund.  The boards also demonstrate a more diverse set of influences through the inclusion of: the Director of Christians on the Left; the creator of Relationology, a 'unique approach to helping businesses grow their top lines through the power of relationships'; and the Director of Leadership Innovation at Onelife, an organisation that works 'with young leaders in all spheres of society across the UK'.[125] Tom expressed that including 'a diversity of views and backgrounds' was one of his aims for the development of the boards.   There is also a former student member on the trustee board 'to bring that knowledge which you can only really have if you were a student who was involved' (Tom).

*Means of operating*

Just Love's primary means of operating is through local groups, most of which frame their activities in terms of global, local and personal, with activities that can be categorised as advocacy, projects and prayer. As the chart below demonstrates, this mainly manifests itself in similar activities and emphases, with homelessness, trafficking and personal lifestyle change featuring prominently.

| Group | Focuses |
|---|---|
| Bath | Local (homeless outreach, and care and support for the elderly); Global (focus on persecuted Christians and human trafficking, as well as supporting international students); and Personal (ethical living)[126] |
| Cambridge | Personal (exploring a theology of justice and taking part in Live Below the Line); Local (collecting for foodbanks, and getting involved in |

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[125] See http://www.justloveuk.com/meet-the-team.html for full list of advisors and trustees.  [Accessed 05/10/16]

[126] http://www.justloveuk.com/bath.html [Accessed 05/10/16]

| | |
|---|---|
| | Foodcycle) and Global (focus on human trafficking)[127] |
| Durham | Global (working with Tearfund, International Justice Mission, Open Doors, and Christian Aid); Local (support local churches in their outreach projects and work with local charities such as the Salvation Army and Durham Foodbank); and Personal (encouraging just lifestyles)[128] |
| Exeter | Just Freedom (focus on issues such as human trafficking); Just Refuse (working with homeless people); Just Live (mentoring disadvantaged young people)[129] |
| Glasgow | Personal (radical everyday living); Local (working with local charities that reach out to marginalised groups); and Global (working with charities like International Justice Mission and Open Doors)[130] |
| Norwich | Local (homeless outreach); Global (education about global issues, connecting with Christians overseas, and meeting international students); and Personal (everyday living)[131] |
| Oxford | Homeless outreach; Human Trafficking Action Group; Just Living; Caring for Creation[132] |
| St Andrews | Global; Local; Personal [no further information][133] |

Just Love Oxford, as the most long-standing group, is the largest Just Love group, with 'over a

hundred people involved' (Tom). Tom made the assessment that 'most Christian students will have

[127] http://www.justloveuk.com/cambridge.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[128] http://www.justloveuk.com/durham.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[129] http://www.justloveuk.com/exeter.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[130] http://www.justloveuk.com/glasgow.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[131] http://www.justloveuk.com/norwich.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[132] http://www.justloveuk.com/oxford.html [Accessed 05/10/16]
[133] http://www.justloveuk.com/st-andrews.html [Accessed 05/10/16]

heard of it and quite a decent chunk of them are involved'.  Alex claimed that the group had about

70 people who were regularly involved and that 'particularly the homeless outreach has grown

massively'.  Other local groups, by contrast, 'are obviously smaller and will take a bit of time to grow'

(Tom).  Rosie commented on Just Love CD being a 'little bit slow-growing'.  As the largest group, Just

Love Oxford has a packed weekly schedule, each week of term including a committee meeting, two

nights of homeless outreach, a prayer walk, a homeless outreach prayer breakfast and Just Lunch.

HTAG, the human trafficking action group within Just Love Oxford, meets fortnightly.  Most people,

Alex explained, would be involved in one particular area, so that Just Love functions 'like a big

umbrella, which also has its own pockets of community going on'.  Launch events, at the start of

each term, would attract most of the Just Love community and bring everyone together.

As well as the regular projects highlighted in this chart, Just Love groups also organise one-off

events.  The following events were popular among Just Love groups: 'Who would Jesus vote for?'

panel events prior to elections, in which Christian representatives from the political parties provided

their perspective; Live Below the Line (a sponsored fundraiser in which participants live on £1 for

food a day, also raising awareness of food poverty); and Stand for Freedom (awareness-raising of

human trafficking).  Other events have included a 'big clear out', collecting food for the local food

bank from students at the end of term, and a BBQ 'for our homeless friends' (Alex).

Partnership is a crucial way in which Just Love operates.  Tom commented on the 'expertise' of other

charities when it came to 'dealing with any particular justice issue', while Just Love hoped to

contribute in return their knowledge of the 'landscape of the student Christian world'.  Just Love

thus hoped to build up a 'range of connections and to make them available to local groups' (Tom).

On a local on-the-ground level, partnership was also important, such as collaborating with other

societies on events and projects.  Alex explained how Just Love Oxford had done a partner event

with Amnesty International on religious persecution and commented 'we really do value partner

events'.  Unlike other Just Love societies, Just Love Oxford actually had fewer partnerships with local

charities and Alex felt that they might 'miss out' as a result.  The table above demonstrates the

extent to which other Just Love groups acted in partnership with local charities.  Just Love also have

a 'semi-official' relationship with Tearfund, which Tom described as something they were currently

'working out'.  Just Love valued this relationship, as Tearfund had been 'immensely helpful to us in

terms of people from their teams inputting into the development of people in Just Love as

individuals and the development of the organisation and helping with training'.  Clara also

commented on the 'similar visions' of Just Love and Tearfund (especially Rhythms) and the fact that

some people involved in Just Love had been Emerging Influencers.  However, Just Love hoped to

continue the 'nice neutral position where a Just Love group could do something in partnership with

any charity or take up a campaign that's run by any charity'.  As a result, Just Love would 'shy away

from really exclusively partnering with someone' (Tom).

*Religious positioning*

Just Love is an evangelical organisation that affirms the Evangelical Alliance's Basis of Faith.  This

specifically evangelical identity stemmed from Tom's belief that 'Christians weren't sufficiently

motivated to engage with this [social justice issues] and so to take it from a *real Christian* angle

would be the best way to solve that problem, rather than being open for everyone but maybe being

less convincing for the Christians' (my italics).  From such a perspective, it is evident that being seen

to be 'legitimately' Christian would become very important.  Just Love describe their Christian faith

as 'at the very heart of what we do.  Our faith determines the motivation, the manner and the end-

goal of our pursuit of social justice'.  Social justice is seen to be a 'fundamental part of the Christian

faith, not an optional extra' and the website also highlights the 'centrality of scripture and prayer in

all that we do as Just Love'.[134]  Particular emphasis is placed upon the Biblical basis for caring about,

and acting upon, social justice, making clear the evangelical context in which they operate and which

they hope to influence.  Tom explained that, whilst Just Love was not 'at a point where we're

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[134] http://www.justloveuk.com/our-vision.html [Accessed 05/10/16]

prescribing a particular theological understanding of justice', they hoped to present a 'number of reasons' for why social justice is important for Christians. Tom explained that these reasons could be summed up as falling into the categories of 'commands, character, creation', so exploring, through 'a lot of [Bible] verses to back all that up', God's commands to do justice; the nature of God's character as a 'just and righteous God'; and the role of humanity to 'steward over creation'. Whilst staking out the Biblical basis for engaging with social justice issues was an important task for Just Love, Tom was clear that Just Love wouldn't take a position on 'more contentious' issues such as the relationship between social justice and evangelism or whether or not there is a responsibility to 'do justice amongst Christians first', and would instead take the perspective of 'here's what a number of different authors say, here's a number of different passages to think about'. This demonstrates Just Love's consciousness of the sensitivities around these issues, particularly if they are trying to engage more conservative evangelicals.

Just Love's clearly evangelical identity is demonstrated particularly in its homeless outreach, a 'staple' Just Love activity. Tom commented that 'we'll pray before we go and we'll often chat to them about faith'. Tom confirmed more explicitly that there was an evangelistic impulse to the homeless outreach:

> There was quite a lot of physical provision of things but we felt like we wanted to think
> about whole-person care and the emotional and spiritual side of what people were dealing
> with and that that was something that […] we could do quite a good job of bringing in a way
> that other services might not be able to.

Tom continued that 'our niche, if you like, would be to get to know people, build community, share faith'.

Just Love can also be situated along the charismatic spectrum of evangelicalism, and interviews with Just Love members revealed some sense of conflict between conservative and charismatic evangelicalism. Alex commented on the charismatic nature of other Just Love members, and how this provided him with a sense of 'common ground'. He continued that Just Love had experienced considerable success in attracting students from two of the three main student churches in Oxford, both of which were charismatic evangelical churches, but not from the other, a conservative evangelical church. Just Love has also received opposition from some Christian circles based around 'largely theological differences about what Christians should be prioritising and seeing it as a distraction from the more important work of evangelism' (Tom).[135]

Whilst SPEAK gives off a sense of operating on the fringes or margins of Christianity, Just Love is positioned more centrally, in terms of where the energy and noise of contemporary student Christianity can be found. Whilst Guest et al.'s 2013 study of student Christianity in the UK discovered a complex picture of student Christian identities, evangelical forms of Christianity were found to be the most visible and vocal in the student world, though not the most numerical. Amongst the category of Christian identity that Guest et al. label 'active affirmers'[136] (consistently frequent church-goers) – into which Just Love members can most accurately be placed– evangelical and Pentecostal church-going predominates. By contrast, historic Protestant denominations were found to be the least successful at retaining their attendees, with just over 40% of those attending historic Protestant churches before university choosing to attend a church of any kind while a student (2013: 92). Rosie confirmed this sense of greater evangelical visibility and activity when she explained that 'if you're trying to get a decent number of people coming along, then they are going

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[135] The debate within evangelicalism over the relative importance of evangelism and social action – or whether indeed they are interlinked and cannot be separated, as is the stance of 'integral mission' – has long historical roots.

[136] The other categories identified were lapsed engagers (frequent church attenders in the holidays, but infrequent or non-existent attenders at university); established occasionals (consistently infrequent church attenders); emerging nominals (infrequent church attenders in the holidays who opt out at university); and unchurched Christians (consistent non-attenders).

to be evangelical people'.  Tom also highlighted how the first Just Love committee were 'well

positioned in terms of they were already fairly well known in a lot of the major Christian circles

already and were good at building relationships with a lot of people in those circles'.  This centred

nature allowed for quick growth 'in that we were already reaching a lot of people almost

automatically through the relationships that we had'.  Tom explained further that now 'people in the

big churches are involved, people in the CU are involved, we have representatives in each of the 30

colleges called J-reps'.

One key relationship for Just Love is their relationship with the Christian Union, which is seen as very

important, though is not always straightforward: 'we're keen to end up in a good place with the CU

and it does seem to be moving in a good direction' (Tom).  In the process of setting up, Just Love

Oxford had first spoken to the CU, as the committee at the time 'were particularly supportive of us

wanting to do more justice things' and several people 'involved in starting Just Love were college

reps for the Christian Union'.  At first, the possibility of having a 'new social justice branch of the

Christian Union' was considered. However, the UCCF[137] were clear that the CU's sole purpose is to

'share the gospel with every non-Christian student at the university' and instead encouraged them

'to start our own group and they would try and be as supportive of it as they could'.  Even so, there

were some difficulties in Oxford: 'it was a battle of several weeks to get an announcement at a CU

meeting that Just Love was starting' (Tom).   However, the current relationship between the two

societies in Oxford was much more positive, there being a 'lot of people heavily involved in both

groups', including crossover between committee members.  This had led to an increasingly positive

relationship, including a joint event.

The current state of the strong relationship in Oxford is evidenced by the fact that Alex was told

about Just Love when he contacted his CU college rep before starting university.  Alex also spoke

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[137] The umbrella body for Christian Unions.

about the shared involvement of many people in both Just Love and the CU and the existence of

some 'mutual love'.  Alex recognised the distinct visions of the two groups, in that 'we're all for

evangelism, but our heart is distinctly about social justice and seeing God's Kingdom come in that

particular sense of the restoration of relationships and their heart is particularly – well hopefully

most of them love social justice stuff – but their heart is particularly in seeing God's kingdom come

through evangelistic stuff and people hearing the good news about Jesus'.  As a result of these

different visions, Alex hoped that the two groups operated 'like parallel brother sister organisations.

That's the dream'.  A strong relationship was also in existence at other universities.  Clara had found

that the CU at her university were 'fantastic' and as a result Just Love was 'really good friends with

them'.  Helen's early discussions with the CU had also been 'really positive', with possibilities of

shared events emerging.

*Political positioning*

Just Love does not have such an explicit political positioning as the SPEAK Network.  Its primary foci

are on ethical living and the alleviation of suffering in local communities, and there was little

evidence of state-orientated campaigning or advocacy work.  Just Love's primary forms of action

accordingly correspond with those observed by Peter Herriot within charismatic Anglicanism as

based 'on the belief that showing love and care to needy people is an evangelical demonstration of

God's love for individuals'.  Herriot identifies an underlying assumption "that it is the individual who

is the recipient of God's love, and that enhanced justice follows from the increasing number of

individuals whose needs are met' (2015: 161).  For Herriot, this is something that can relieve such

Christian groups of 'the need to engage in political activity aimed at reducing the structural causes of

inequality' (ibid) and of a process of 'questioning the basic power structures and political processes

of our society' (2015: 220).  Whilst Just Love members demonstrated a very evident concern with

responding to individual suffering, there was limited evidence of critique of societal structures.  This

also has resonance with the work of DeHanas, though he argues that an evangelical focus on the

voluntary sector may be the result of the fact that 'when confronted with societies where the vast

majority is indifferent to their faith message, evangelicals can become deeply cynical about the actual potential for political and social change' (2016: 186).  I did not find evidence of cynicism among my interviews with Just Love members, however, but instead a real sense of excitement and optimism.

## 7.3 Christian Millennial responses to social action concerns

This section charts how Just Love and SPEAK appeal to Millennials, focusing on three main emphases: being a movement; functioning as a community; and an ethos of direct participation. Whilst the notion of the 'imagined young adult subject' (as considered in the previous two chapters) is naturally less relevant for these more youth-led groups, both groups nonetheless have certain ways of envisaging their activities, the role of young adults therein and a sense of how this contributes to change.  These ways in which Just Love and SPEAK appeal to Millennials share similarities with the emphases of Rhythms and the Collective.  However, these are far more actual, embodied experiences for Just Love and SPEAK members, taking place in local, face-to-face settings. In the three responses listed above, Just Love and SPEAK demonstrate quite similar ways in which they wish to operate and to engage their peers.  However, Just Love and SPEAK's narratives of change reveal rather more differences between the two organisations, and their responses to social action concerns.

### Being a movement

Both Just Love and SPEAK describe themselves as movements, and this functions as a key feature of their attraction, resonating with scholarly opinion as to the diminishing attraction of institutions for this generation.   Just Love describes itself as a 'movement of hundreds of students',[138] whilst SPEAK self-describes as an 'evolving, dynamic movement of relationships', explicitly stating that it is 'not an organisation'.[139]  In contrast to Rhythms and the Collective, this identity as a movement was less

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[138] https://justloveoxford.wordpress.com/about-2/ [Accessed 01/02/17]
[139] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/our-vision [Accessed 01/02/17]

aspirational and more tangible, being more based upon grassroots decision-making and student- and

member-ownership.  This was an attractive element of SPEAK and Just Love for both their respective

members.  Rebecca commented that 'being part of something that was a grassroots movement

became really appealing', whilst James highlighted that SPEAK was 'such a dynamic movement'.

Katie felt that SPEAK's movement nature meant that it was a 'dynamic network of people who are

working together' and that it had not become 'caught up in tradition, to a large extent'.   A similar

focus on the dynamism of movements was present amongst Just Love members.  Alex explained

how he was 'always quite attracted to things that are a little bit more fledging and a bit more

visionary and flexible and […] a bit more like movements rather than institutions'.  This was an

important element of Alex's attraction to Just Love, as it was a 'bit fresh' and 'a bit more exciting'.

Alex continued that 'I think there's something inside of me that wants to do something new, rather

than just plodding along rehashing the same old thing'.

## Being a community

Community is also a central discourse for both Just Love and SPEAK, again resonating with Millennial

values (Thurston and ter Kuile 2015; Flory and Miller 2008) and being expressed in a more concrete

form than the Collective and Rhythms.  Clare referred to Just Love as a 'community of Christian

students', whilst Alex also commented on the activities of the Just Love 'community'.  Interviewees

were attracted to their local Just Love and SPEAK groups by the community that they offered, and

this community motivated their further involvement and participation.  Alex highlighted that, whilst

it was the homeless outreach that initially attracted him to Just Love Oxford, this meant that he 'got

sucked into the Just Love community a bit in my first term and through that I eventually ended up

feeling like part of the organisation'.  Katie spoke about being drawn in by the community of her

local SPEAK group as a student.  She explained that this began as early as her encounter with the

SPEAK stall at her university freshers' fair: 'she [the student on the stall] was so kind of warm and

friendly and just was a bit like a mother hen […] and I think when you first go to university, you feel

quite vulnerable, so that was very attractive'.  This community 'kept' Katie 'there for the first year'.

Theo identified the 'community aspect' of SPEAK as 'really important', while Lizzie had been

attracted to SPEAK by the 'incredibly friendly, down-to-earth' people.

Community was also a key impetus in the setting up of new groups. Helen, for example, who was

involved in setting up a Just Love group in Glasgow, explained 'I just met with different people and

just chatted to a lot of my friends who were already quite passionate about this kind of thing.  And

we'd gathered together and met up and, yeah, just started hanging out and seeing what we were

passionate about'.  In Helen's account of Just Love Glasgow, then, these friendships preceded the

group's activities.  In addition, community was experienced on a national level.  James highlighted

how:

> What made me fall in love with SPEAK […was] a great, great community that focuses on
>
> relationships … and like you could go to a Soundcheck gathering with 150 or more people
>
> and honestly without being like the biggest extrovert in the world knowing like easily a third
>
> of the people there- and feeling like you know them really well and like you really love them
>
> and they know and love you, without being even that extroverted in that context.

For both Katie and Rebecca, the community of SPEAK meant it could be an authentic movement.

Katie commented that 'things are much more meaningful when they're communicated within the

context of a meaningful relationship', while Rebecca mentioned that SPEAK's activities were 'just

genuine.  The people who were involved were the people who were doing it'.

## An ethos of participation

A focus on active participation and on *doing* things is the third central characteristic shared by both

SPEAK and Just Love.  Both these groups place a considerable emphasis upon being student- or

young adult-led, involving full and direct participation of their members.[140]  Just Love's website for example states:

> Just Love UK is here to support you, and we can be as hands-on or hands-off as you like depending on how much ownership you want to take. Ultimately, we want this to be your project, and we understand that you know your university better than we do - so as long as you are passionate about fulfilling the vision, it'll be up to you to decide how best to do it. We'll still be there to offer training, connect you to speakers and experienced organisations, and offer strategic and emotional support.

Tom described how Just Love Oxford ended up being 'quite passion-led in terms of what we engaged with' and hoped that new Just Love groups would also experience a similar level of ownership, with members able to 'put their own stamp on it'.  Discussing the formation of Just Love Glasgow, Helen commented that 'we really want to be shaped by the people that are coming along' and that as a result the group was 'still quite open as to what direction we're going to take'.   The student-led nature of Just Love was attractive to its members.  Helen, for example, stated that 'something that was really student-led really attracted me'.  Being student-led was also seen as beneficial for the growth of Just Love.  Tom commented that because Just Love Oxford was a 'student run thing, people felt a real sense of ownership.  People felt like it was their baby and were really committed to seeing it grow and thrive'.


SPEAK also identifies as a member-led movement with an emphasis on the direct participation of its members.  Its website states that everyone has personal 'responsibility to those who are suffering as a result of global injustice' and challenges interested web browsers: 'it's up to you to take the initiative'.  James felt that SPEAK:

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[140] This is, of course, limited, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Really respects young people and wants to empower them, not just ask them all to send an email to their MP and then say "and now the campaigns officer will go and carry that campaign forward from there". It was always about letting people really own and be the most significant people within a campaign and within a movement.

The member-led nature of SPEAK is seen particularly clearly through its Flower Model decision-making structure, which James identified as a 'really open space of open decision-making, but also again of participation as well, of really inviting people into it and making happen what they had suggested'. This was because Flower Model is not 'just a talking shop for everyone to come and have an opinion – it partly is that and that's great – but it encourages people to put some work into where they want to get to as well, which I think is great'. Another key feature of SPEAK's participatory ethos is the autonomous nature of local groups. James commended the fact that 'they really didn't have to do what the rest of network was doing. They were encouraged to support the campaigns and so on and encouraged if they were doing a fundraising thing to fundraise for SPEAK but at the same time, a SPEAK group could do literally anything'.[141] James contrasted this with the approach of many organisations, which might have more of an attitude of 'we can't possibly let all these groups use our name without signing something that says "we will abide by these values, we will not get too involved in this kind of campaigning that might damage our reputation"'. James explained further that 'we never put any conditions down and nobody ever stepped outside of what the conditions would have been if we had put them down'. Lizzie also voiced appreciation for the fact that SPEAK as a national organisation 'don't impose what they think we should be doing', commenting that 'I think that's really great'.

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[141] It is worth mentioning here that James's statement that a 'SPEAK group could do literally anything' operates within a set of tacit assumptions regarding SPEAK's membership and activities. For example, it seems highly likely that a local SPEAK group that decided to campaign against abortion would be called into question by SPEAK nationally. However, it is also highly likely that this would never occur because joining SPEAK involves accepting and embodying a certain set of values and emphases. This is clearly elaborated by James later in this paragraph.

In the accounts of SPEAK and Just Love members there was also an interesting interplay between the two ideals of community and participation. Whilst this was not always the case – and in fact could be the inverse, as will be described later – there was an expressed sense that community facilitated and enabled participation. Alex explained that Just Love had successfully been able 'to foster a community that people can attach to and feel like they belong to', and that this in turn encouraged participation: 'people are motivated by feeling valued and feeling known… It's much easier to take steps out and step out of your comfort zone a little bit, if you feel like there are people who love you and care about you and know you and who will cheer you on, regardless of what happens'. Alex reiterated later 'if you want people to get involved, help them to feel like part of something, that they belong'. The community of Just Love also stopped Alex from getting burnt out: 'it brings me a lot of life to do this stuff. It's got community surrounding it. And I think that's a really important thing, like there are people to laugh about stuff with'.

## Narratives of change

If SPEAK and Just Love are very similar in their appeal to these three values – suggesting that active participation, community, and being a movement are very important for Millennial social action – their narratives of change exhibit very different tendencies. Whilst both SPEAK and Just Love share a perspective of young adult identity in which a sense of capacity or agency is central, such that individual members are seen to have the potential to change their lives, the lives of others and the world around them, there are many differences within this broad framework. Firstly, whilst the concept of personal transformation, including lifestyle change, is central to SPEAK and Just Love's sense of identity, SPEAK members demonstrated some scepticism towards this focus on ethical lifestyles. Secondly, whilst both Just Love and SPEAK members emphasised their role in influencing others, this is expressed rather differently, Just Love operating from what they see as their central position within evangelical Christianity to influence the Christian culture around them, SPEAK positioning themselves more as prophetic outsiders on the margins. Additionally, in the case of Just

Love, the current agency of individual members is to some degree counter-balanced by an underlying focus on this agency as *emerging* or *nascent,* such that Just Love members are identified as *future* leaders. This has led to a discourse within Just Love of effectiveness and being strategic, which mirrors, in a new setting, some of the 'old' principles of evangelical youth work.  Thirdly, SPEAK and Just Love demonstrate differing emphases when it comes to charity and structural change, with Just Love focusing more on the former and SPEAK on the latter.  These differences illustrate the extent to which Just Love and SPEAK are influenced by their religious contexts, and the historical trajectories and trends that these contexts bring with them.

*Personal transformation*

SPEAK and Just Love share a whole-life approach to their activities, which includes a faith-inspired ethic of just living, and a focus on depth and authenticity.  This is manifested both in a broad sense of personal transformation and an emphasis on small everyday actions and lifestyle change. Lifestyle has been defined by Giddens as 'a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity' (1991: 81).  Giddens continues further that 'the more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking' (ibid).  The centrality, particularly in the case of Just Love, of lifestyle action should be understood in this light.  Following Giddens, we can understand Just Love members as answering, through the choices that they make, the key question that Giddens states is characteristic of the post-traditional order: 'how should we live?' (1991: 215). Whilst lifestyle change is a project of self-making, this should not however be interpreted as a wholly individualistic or narcissistic process.  Indeed, Giddens contends that it can lead to the 're-moralising' of daily life (1991: 226).  In the context of SPEAK and Just Love, lifestyle change should be seen as demonstrating a certain sense of identity – i.e. 'ethical' – within a specific community and to 'outsiders' of this community, but also of embodying values, such as care for distant others.

Furthermore, and as reflected upon in the context of Rhythms, a focus on self-making corresponds with features of charismatic evangelicalism.

Lifestyle change was especially important for Just Love, encapsulated in the Just Living section of Just Love Oxford's weekly updates, which attempts to 'remind people [that] actually our lives need to change; it can't just be about the big grand ideas about helping people far away, but actually it starts with the way we live and the way we respond to it' (Alex).  Just Lunch, a weekly Just Love Oxford event, also involves processing 'how the Bible helps call us to be just, so in that often that's quite a personal thing about "ok, what does it mean for me to respond to this?  What changes need to happen?"' (Alex).  Similar lifestyle considerations are incorporated into other Just Love activities. For example, Stand Up For Freedom, an awareness-raising event about human trafficking, also led to members being encouraged to think about 'ok, where are we buying our clothes?  Are we actually being complicit in supply chains that use slaves by not paying more attention to where we buy our consumer goods?' (Alex).  Alex perceived lifestyle change as 'a thing for everyone', in contrast to the fact that 'not everyone is called to hang out with homeless people in the street'.  He continued 'we are all called to live justly in the sense of using our decisions to glorify God'.  Durham's Just Love group has a personal stream that similarly hopes to 'encourage each other to lead radical and counter-cultural lifestyles of justice'.[142]  Tom also highlighted that many of the decisions he was making in his everyday life have 'ethical implications in terms of everything we buy, where it was made- like, who made my clothes? How well were they treated?  […] I want to use my consumer power to get behind things that are treating people fairly and are benefiting the people who make them and produce them at every level'.  He further stated that 'all the lifestyle and justice things that I do and trying to live ethically every day, that would again be informed by my understanding of justice being really important from a Christian perspective'.

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[142] http://www.justloveuk.com/durham.html [Accessed 07/10/16]

SPEAK also has some focus on lifestyle change, Rebecca highlighting the exposure 'to radical ways of living', which were helpful in 'challenging the pervading culture of apathy'. For Lizzie, witnessing the attempts of fellow SPEAK members to live out 'an ethical way of life, so in the way that they shopped and the way that they treated people and the way that they built community and the clothes that they wore and where they went on holiday and just embodying a trying to live a different way' gave her a way of engaging with 'huge international issue[s] […] in those small ways, whilst actually being liberated more yourself'. This allowed her to re-engage with social justice issues after a difficult period of social justice burn-out, during which she almost 'gave up on bothering with social justice altogether and just thought "maybe I'll just, you know, sit this one out for myself"'. Lizzie continued that 'the joy in finding that was a major factor in us continuing to strive to live differently as opposed to just getting bogged down in the system'. James and Katie identified personal transformation and lifestyle change as a way in which they could fully embody the values of the network and live with authenticity. Katie explained that SPEAK campaigns weren't about 'doing a good thing and feeling good and having peace of mind to go home'. She explained that campaigning abut structural issues forced her to reflect on her own life: 'if I'm writing to my MP to sign a parliamentary petition to say "let's call for more transparency", I need to be really honest with myself about- are there ways in which I am greedy, or misuse power, or am not fully honest?'. For Katie, this was not about feeling good, but about feeling profoundly 'challenged', which was at times 'uncomfortable'. James also highlighted living up to SPEAK's values as a 'challenge' that could in fact be a 'struggle', because 'the values were so ambitious and we couldn't possibly live up to them'. As a result there was a struggle 'to manage that balance between where we were and where we wanted to be'. This highlights the degree to which SPEAK can feel quite exacting in terms of what it expects from people, implying a strict moral standard, even if this is not a form of morality like, for example, Christian Concern's. The notion of a 'perfect standard' of activist behaviour and commitment has been highlighted by Bobel (2007). SPEAK can also be seen to reflect what has been

identified by Gerardo Marti and Gladys Ganiel as emerging Christianity's shift in focus from orthodoxy to *orthopraxis* (2014).[143]

Among SPEAK members, there was also evidence of some discomfort with ideas of personal transformation and lifestyle change, which was expressed most strongly by Lizzie.[144] Whilst Lizzie identified that 'we've stayed engaging with those issues as opposed to just finding them too painful, as a direct result of our SPEAK group really', she had become increasingly sceptical about creating what she termed 'your own little happy heaven'. Lizzie's reasons for this scepticism were multiple. Firstly, she identified the capacity to make certain changes as being a result of socio-economic privilege. She highlighted her own 'incredibly privileged position' and expressed the view that alternative lifestyles could exclude people who couldn't afford to make particular lifestyle choices or who were in positions that dictated a certain form of life:

> People who are so embroiled in the business world perhaps where it's just not an option to
>
> just turn hippy for whatever reason. What option does that leave for them? And just
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> ordinary people that are just doing their ordinary thing that isn't absolutely staggering?

Secondly, Lizzie expressed discomfort about the potential creation of an ethical living hierarchy, in which social justice activity became 'about me and my little amazing perfect ethical life that I've

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[143] The SPEAK network can be seen to share several similarities with observed features of the Emerging Church, an 'unfolding field of thought and practice… populated by a variety of Christian institutions and actors' (Bielo 2009: 220). These would include: church de-conversion fuelled by moral criticism and churches' lack of social justice focus; a concern with being and doing church rather than attending; a preoccupation with authenticity; concentration on following Jesus (Harrold 2006); a rejection of the denominational structure; left-wing leaning (Hunt 2008); a 'post-conservative and post-liberal' identity (Moody 2010: 499); and an enlarged conception of evangelism, beyond 'getting people saved' (Bader-Saye 2006: 19).

[144] Whilst Lizzie was the only one of my SPEAK interviewees to express this so strongly, my own personal involvement with SPEAK over the last eight years and conversations with SPEAK friends would confirm that the thoughts expressed by Lizzie are not uncommon sentiments. In particular, Lizzie's identification of the feeling of inadequacy that the stress on personal and lifestyle transformation could create resonated with my own personal experiences, and with conversations I have had in the past with various SPEAK friends. It is also worth mentioning that mental health issues may intersect with such lifestyle demands in difficult and painful ways, an observation that is again based on informal chats I have had with SPEAK friends over the past few years. This would seem especially pertinent for a generation in which reported rates of mental ill-health are particularly high.

created'. Lizzie spoke about her unease at herself and Theo becoming 'the people that people really

look up to in a number of ways. Oh, we've done it all right and we're renovating a house [and we

work in the charity sector]. We've got an allotment for goodness sake!', when in reality 'oh God, we

so do not have anything sorted'. Lizzie felt that 'if it's not empowering everybody to feel affirmed in

who they are, it can very much be a culture of certain people that are held up as absolutely amazing

and other people that are just a bit average'.


In the following interview extract, Lizzie and Theo considered ways of combating this:

**THEO**: And in terms of SPEAK, like how do you- 'cause obviously you want to share what

you're doing

**LIZZIE**: you want to inspire people

**THEO**: yeah, yeah, but how do you do that in a way where it doesn't set up a hierarchy?

**LIZZIE**: exactly

**EW**: yeah, yeah

**THEO**: where you're kind of measured based on how much you're doing or what you're

doing, like even – however much you try not to, people will always feel, like we did,

inadequate - or like we do - you know, we're not good enough because someone else is

doing more

**LIZZIE**: and it's also- yeah, you want to inspire people and you want to show them that it's

possible and you want to give people hope that a different way of life is possible- I think

vulnerability is probably the biggest thing with that. I think if you are doing all of those

things but you're still able to be truly vulnerable about ways in which you haven't got it

sorted. I think yeah vulnerability- I've not figured it out, but I feel like that's the key there.

It's just- it can become a way of hiding and not being vulnerable with people, which is always

a problem

**EW**: yeah, yeah

**THEO**: vulnerability and honesty

This dialogue comes to a conclusion which might be seen to support Abby Day's contention that

'young people may be more in search of "authenticity" than prescribed templates of morality' (2010:

99), though it also seems clear that Lizzie and Theo's involvement in SPEAK would provide some

clear-cut moral boundaries, so this search for authenticity takes place in a framework that is morally

delineated in certain ways.

Thirdly, Lizzie identified a tension between personal change and structural change and questioned

the extent to which lifestyle change was a change-making activity:

How are we going to see change?  And what does that mean?  Does it mean each person just

individually living it out in their own life and that…?  We've got friends and family that make

– you know, attempt to make more ethical decisions as a result of seeing how we live our

lives.  But I wonder how many of our friends and family actually write us off more, because

they think 'oh, that's Lizzie and Theo, who are slightly hippy', so I don't know how effective

that is.

Lizzie continued that:

We need to find a way for social justice to make sense to people outside of our little artsy

liberal-y, hippy, kick back to the 60s kind of group, because- because otherwise it becomes

all about how ethical and wonderful we are and how awful and wrong the Tories and big

business is, which makes us feel wonderful but doesn't actually result in real change.

This is significant in two main ways.  Firstly, Lizzie challenges the discourse of several of the Christian

social action groups considered in this study of 'being the change'.  Secondly, she positions herself

against a tendency to demonise the two main targets of contemporary leftist discourse in the UK,

the Conservative Party and corporations.  In so doing, she renders common change-making

narratives more nuanced and complex.  Lizzie's discussion of the potential problems embedded in SPEAK members' 'hippy-ish' identity is worth considering in relation to Szerszynski's 2003 article on the 'marked bodies' of environmental activists.  Szerszynski contends that, whilst elements such as style of dress act as 'visual symbols' of membership of a political community, this 'marked-out nature also makes them vulnerable to being seen as Other in a way that exactly denies them the right to speak beyond their own boundaries, to make the powerful prophetic moral claims that they do' (194).  Lizzie similarly seems to fear that she and Theo's 'marked-out' natures may limit their capacity to speak into the lives of others.  Szerszynski makes the further point that activists can be '"othered" as a distinct social group within society in a way which undermines their claim to be fighting on behalf of the planet as a whole rather than just acting out their own positional habitus' (2003: 203).

*Having influence*

Both Just Love and SPEAK see themselves, to some extent and in different ways, as existing to have an influence.  Katie, for example, identified SPEAK as a prophetic organisation, concerned with 'speaking truth to decision-makers but also to fellow believers as well – and saying "this is really important, this is what God's heart is for"'.  However, a discourse of influencing others was far more apparent among Just Love members.

Just Love hope to influence both their Christian peers and the Christian culture around them.  In the case of the former, Alex identified his role as Just Love Oxford President as 'pulling the best out of people'.  He continued further that he loved 'the relational side of my role – so just getting to walk alongside people, particularly Freshers, encourage them, speak into their life a little bit'.  Alex also commented that he hoped that Just Love was influential in 'stirring the pot a little bit and helping people think a bit more about the kind of justice implications of being a Christian'.  Echoing the latter point, Clara explained that she hoped Just Love's activities would help contribute to a 'shift in

Christian culture', moving away from expressions of religiosity that focus on 'me and Jesus and my relationship with God' towards a focus on the fact that God is 'just crying out for justice'. Just Love's official description states that they hope to 'bring about a culture shift within the Christian student world'[145] and Tom stated that he hoped Just Love would help facilitate a 'culture shift in the Christian community toward a greater prioritisation of social justice'.

Within this broad notion of having influence, there was an important belief in the significance of student-hood as a stage of life. Alex perceived that:

> Going to uni is quite a pivotal time for people who are Christians and a lot of Christians will either decide that it's not really their thing and they can't really be bothered to do Christian stuff and they'll let it go and they'll stop going to church; and a lot of other Christians will really start to throw themselves into it and decide that this is a central part of who they are.[146]

Just Love was seen as a way of demonstrating to Christian students during this 'pivotal time' 'what it means to be a Christian and realising that it's not about half measures or doing it half-heartedly' (Alex). Clara also commented that 'at university you begin the habits of a lifetime, and so it's encouraging students to start really good habits and integrating that as part of their worship'.

However, the focus on student-hood as a catalyst time of life was also counter-balanced by a strong emphasis on the influence, and particularly, leadership these students would go on to have *after*

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[145] http://www.justloveuk.com/our-vision.html [Accessed 31/10/16]
[146] This is interesting, as scholarship would suggest that this is not necessarily the case. Guest et al.'s study found that university was actually less of a destabilising time for young people's religious identity than has often been thought, with most students self-reporting their levels of religiosity as remaining constant (2013: 88). However, Guest et al. do note that the form of evangelical Christianity offered by the CUs *is* destabilising, 'triggering enthusiastic activism and disillusioned withdrawal in apparently equal measure'. As this is the context through which Just Love operate and imagine student Christianity, Alex's comments would in fact correspond with Guest et al.'s findings.

graduating. In this way, the influence and leadership exercised by Just Love members is seen to be emerging and nascent. Tom explained that the 'development of student leaders […] and seeing people grow', and 'developing new leaders and building up the next generation' were highlights of his Just Love involvement. He further identified a key feature of his current role as enabling Just Love committees to do 'the best possible job of inspiring and releasing the students around them and also developing them as individuals to go on and do things afterwards'. Tom hoped that students that had been involved in Just Love would retain these values by the time they are 'two, three, four, five years out into the world' and be 'really going for it now in terms of doing justice stuff, whether that's just through really different lifestyles or giving a lot of money away or that they're directly working in the charity sector'. Tom had also invited the founder of One Life – an organisation that trains young leaders, which Tom identified as 'a really helpful thing for us to be thinking about' –to join the Just Love advisory board. A recent Just Love YouTube video was focused on leadership, stating 'after students graduate we want to see them being champions for Jesus and for justice in every area of society they might find themselves in. In order to see this happen, we want to invest in them now so they can flourish as *exceptional leaders after they graduate* [my italics]'.[147] This focus on leadership corresponds with the arguments put forward by Pete Ward in his work on evangelical youth work. One key contention is that 'Christian youth work seeks to help young people grow in the faith. Growing in the faith is generally linked to a well-defined career of leadership' (1996: 189). However, Just Love stresses the possibilities for leadership in many spheres, contrasting with Ward's assertion that the primary location for Christian leadership is 'through increased responsibility and leadership within the structures of youth work' (1996: 15).

Tom considered that change would come around through:

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[147] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY4edEQWZ8U [Accessed 31/10/16]

A generation of people who would want to be quite *ambitious* and dedicated and get

themselves in a lot of *powerful* positions in a lot of spheres of society and use that to

*influence* a lot of people to make a difference […]  But generally I feel like if we start to

*influence* culture and have people in *influential* positons of culture […] Passionate *influential*

people fighting quite relentlessly to change things and *influencing* people en masse to

demand changes - I think then you can start to make progress (my italics)

This demonstrates that, whilst Just Love is a more grassroots and student-led organisation, it still

shares similarities with initiatives like the CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's

Wilberforce Academy in terms of the ways it perceives change happening and the role of young

people therein. The repetition of influence in the quotation above is particularly striking.  Thus,

despite Just Love's recent occurrence and their own sense of new-ness and of filling a gap, they

should also be understood in the context of a long line of Christian youth work concerned with

leadership and preparing young people for positions of influence.  In Manwaring's study of the

position of evangelicals within the Church of England in the twentieth century, he contends that 'the

Inter-Varsity Fellowship [which would become UCCF] … took strategic soundings of the whole of the

educational process […] with a view to evangelicals gaining influential positions wherever possible,

with the result that, in due course, they occupied posts of considerable importance' (1985: x).

Whilst Just Love are keen to widen the range of issues that are deemed deserving of evangelical

concern, their view of change making follows this historical precedent. The Oxford origins of Just

Love, in this light, are not purely incidental.  Pete Ward argues that 'evangelicalism in an English

context has been dominated by a prevailing public school and university (indeed Oxbridge) educated

ethos' (1996: 10).

Corresponding to this emphasis on preparing students to be influential, there was a focus on such

discourses as effectiveness and strategy.  One of Just Love's official core values is that of 'quality'.

Tom highlighted how establishing a clearer vision and set of objectives meant that Just Love could

'give people tangible, focused ways to respond'. Rosie commented in agreement that the global,

local, personal framework was a useful device for enabling the group 'to think about our impact a bit

more and to just think about the spheres we have influence in and think about different levels

[where] we can actually operate'. Alex identified 'getting really good at best practice stuff' as a goal

for Just Love Oxford and 'being a bit strategic'. Alex continued that he was 'passionate' about

'effectiveness' and 'making sure that we're not just doing things for the sake of doing it, but actually

we're finding the best ways of making the differences that God wants us to make'. An emphasis on

being strategic would also correspond with the kind of historical evangelical emphases described

above.


*Charity or structural change*

It is also important to acknowledge that, within the Just Love change-making narrative and the range

of activities in which Just Love participates, there is little sense of the need for structural change.

Instead, the focus is on charity and helping others, raising awareness and influencing those around

you, and making changes to your lifestyle. Shah has argued that 'evangelicals believe that

fundamental moral, social and political change does not come through top-down, state-centred legal

and policy schemes but through the bottom-up transformation and mobilisation of individuals'

(2009: 137). Whilst this seems a rather too crude generalisation, serving to reify what is in actual

fact a highly heterogeneous Christian movement, it does seem to have some applicability in this

particular context. DeHanas has also highlighted how there may be a tendency for evangelical social

action to focus on 'individual-level heart change' and act mainly in the voluntary sector (2016: 186).

SPEAK, by contrast, has a far greater awareness of structural issues, which is reflected in its higher

focus on campaigning and its entry into contentious and complex campaign areas such as the arms

trade. Indeed, SPEAK's vision contains an expressed discontent with charity: 'in the past we have

spent long enough believing that an organisation will do it all for us, and that giving limited financial

assistance to a charity is enough. However, global problems are more deep rooted, connected with

unfair trade and debt, and many other issues'.[148]  In this way, I would contend that SPEAK and Just

Love respectively share similarities with the conceptualisations offered by Matt Baillie Smith and

Nina Laurie to understand two types of international volunteering: the global citizenship framework,

which includes ideas of solidarity, development and activism; and the neoliberal framework, which

centres around ideas of individual autonomy, improvement and responsibility (2011: 545).  This

difference between SPEAK and Just Love is also significant in light of the categories of student

Christianity identified by Guest et al. (2013).  Students within the category of 'established

occasionals' (those who attended church infrequently both in term time and during the holidays)

were found by this study to be the most actively politically engaged.  By contrast, more regular

church attendance – which was strongly linked to evangelical church attendance – was found to be

more likely to encourage charitable activities than political engagement (Guest et al. 2013: 191).  It

should, however, be noted that, whilst a focus on structural-level campaigning is SPEAK's official

position as a national organisation, the picture presented by local groups may be considerably

different, owing to their nature as autonomous expressions of the SPEAK Network.


To return again to Bang, SPEAK and Just Love represent the most project-orientated initiatives of

those considered so far, though they are far more other-orientated than consisting merely of

'people who want to engage directly in helping to solve those policy risks that confront them in their

everyday lives' (Bang 2009: 119).  This highlights one of the main problems of Bang's theory; that it

applies more to forms of citizens initiatives than to forms of political activity that may be more

concerned with helping others, whether near or distant.  Nonetheless, the Everyday Maker still has

some resonance, such as a focus on politics as lived experience and a pragmatic 'just do it'

philosophy, most clearly expressed by Just Love: 'Do it yourself; Do it where you are; Do it for fun,

but also because you find it necessary; Do it ad hoc or part-time; Do it concretely, instead of

ideologically; Do it self-confidently and show trust in yourself; Do it with the system, if need be'

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[148] https://speak.org.uk/about-us/our-vision [Accessed 01/02/17]

(Bang, 2009: 132). SPEAK and Just Love also seem to exhibit elements of Bennett's actualising citizen. Albeit not in online spaces, SPEAK and Just Love groups are 'rooted in self-actualisation through social expression' (Bennett et al. 2011: 840).

## 7.4 Effectiveness

In turning to assess the effectiveness of Just Love and SPEAK, the interview data suggested that all of the three main attraction points of the two organisations had 'flipsides' which limited the effectiveness of both groups. Just Love and SPEAK are distinct in offering tangible expressions of these values; however, this does not necessarily mean they are more effective, as these values are accompanied by several problems.

### Limitations to being an inclusive community

Both SPEAK and Just Love's ethos of being a community runs alongside various ways in which this may not be inclusive. In the case of Just Love, there is a tension between the group's vision – to inspire *all* Christian students – and a charismatic evangelical way of being that is alienating to non-evangelical Christians. Alex, from Just Love Oxford, explained that there was a key goal 'to unite all the Christians in our city, student Christians in our city, rather than just being some weird clique on the side'. However, whilst self-defined evangelical Christians involved in Just Love were strongly committed to the endeavour, there was a sense that more 'liberal' or 'progressive' Christians didn't feel included in the Just Love community to such a degree. In this way, the Just Love community may not successfully serve *all* Christian students, but only Christian students that fit a particular evangelical mould.[149] This was especially apparent in my interview with Rosie, who explained that the increasingly evangelical identity of Just Love had alienated her from the group. Having set up a Christian social justice group at her university which was subsequently turned into a Just Love group,

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[149] There appeared to be a blindness amongst Just Love interviewees towards forms of Christianity that would be characterised as non-evangelical. If, however, being a Christian is strongly associated with going to church, and if – as Guest et al.'s 2013 work found – church-going as a student is strongly correlated with evangelical or Pentecostal church-going, this would be perhaps unsurprising.

Rosie encountered many difficulties stemming from the evangelical direction that Just Love ended up taking.  Whilst she recognised that Just Love has been 'effective at reaching people where they are' in the context of a student Christian culture that is most visibly and vocally evangelical, she voiced concern at Just Love's affirmation of the Evangelical Alliance's statement of faith and the fact that presidents of individual Just Love societies would soon have to affirm it too.[150]  As a result of this, she felt she 'had to step down as President [of the society], because I didn't think that that was right, because I wanted Just Love to be more inclusive and I wanted to be open to Christians of all denominations and beliefs'.  Rosie continued that she was concerned that 'if we did too much to try and work with the Christian Union, then we would just become too much like them'.  Rosie's opposition to the possibility of having to sign the statement of faith was partly theological but also partly practical: 'I don't think you should have to have certain beliefs in order to be able to do social justice'.

Rosie explained that since stepping down from her position of leading the society 'it has a different feel to it, because the committee is almost exclusively based at one of the big evangelical churches [in the city]'.  She highlighted how the one remaining committee member who was not part of an evangelical church was contemplating stepping down 'for the same reasons because he doesn't feel very at home in that environment because it seems quite exclusively evangelical'.  Rosie expressed sadness at this 'because it's the society that I set up.  And it's now gone down a different path'.  As a result of this different direction, Rosie's involvement had decreased considerably, as she felt 'a little bit uncomfortable sometimes going to the events because it is not quite how I wanted it to be and I don't always agree with everything that they're saying any more'.  This had been particularly the case at national training events Rosie attended, at which she felt that Just Love 'were pushing a kind of evangelical agenda and they weren't being very open to other styles of worship or other types of Christianity.  And there was an assumption there that everybody there was evangelical and I found

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[150] Tom confirmed that each Just Love committee would need to affirm this statement of faith, though individual Just Love members would not have to.

that pretty problematic'. Rosie identified this assumption as correct, but self-reinforcing: 'It has evangelical members and it's going to become evangelical and it's going to stay evangelical'. Whilst Rosie asserted that Just Love were 'still doing really good things' and that the 'activities they're doing are really great', she thus felt increasingly uncomfortable with the 'theology behind it'.

By contrast, Lizzie commented that her local SPEAK group might struggle to accept people that had the view that 'social justice is important but as a means to evangelism'. Thus, whilst SPEAK's inclusivity and ecumenicism were widely acknowledged, there are perhaps limits to SPEAK's inclusive nature. Whilst some members of Lizzie's SPEAK group were part of a 'very charismatic, evangelical church' and had a 'reasonably conservative faith', Lizzie felt that, despite their full participation in the group, there was nonetheless a sense that they didn't 'connect with the group quite as much'. Lizzie explained that she was 'always sceptical of progressive things that seem really inclusive' but that she felt were 'as exclusive in different ways', such as, for example, creating a 'little leftie bubble'. Guest et al.'s study of student Christianity tenuously suggests that there may be a link between social justice activism and taking a marginal position in terms of church-going: 'as political engagement is often about fighting for the rights of the socially marginalised, it is interesting that it is also associated with taking a more marginal position at church' (2013: 191). This marginality may lead to a distinct sense of identity that may be disrupted by members who are more active church-goers within more visible and vocal elements of Christianity.

*Class and ethnic diversity*

SPEAK and Just Love were also limited in their inclusivity due to the fact that they were predominantly middle class.[151] Rebecca highlighted how the SPEAK community was not as heterogeneous as SPEAK might like to think: 'we're all white and middle class, pretty much. 95% of us'. This was partly a result of the fact that SPEAK is a student network: 'it's going to be the

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[151] Gender did not emerge as a key fault-line within either Just Love or SPEAK. However, this chapter will later point to what appear to be higher levels of 'emotional labour' carried out by female members. It is also worth pointing out here that Just Love groups seem to have no disagreement with female leadership, but this has been a major bone of contention within Christian Unions, and female CU presidents are uncommon. See http://exepose.com/2014/03/13/christian-unions-sons-of-god/ [Accessed 07/10/16]

privileged part of our society that can afford to go to university, which through institutional racism is largely white'.  Lizzie also commented that the group was not 'very good at including people culturally' and spoke about the difficulties of accommodating people from other cultures in their 'very white middle to upper class' group.  For SPEAK members then their lack of ethnic and socio-economic diversity was viewed as problematic, which may reflect the more activist-orientated identity of SPEAK members, diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality being very important in contemporary activist circles.

Just Love also has an evident middle to upper class bias, as evidenced by the universities in which they are active.  The more common Just Love perspective, however, viewed this privileged class position as a basis from which to act.  Just Love Durham describes its desire to break 'the student "Bubble" of privilege',[152] whilst Just Love Glasgow encourages students to get out of their 'ignorant, but comfortable, student bubble'[153] and work with local charities and churches.  More strikingly, Just Love Glasgow hopes to use the 'privilege and influence' of students to support international charities.  None of the Just Love members I interviewed mentioned any discomfort about being a predominantly middle class movement.  This may be a result of Just Love members' firm positioning within evangelical churches, which are themselves predominantly middle class (see Ward 1996). Again, SPEAK members' more marginal position in terms of church-going may be expected to have implications, such as an increased likelihood of criticism towards the class basis of congregational Christianity.

## Tensions between community and participation

As highlighted above, community was often seen to facilitate participation.  However, within SPEAK members' accounts, there was also a sense that active participation might be limited by the focus on community, as such an emphasis might inhibit a group's more political goals.  For SPEAK members,

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[152] http://www.justloveuk.com/durham.html [Accessed 07/10/16]
[153] http://www.justloveuk.com/glasgow.html [Accessed 07/10/16]

then, there was a felt tension between the encouragement, and living out, of community and full participation. Rebecca, for example, explained that she sometimes got frustrated with the desire amongst SPEAK members to 'hang out for a while'. She continued, 'sometimes, in my opinion, there was too much just hanging out'. Rebecca realised, however, that this desire for community might stem from SPEAK members' involvement in a broader activist culture, such that 'when people who are active anyway and are also part of SPEAK they're like "ah, these are Christians, we can talk about being centred and not doing too much and the value of community as well", so maybe that's part of slowing things down as well'. Nonetheless, Rebecca identified this as a 'tension' and gave an example of going to festivals and 'people are doing the stalls and they're actually just talking to each other and they're not being proactive at greeting new people [...] With every group that is grassroots and is built around relationships, [such things] will happen I think'.

Similar reflections were offered by Theo and Lizzie, stemming from the context of their local SPEAK group. Their group had undergone a conscious phase of community-building following a decline in numbers. This led to a focus on 'just living out community' rather than campaigning. For Lizzie this was important, as, after a challenging year working in the NGO sector, this was 'something we felt we could really get involved with'. Theo also highlighted the importance of not putting 'pressure on ourselves to be coming up with new things all the time and working on new campaigns and how can we make the biggest impact and stuff like that'. However, whilst Theo appreciated this community focus, he also voiced some concern about its possible implications: 'sometimes I wonder if, because we're pushing so hard to get people engaged, we're not actually doing as much social justice action stuff as we used [to] or would otherwise be doing'. Theo explained how some members of the group had found this particularly difficult, as they 'really wanted to be doing more social justice stuff, because that's what they felt the purpose was'. In these accounts then, the agency promoted by SPEAK is tempered or counter-balanced with a sense of tension between *doing* and *being*. This again reflects trends in contemporary activism, such as attempts to balance political activity and self-

care.  It also has longer historical roots, such as the debate between urban activism and creating

rural communes.


## Limits to democracy and participatory decision-making

SPEAK places significant emphasis upon its open decision-making processes.  However, despite the

opportunities put in place by Flower Model, there are some limits to the role that ordinary members

can play in SPEAK's decision-making.  James highlighted that SPEAK's trustees also hold a role in

decision-making, particularly more strategic decisions, and that sometimes there was some

confusion between the decision-making powers of Flower Model and those of the trustees.   As

James explained, it was sometimes difficult to find a balance 'between our values of open

participation and the fact that we needed to make some decisions', and difficult too to communicate

this to the rest of the network. James also commented on the need for 'better clarity and definition'

of the different roles of the trustees and Flower Model- 'what both things are there for and what

they're not there for and where and how decisions would be made at different levels on different

issues'.


As well as organisational constraints to participatory decision-making, there are also inherent

constraints as part of the process.  Rebecca highlighted how whilst 'the possibility for being part of

shaping [SPEAK] is definitely there', 'it's quite a slow process', which can lead to frustration.  She

continued, 'you can't change everything at each Flower Model', and highlighted the difficulty of 'ok,

this has already been decided, we are actually working on this, and have been for a year […] so we

have to build on that, rather than scrap it and start something new'.  Whilst Rebecca didn't think

SPEAK had always listened to feedback very well and that there had previously been 'a tendency […]

to brush off feedback that might have been quite constructive', she also identified that some

feedback or suggestions could be 'hard to listen to' if they came from someone who had 'never been

to Flower Model […] and it's like "well, you haven't been part of the planning process, you're speaking to something that you actually know nothing about"'. She also highlighted how there could be a lot of 'heightened emotions' around issues, due to the influence of charismatic Christianity in SPEAK's early years. Rebecca recalled, following prayer sessions, people being 'really distressed if you don't listen or don't take it on-board as much as they think it needs to be'. This can be linked to the emphasis within charismatic Christianity on personal revelation, such that ideas may be seen to be divinely-revealed (Swindle 2009). In such a context, failure to take these ideas seriously would have understandably emotive implications. Following the work of Riis and Woodhead on understanding religious emotion sociologically, we can understand charismatic Christianity as constituting an 'open emotional regime' (2010: 200), triggering very strong individual emotions that may not easily be contained or stabilised by the group.

Just Love currently offer fewer opportunities than SPEAK for individual members to input into decision-making. Whilst Just Love committees naturally have a role in making practical decisions 'in terms of on-the-ground work' (Tom), other decisions are made by Tom, the exception being those decisions that involve 'more of a high-profile reputational issue for the charity, so something like who we're to partner with'. In such situations, the Just Love trustees would also be involved. Tom explained that the trustees 'trust my discretion to know when it gets to a level of decision that needs to be run by them'. Whilst Tom might informally canvass the views of student groups about particularly significant decisions, this was not built-in as a formal process. However, when I spoke to Tom, Just Love was in the process of establishing a membership process, whereby each student group would be classified as a member, and would send a representative to Just Love AGMs, so that the student groups would 'have a certain stake in how the charity is run nationally, 'cause we did want to make sure that they have a voice and it's not the case that older people dictate from up high and the students feel a bit disempowered'.

Perhaps as is often the case with more community-orientated organisations, there may also be less voting-based democracy.  James confirmed that leaders of Flower Model working groups or 'petals' would not be chosen through application, recruitment or voting, but rather 'the ideal process would be that the petal leader would be looking to build their petal […] and from within their petal they would be looking for who could lead next and be building up to a few potential leaders'.  The process of establishing new Just Love student group committees may follow similar procedures.  The current committee plays a significant role in deciding upon the membership of the new committee, as Tom explained:

> So in September, coming into the new academic year, they started to discuss who the new committee would be, drew up a long list with a view to opening nominations about half way through that term.  So they take nominations and then the existing committee would decide and they'd approach a president and a vice president who would sit on for a term and then they'd start approaching the other six.

Prior to this process, the current committee would be encouraged to consider the skills of new members and invest in them, so that, if they are approached for the next committee, they 'feel like we've been developing them'.

This demonstrates a similar succession process to that followed by university Christian Unions and independent evangelical churches, whereby people are approached and asked to take up a position, rather than individuals standing for positions themselves.  This process would often be considered to be 'spirit-led'.  On the one hand, such an approach may serve to reinforce the status quo and allow for the expression of certain voices at the expense of others.  In the case of Just Love, for example, it seems likely that this approach would favour individuals of a particular charismatic Christian persuasion, or attendees of the 'right' kind of church, whilst potentially overlooking liberal Christians like Rosie.  However, on the other hand, it may encourage people into positions of leadership that

they might not themselves have considered, and also potentially allow for the best utilisation of different individuals' skill sets.  In addition, for some smaller Just Love groups in particular, the idea of voting was considered impractical.  Rosie, for example, highlighted how 'we haven't really exactly had a wide pool of people to choose from' and that as a result 'we thought it would be best to reach decisions by mutual agreement rather than by the voting process'.  As well as the practicalities of such decision-making in a small group, Rosie felt that reaching a place of mutual agreement was 'more part of the ethos of Just Love'.[154]  Of course, processes of consensus decision-making are not free from inbuilt hierarchies and power dynamics, as Freeman's (1973) theory on the 'tyranny of structurelessness' makes clear.  Freeman contends that structurelessness is impossible and that groups that are not formally structured always have an informal structure, such as elites formed by friendship groups (1973: 153, 154).

## Relationship between self-organising and being supported/receiving training

Whilst both groups take pride in being student-led, Just Love place more emphasis than SPEAK upon training and providing members with support and resources.  There are national training weekends twice a year for Just Love local committee members, which hope to provide 'high-quality input on leadership, lifestyle and theology'.  Tom highlighted that 'there's a bit of a line to tread in that it's probably helpful for students to be receiving support and expertise on things where they need it but also having the space to own it themselves'.  This provision of support was appreciated by Just Love members.  Rosie, for example, commented that 'getting support and training was really good' and that this was something she missed following the decrease in her involvement.  She'd also found the structure provided by the Just Love 'mission statement and […] vision' helpful and 'easier to work with [than not having one]'.

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[154] My own experience as a member of two small, local SPEAK groups was very similar.  Deciding the next committee would usually just be a matter of having a discussion as a whole group.  If there were more people who wanted a role than there were roles available, we would create a new role for this person!

By contrast, some SPEAK members commented on a lack of training or intentional learning processes. Lizzie, for example, commented on the fact that she didn't 'really get' the arms trade campaign, 'as in I knew it was bad, but I didn't really understand it like they [other SPEAK members] did'. Lizzie felt that this happened 'with grassroots-y things like that', in that 'perhaps people who are very involved don't take a step back and think about the organising aspect of it and the training aspect of it, which I think is really important and perhaps what more formal organisations perhaps do better'. Lizzie concluded that she 'could have been more effective in my campaigning if I had been a bit better – [more] knowledgeable on it'. This can perhaps be understood in light of James's comment that SPEAK was 'never too subservient' to the 'general rule for campaigning' of giving people 'simple actions to do and sometimes simple information'. SPEAK instead was 'prepared to give people an awful lot of information if they wanted to read up and get more informed and more involved'. Whilst James really appreciated this depth and the fact that SPEAK wasn't patronising, Lizzie's experiences suggest that this kind of information is perhaps inaccessible and lacks a simple entry-point. Lizzie's experience may also suggest that, in the context of their autonomy, local groups may be less well equipped to resource and train their members than SPEAK as a national organisation. Just Love groups, by contrast, are given more of a framework in which to operate.

## Not recognising personal limits

An emphasis on full participation also has its drawbacks, as it may feel over-whelming or too highly demanding, something that seemed to be the case with SPEAK particularly. Rebecca, for example, highlighted how 'there's almost too much for people to be involved in. So sometimes local groups maybe lost out to people being drawn into Flower Model'. Katie recognised that, for people who worked for SPEAK, there could be issues in terms of people's energy levels and capacity: 'recognising limits and boundaries can be a bit of a grey area. And I think that therefore people who have worked for SPEAK have felt exhausted perhaps and maybe got to the point of burnout'. This problem is compounded by the fact that SPEAK employs people on a support-raising basis, in which

employees are not paid by SPEAK, but are instead expected to fund their own salary through eliciting donations from churches and congregants, friends and family.[155]  Whilst Katie identified that this contributed to an 'enriching' process of 'drawing other people into it and learning how to communicate the message', she also felt it could 'add to the strain' of working for SPEAK.  Lizzie was more forthright in her dislike of the support-raising structure: 'I've met so many people that have done that and just hated it and it's been an awful experience.  I've yet to meet anyone where that's been a positive experience and I just think, yeah, it's not a very responsible way of employing people'.   In addition, whilst a lack of resources facilitated SPEAK's participatory ethos – as it is not an option for SPEAK to pay external bodies to produce resources or come up with ideas – this could be interpreted by SPEAK members on a local level as overly demanding.  Lizzie commented how when SPEAK as a national organisation got in touch 'I don't necessarily trust it, because it almost feels like they're needing … they're needing.  [...] They're wanting to push certain things and so when they contact their smaller groups in a sense they do want things out of them, as well as to support them, and I feel that quite strongly'.   Whilst specific gender dynamics were not a notable finding of this chapter, it is striking that all the comments that critiqued the demanding nature of SPEAK were made by women.  Within many spheres of human activity, including work and activism, it has been noted that women may carry out more 'emotional labour', and it is possible that such a phenomenon may be at work here.  Women's emotional labour, in the form of caring for others alongside their other work and responsibilities, has been observed within trade union activism by Franzway (2000).

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[155] SPEAK justifies this support raising as having a Biblical basis: 'support raising or living on gift income is something that Christians have done since the Levites were asked to be the priests in the Hebrew temple. They couldn't make a living like others did but God asked all the Israelites to work in partnership with others offering some of their secure income. Jesus, his disciples, and later the apostles, also worked in partnership with other believers who supported them in their ministry'.  See https://speak.org.uk/node/183 [Accessed 31/10/16]

## 7.5 Conclusion

Just Love and SPEAK appeal to Millennials through a focus on being a community and a movement, and on enabling young adults' active, direct participation, and an ethos of self-organising.  In the tangible expression of these values, Just Love and SPEAK offer distinctive alternatives for Christian Millennials to engage in social action.  They differ, however, in their narratives of change, which can be seen to be influenced by the different religious positioning of these two initiatives.  In addition, SPEAK and Just Love's very distinctiveness is accompanied by various problems that result from these values.

# Chapter 8 – Prospects

The previous three chapters have considered the main ways in which the selected case study organisations attempt to appeal to young people, including the extent to which they are responding to generational change.  These chapters have also reflected upon the ways in which these youth engagement strategies and responses to generational change have been negotiated by young adult participants, thus considering the short-term effectiveness of these initiatives.  The focus in this chapter turns to the issue of the case study organisations' long-term sustainability, considering the trajectories we might expect them to follow and their prospects as a result.  This chapter will thus consider each case study organisation by turn. Owing to the very different natures of the case study organisations – and the highly varied contexts in which they operate – this is inherently a slightly uneven exercise.  For example, the interviews with Leadership Programme and Wilberforce Academy participants found that many Millennials were critical of their experiences, already hinting at potential problems for the long-term sustainability of these initiatives.  By contrast, there was little critique from participants of the Christian Aid Collective internship and the Tearfund Rhythms Emerging Influencers programme.  As a result, to consider the long-term prospects of these organisations required a little more unpacking and rather more critical thought.  Accordingly, more attention is given to some organisations than others in this chapter.

## 8.1 The CARE Leadership Programme

As Chapter 4 demonstrated, the Leadership Programme hopes to equip young Christian graduates with leadership skills, self-development as a Christian in the public sphere, and networking opportunities.  It does this through the provision of academic input and high-level work experience, predominantly in parliament.  It seems likely that this kind of experience will continue to appeal to a small number of young Christians.  However, this section will critically assess the potential of the

Leadership Programme to grow and broaden its appeal to more people, a desire expressed by the Leadership Programme director.

My assessment would suggest that growth seems unlikely for a number of reasons. Firstly, the target of the Leadership Programme's advertising remains the UK's top strata of universities, which inevitably limits its appeal to a particular societal sector. The Leadership Programme director expressed no desire to branch out to consider advertising to other universities (something that could also have the effect of increasing the diversity of Leadership Programme participants), despite his wish for programme growth. Secondly, within the handful of top UK universities, the number of potential Leadership Programme participants is limited still further to the number of students within these universities who are committed to Christianity in the particular way in which it is defined by CARE's Institute for Faith and Culture. The application form for the Leadership Programme, for example, asks for a personal reference from the applicant's church leader and for the applicant to account how they 'came to faith in Christ', as well as answering various questions on Christianity in public life. According to Guest et al.'s work, this kind of student Christian – an active church-goer with orthodox belief in Christ – is the most visible and vocal, but are also in the minority, when taken as a proportion of the total number of students who self-define as Christian (Guest et al. 2013). If the Leadership Programme continues to be marketed at this particular kind of Christian at the UK's top universities and if this form of Christianity declines (which would, from church-going statistics, seem likely),[156] then it is probable that applications for the Leadership Programme will decline.

Thirdly, it seems likely that the 'product' that the Leadership Programme offers may become less appealing too. The Millennials I interviewed for this project were politically engaged and informed, but ambivalent at best and antagonistic at worst to parliamentary politics, thus corresponding with

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[156] Evangelical Alliance statistics found that while in 1998 25% of their membership basis was between 18 and 34, by 2008 this had decreased to 3%. See http://www.eauk.org/idea/sep-oct-2014-issuu.cfm [Accessed 31/10/16], p. 4

the general characteristics of their generation. Their narratives of change primarily focused on the role of the church, making a difference in their local communities, and the capacity to make change through personal everyday decision-making.  If this trend in attitudes continues, then it seems likely that the appeal of the Leadership Programme may further decline.  However, the director of the Leadership Programme did express the desire to broaden the opportunities offered by the programme to other sectors, such as the third sector and business.  These alternate emphases may have the power to resonate rather more with Millennials, particularly if the emphasis is on social enterprise (as Greg suggested).  However, this broadening of focus could also have the effect of diminishing the Leadership Programme's distinctiveness, particularly some of the specific values that it prides itself on, such as its prestige.

## 8.2 Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy

As Chapter 5 suggested, the Wilberforce Academy, rather than trying to engage a broad spectrum of young adults with Christian Concern's work, instead seems to be part of a process by which Christian Concern find and select a small number of young adults who are most 'on board' with their organisational agenda.  The interviews conducted for this PhD – alongside other empirical data – would suggest that this may be increasingly difficult for Christian Concern. Firstly, conservative Christian young adults will increasingly find themselves interacting with peers – and in a general social milieu – whose values and attitudes are greatly opposed to those of Christian Concern.  This means that the articulation of conservative 'family values' is a matter for far more deliberation, requiring great sensitivity.  As a result, Christian Concern's approach may be increasingly alienating for Millennial Christians, even for those, like my research participants, who broadly share Christian Concern's conservative values.

Secondly, Wilberforce Academy attendees' accounts of their attempts to provide critical feedback to Christian Concern about their experiences suggest that the Wilberforce Academy is unlikely to

change approach or direction.  Amy, for example, had received no reply when she emailed Christian Concern with some feedback and requested that she 'wanted to have a conversation' with them about the Wilberforce Academy.  Kush had provided Christian Concern with feedback concerning how 'they could be more effective if they thought a bit more about what sort of kind of tactics and strategies they wanted to be conveying', following which he had received a generic reply.  However, Kush later spoke to some Christian Concern staff in person and found that there had been no 'shift away from what they were doing'.  Furthermore, Kush got the impression that 'they didn't consider my voice to be one of the….to be the voice of the target audience, as it were […] to be representative of others who were at the conference, or of the majority of the others'.  Christian Concern's tendency to ignore constructive feedback means that, if this continues, they risk alienating a large number of young Christians, who do in fact share values with the organisation but are reluctant to align themselves with Christian Concern's 'black and white' approach.  However, it also seems likely that there will always be crystallised, subcultural forms of very conservative Christianity that will continue to provide Christian Concern with a source of small numbers of young people who they can engage in their work.

## 8.3 Tearfund Rhythms

On a surface-level, Tearfund Rhythms seems to be the most successful of all the case study organisations.  It has a clear young evangelical target audience, who can be situated within the sectors of congregational Christianity in the UK which, if not growing, are stable and where the greatest number of young adult church-goers are (Brierley 2006).  In addition, the narrative produced by Rhythms seems to clearly resonate with Millennial Christians.  However, I think there is reason to be cautious of Tearfund's optimistic discourse.  Tearfund employees' responses were strikingly lacking in self-criticism when compared with those of Christian Aid employees.  Thus, certain features of charismatic evangelical culture should be borne in mind, such as a tendency to over-state unity and a culture of (over-) optimism and enthusiasm (Warner 2007), which was also

present in my interviews with young adults.  Whilst the voices of the Leadership Programme and

Wilberforce Academy participants went a long way towards being able to consider the effectiveness

and sustainability of these programmes, this was not the case here, necessitating that this section

take a slightly different approach.[157]  Accordingly, this section will draw on recent research from a

policy or practitioner perspective, in order to consider Tearfund Rhythms' long-term sustainability.


A recent selection of reports have considered the values that NGOs mobilise when they attempt to

engage the public with particular causes, pointing to the complex interactions between different sets

of values and suggesting that, if an NGO appeals to a particular set of values, it may negate others.[158]

A particular focus of these reports is the ways in which NGOs may appeal to 'feel-good' sensibilities.

Tom Crompton's 2010 report *Common Cause: The Case for Working with our Cultural Values,* for

example, contends that appeals to values like social status 'are problematic because […]

strengthening these values serves to weaken opposing values that underpin concern about bigger-

than-self problems' (2010: 21).  Instead, Crompton recommends that NGOs appeal to intrinsic values

as they strengthen 'those values associated with greater concern about bigger-than-self problems'

(2010: 35).  Darnton and Kirk take a similar line of argument, asserting that, while appeals to

Western publics' self-interest may yield short-term gains, such a strategy means that people are 'less

likely to support pro-social campaigns in the longer term' (2011: 7).


Tearfund Rhythms does not explicitly appeal to feel-good factors or self-interest and Ian was clear

that Tearfund hoped to have an emphasis 'on poor and vulnerable people, rather than focused on

the supporter, making them a hero'.  However, there were some rather more subtle ways than those

suggested in the Crompton (2010) and Darnton and Kirk (2011) reports in which Rhythms does

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[157] The approach taken in this section also stems from my own personal interest in social justice issues.  From this perspective of personal commitment, I hope to position myself here as a critical friend.
[158] These reports were actually recommended to me by Ian from Tearfund, demonstrating awareness of their findings at the organisational top-level.

appeal to certain values that might be seen as unhelpful in the longer-term. Firstly, then, whilst Tearfund's development practice emphasises the power within the overseas communities with which they are in partnership and 'the belief that a community works itself out of poverty' (Kiera), their youth engagement seeks to empower privileged western young people, particularly given the middle-class nature of evangelicalism within the UK, the Christian context in which Tearfund are operating. Kiera, for example, spoke of the desire to 'enable them [British young adults] to speak up for those that are living in the hardest places and those that are living in the most extreme poverty', identifying Rhythms' target demographic as 'people of power'. Kiera also highlighted the desire to create 'an innovative way that is empowering for people to connect with those living in poverty through a charity'. The trip abroad encapsulates this issue of 'whose empowerment? whose power?' most profoundly. Western young adults are encouraged to write about their experiences, thus giving themselves a voice: meanwhile the suffering 'other' becomes reified as the object of a blog post. There is a sense – however slight – that the empowerment of these middle class Western youth may come at the expense of the empowerment of the people who Tearfund hope to serve. Biccum, for example, has highlighted how, in contrast, with the 'developing' subject, a key notion of the 'developed "global" citizen' has emerged 'whose rights and responsibilities as such include a knowledge of the wider world, acceptance of the values of liberal democracy and an inclination for active participation in the project of development' (2010: 40). Furthermore, the emphasis of Tearfund Rhythms on the 'personal story' – the individual face of poverty or suffering – individualises problems that are inherently structural. This may serve to inhibit young adults' engagement with the deep structural forces that create and exacerbate poverty and inequality, as Howell (2012) suggests.

Secondly, the politics of the everyday advanced by Rhythms develops a certain kind of citizenship in which the notions of 'doing good' and 'service' are embedded into the practices of everyday life. [159] From one perspective, this kind of citizenship can be seen as fairly accessible, not relying on particular sets of skills or a large amount of spare time. However, it is also inherently middle-class, with a focus on practices, such as buying Fairtrade, that may be alienating for less financially affluent young adults. As Bryant and Goodman assert, such activities are only an option for 'those that can afford to pay the economic premium' (2004: 360). It is also a relatively genteel form of everyday politics, involving little in the way of 'getting your hands dirty'. The political is internalised, and, whilst the focus is on the everyday, the messiness of the everyday seems to be largely ignored. The everyday in the change-making activities of Rhythms is a neat experience with identifiable possible actions and clearly categorised areas of operation, despite Sarah's comment that 'God asks for your whole life to be engaged in the mission to reconcile and restore all things to Him, so that's going to take your whole life'. In addition, whilst Rhythms has a fairly abstract or idealised notion of community, the difficulties inherent in working with people and collectively making decisions are absent from their discourse. Rhythms' stress on personal lifestyle changes may not only be inaccessible in class terms (as considered above), but also risk making social change look *too easy.* In addition, whilst this is not necessarily 'feel-good', it may risk becoming rather self-orientated. Ben from Christian Aid, for example, suggested that, though it wasn't 'the sum of what they want people to do', Rhythms 'boils it down to fairly small actions and it's about *making yourself right* […] It can be

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[159] The political efficacy of such lifestyle agency has been a subject of much debate in political theory. The critical development theorist Chouliaraki argues that it represents a form of 'light-touch activism', involving 'an effortless extension of everyday life that responds to our individual consumer needs whilst minimising our engagement with human vulnerability' (2013: 178, 179). For Chouliaraki, much modern engagement with development issues has replaced 'an other-oriented solidarity of deeply felt ideological commitments' with 'a self-oriented form of solidarity of short-term and low-intensity engagements with a cause' (2013: 70). By contrast, Luke Bretherton, a political theorist and theologian, considers such small actions as purchasing Fairtrade products, which fit into Chouliaraki's framework of small-scale, personal actions that take place within the parameters of consumerist society, more positively, contending that it 'enables, albeit in limited ways ordinary political actors to express neighbour love and pursue a just and generous global good' (2010: 176).

seen as a load seen as a load of things that you just kind of try and do and a big, long, sort of "ethical checklist".  So "if I'm a good person, I'm going to do X, Y Z"' (my italics). The politics of the everyday advanced by Rhythms may then preclude more radical political activity and collective organising.

To summarise, it seems likely that Rhythms will continue to successfully attract and engage young evangelical Christians.  However, Rhythms' focus on empowering these young people exposes some potential problems in their thinking around power.  Additionally, and perhaps more problematically, the change-making narrative advanced by Rhythms emphasises accessibility at the expense of an acknowledgment of the difficulty of making change, the importance of persistent struggle, and the necessity for messy collective political organising.  This may lead to young adults becoming disillusioned with the simplicity of the Rhythms' change-making narrative, as they encounter deep-rooted, intractable societal problems.  Alternatively, it could lead to a future evangelical social justice culture that fails to engage deeply with the structural causes of poverty and injustice.

## 8.4 The Christian Aid Collective

The Christian Aid Collective shares several characteristics with Rhythms, such as some emphasis on personal stories of impoverishment and disadvantage rather than structural causes, and a focus – though rather less than Tearfund – upon the politics of the everyday.  In further correspondence with the idea that certain values may negate others as explored above, the Collective internship also encourages a discourse of 'getting into development' that has some problematic implications.  Pippa highlighted how the internship hoped 'to train up people who are experienced in development', while Chris commented on the internship's role in giving young adults 'a better idea of what a development agency does, and the different parts that make it work, and perhaps their place in it in terms of where their skills relate'.  This discourse also featured in Collective interns' accounts. Hannah, for example, commented 'I've always wanted to get into development and I don't think I'd be anywhere near where I am now if I hadn't done the internship', while Maddie stated that the

Collective internship had 'sounded like a good route into international development'. Maddie's desire to 'get into development' meant that she was subsequently disappointed when there were few jobs available with Christian Aid after the internship had finished: 'I think a lot of us thought it would be easier to get jobs in the organisation later. I remember one time three of us- three of the interns- went for one role but they gave it to someone external. Which is fine […] but we'd given a lot'. Ben also highlighted how the common desire to 'get into development' led to a somewhat competitive atmosphere, in which 'everyone sort of looks over their shoulder a bit'. The 'getting into development' discourse is not necessarily in and of itself problematic but it is a product of the 'professionalization' of development, a phenomenon that has been critiqued by many critical development scholars (for example, Barnett and Weiss 2011). Furthermore, it may place a greater emphasis on having a 'nice' or 'good' career than it does upon a narrative of social and economic change, additionally corresponding with Biccum's identification of the '"global" citizen' ideal (2010). It should also be noted that in this way Christian Aid Collective interns were closer to Bang's (2009) Expert Citizens than to Everyday Makers.

However, the long-term sustainability of the Christian Aid Collective would seem to be threatened rather more by other factors. Firstly, the Christian Aid Collective is operating in a less amenable religious context than that of Rhythms, as has been elaborated upon more fully in Chapter 6. Its traditional supporter churches (such as the United Reformed and Methodist churches) have only very small numbers of young church-goers, leading to an erosion of Christian Aid's historic supporter basis. Whilst the Christian Aid Collective has tried to widen its appeal to evangelical young adults, this may have the effect of alienating non-evangelicals, as was the case for several Collective interns who felt uncomfortable with the practice of praying aloud as a group, for example. In addition, it seems unlikely that Christian Aid could ever build up the evangelical support that an explicitly evangelical organisation like Tearfund has. To do so would require becoming a rather different kind

of Christian organisation.  It would seem more productive for Christian Aid to appeal to young adults who may not be in churches, but are spiritually engaged and interested.

Secondly, organisation employees suggested that, within the organisation, Christian Aid's youth engagement work is not given priority.  Chris highlighted how fundraising was prioritised over and above young adult work at a senior management level and identified this as a short-term view that contradicted Christian Aid's more long-term development perspective.  Chris reflected 'it's so weird, because Christian Aid as a development organisation understands the long-term view perfectly […] and yet with our own supporter base, we seem incapable of the long view'.  Chris commented further that, at a higher level, 'youth work is not- has not been prioritised' and that 'Christian Aid has put its head in the sand about it'.  If the Collective continues not to receive adequate resources from the organisation, it seems likely that it will decline in its capacity to engage young adults, in a competitive 'marketplace'.

## 8.5 Just Love

Just Love is making early steps towards becoming increasingly institutionalised.[160]  Alex noted that in his time being involved in Just Love it had become more established and 'really gained in prominence in the university'.  He reflected that 'it probably started as a movement and over time has become a bit more of an institution probably'.  Whilst Alex stated that he was 'not against institutions' and could see the benefits of being 'a bit more settled, a bit more known about' and feeling 'really safe and grounded' as an organisation, he worried that they often 'get stale and just do things for the sake of doing them rather than actually thinking about the most effective way'.  He also felt that 'there was something about Just Love in its young stage that you felt like a voice – I felt

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[160] The institutionalisation of social movements has been widely observed.  Dryzek et al., for example, highlight – though go on to challenge – the 'life-cycle' view of social movements, in which the 'de-radicalised movement eventually enters the corridors of power' (2003: 3).  A classic example often given of this is the German Green Party.  However, this would seem to be appropriate only for movements that are state-orientated so this is rather less applicable to Just Love.  There is also a wide-ranging literature on the government's co-option of faith-based service providers (see, for example Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes 2008).

like I could contribute something and be part of something and actually be valued a bit more'. He

continued that in 'big organisations […], it's easy just to get lost in it and just be another number'.

For Tom, the move to achieving charity commission status would make things 'more official', but

probably not particularly change 'student stuff on the ground'. In the context of Just Love's current

range of activities, this seems fairly likely. However, charity commission status could prevent future

developments in Just Love's strategy and activity, such as, for example, inhibiting Just Love from

taking a more politically outspoken stance, or campaigning against a particular government policy.


It also seems likely that Just Love will become increasingly clearly demarcated as an evangelical

organisation. This has the potential to help Just Love occupy a central position within student

Christianity, owing to the high visibility of evangelical Christianity at universities. Being positioned in

alignment with Christian Unions may also be beneficial, as they are larger and more active than

alternatives, such as the Student Christian Movement. This strictly evangelical identity may mean

though that Just Love members are not exposed to alternate Christian voices on social justice issues.


However, Just Love's evangelical positioning does offer interesting opportunities to challenge

elements of this charismatic evangelical culture. In the final stages of writing this PhD, Just Love

launched Unashamed, a campaign to end violence against women run in collaboration with

Restored. It is so-named because 'we want to be unashamed in condemning violence wherever we

see it and in standing with those subjected to it'.[161] This campaign marks a significant departure

from Just Love's early activities of homeless outreach and fundraising, which might be seen as fairly

uncontroversial and to mirror the social engagement of many charismatic evangelical churches. By

contrast, this campaign may have the potential to challenge the church contexts that Just Love

members operate within. Firstly, the campaign recognises that violence against women is a problem

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[161] http://unashamedcampaign.co.uk/ [Accessed 31/10/16]

*within* Christianity not just outside it.[162]  Secondly, it recognises that churches may not address

sexual violence, or may do so poorly.  Within churches that have a strong emphasis on sexual purity

in particular, survivors of sexual violence may be led to feel ashamed of what they have experienced

(see Cooper-White 1996).  The Unashamed webpage also acknowledges the experiences of sexual

violence of transgender women,[163] something that is significant given the limited parameters of

much evangelical talk about sex and sexuality. Just Love may then, from their clear evangelical

identity, be able to positively influence the prevailing cultures of the charismatic churches of which

they are a part.

## 8.6 The SPEAK Network

Though SPEAK over time has needed to develop an organisational structure, and accordingly become

more institutionalised, it still retains much of its movement identity, leading to what Rebecca

identified as an uncomfortable position between 'being quite organised and having an organisational

structure' and being more 'grassroots' and 'radical'.  SPEAK's movement-orientation has led to it

experiencing three main difficulties: increased disorganisation, diminishing energy, and an ageing

process.  Firstly, then, Lizzie perceived that SPEAK, as a national organisation, had been 'in a better

place as an organisation five years ago […] the disorganisation or under-resourcing has taken its grip

a bit I think'.  Whilst Lizzie felt that SPEAK had done 'amazing' things with so little, she affirmed that

'it just feels quite like you never know whether you're coming or going a bit', and also highlighted

the constant changes in staff.  Secondly, Rebecca identified that SPEAK had experienced 'that

levelling-off of energy that you always find in a movement', which she understood as a 'natural

maturing process in any group or movement or organisation after the initial "woah, this is really

kicking off, it's great, there's all these people" and it's like "ooh, now we have to calm down a bit,

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[162] This is backed up by data.  A survey carried out at Momentum (an evangelical Christian conference aimed at students) found that 30% of young, Christian women agreed that they had experienced fear of their partner in a relationship and 42% had been forced by a partner to perform sexual acts they didn't want to.  See http://unashamedcampaign.co.uk/2016/10/21/being-a-survivor-of-sexual-abuse-in-church/ [Accessed 31/10/16].  See also Collins-Mayo 2015.
[163] http://unashamedcampaign.co.uk/faqs/ [Accessed 31/10/16]

capitalise on that and make it sustainable" and that's quite a difficult transition to make anyway'. Rebecca felt that SPEAK didn't particularly deal very well with a sense of 'tailing off' after the 'first growth spurt'. Rebecca also identified that SPEAK's growth in the early 2000s was due to a vibrant context of development-orientated social justice action, such as the trade justice movement and Make Poverty History. Make Poverty History, however, was seen by Rebecca to have had a negative impact, as it 'killed coalition working because everybody was like – in other NGOs – "this was a bit pointless and a bit of a waste of money and we didn't achieve anything"'.[164]   This was seen to have led to SPEAK having a diminished focus.

Thirdly, SPEAK has also experienced an early process of ageing, meaning that it has struggled to maintain its influence in the student world, but previous student members have stayed with the movement. This ageing process has led to considerable discussion within SPEAK as to the respective roles of students and graduates within the movement and its future. James spoke about the need for 'the 30 year olds knowing that they're not the most important people in SPEAK' and for the 'older generation' to 'humbly and sacrificially lay down their feeling of being at the centre of SPEAK and saying "actually, the youngest people should always be at the centre of SPEAK"'. Whilst James felt that 'SPEAK will continue to be a wonderful expression of a Christian faith that's rooted in community and social justice and prayer and everything else regardless of people's age' and that 'it totally spans generations and it really doesn't matter how old you are; you'll be good for SPEAK and SPEAK will be good for you', he felt nonetheless that 'SPEAK does need to keep reinventing itself and we do need a new generation of SPEAK people every two or three years, and that it needs to keep evolving'. A new generation was seen to 'keep it really fresh and young and dynamic and not let anything get too stationary and comfortable'. Katie was more philosophical:

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[164] The negative effects of Make Poverty History have also been acknowledged by scholars. See Nash 2008; Harrison 2010; and Sireau 2009. These sources highlight the extent to which Make Poverty History was perceived as a failure within the international development sector.

It's a shame that there […] aren't as many students, but at the same time, I think, if that is to be the case, we need to accept that less stuff will probably happen because there's less time that people have to give to it.  Yeah, I don't know, I don't know how much we should be saying "no, let's kind of revive, you know, the SPEAK presence in the student world", or how much we need to kind of just let something die in order for something new to grow up.

Rebecca similarly felt that SPEAK had a choice: 'it's either "stay focused, be a student movement and just let people fly off at the end" or accept that there is a lifespan for grassroots movements, who can become really important communities for each other and grow with each other'.  She continued that the latter was not necessarily bad, 'because there's a lot of power in having worked with a lot of the same people for a number of years and being able to plan together and run campaigns together'.

James attributed the decreasing intake of new students to the decrease in SPEAK's staffing levels, which he in turn associated with the recession and increase of tuition fees, both of which rendered a support-raised position[165] on the SPEAK staff team a far less feasible prospect.  Owing to students and young adults feeling 'incredibly insecure if they weren't straight onto a career path', 'support-raising was suddenly a much more terrifying thing when you're saddled with all this debt from being a student'.  James also felt that 'people felt less able to ask for money because they were more conscious of how strapped for cash their friends and family were'.  Whilst James acknowledged that support-raising had always been scary, he felt that factors such as the recession meant 'it became terrifying and more taboo as well'.  With less people willing to support-raise, SPEAK has experienced a decline in staffing, and capacity as a result, meaning that 'you will have less time to invest in good quality relationships with SPEAK groups and the people who are leading them and the people who will lead them next year and put on a freshers' fair and bring in new students every year' (James).

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[165] Support-raising is when the employee funds their own role by raising financial support from their church.

This changing national SPEAK picture has been reflected in its local expressions. Lizzie explained how she and Theo's local group had shifted from being student-dominated to being made up predominantly of graduates. As well as a demographic shift, this had affected the activity and identity of the group. Owing to the fact that many of the group's members had gone on to work in fields relating to social justice, social justice activity was 'not exactly what we want to do outside of our full-time job, but we want to be around people that really, really care about it as well and you can feed off each other' (Lizzie). Theo agreed that 'we're definitely people that are doing lots in our own lives […] but we used to be a group that does things together', and highlighted how the group increasingly functioned as a 'support' group. The frustrations felt by some members of the group as a result (as explored in Chapter 6) correspond with Freeman's observation that 'groups flounder at the point where people tire of "just talking" and want to do something more' (1973: 158-159). Lizzie and Theo's SPEAK group had also struggled to achieve the 'critical mass of people for it to be something that people want to be a part of and feel like it's something to be a part of'. Declining numbers is particularly significant in a grassroots context, because 'people hear about SPEAK through people who go to SPEAK' a decline in numbers means that 'you've got less chance of finding new people'.

These difficulties encountered by SPEAK would suggest that SPEAK's influence in the student world will continue to diminish, and it will become a group that ages together in the same way that a movement like Green Christian has.[166] It is also likely that this will mean a diminishing in political activity organised by SPEAK, as the already politically active seek out SPEAK more as a place of long-standing friendship and support.

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[166] I was employed by Green Christian during the course of this PhD to consider how they might better appeal to younger people. Green Christian formed as Christian Ecology Link in the 1970s, and its members have aged with it.

# Chapter 9 – Conclusion

This PhD thesis set out to explore whether and how Christian social action groups are responding to generational change.  It has considered this issue through assessing the young adult engagement strategies and programmes of six chosen case study organisations.  It has also explored how effective these responses are at engaging young adults and how well they resonate with Millennial sensibilities, as well as considering the possible long-term sustainability of these initiatives.  In this conclusion, I present the key findings of my thesis, and draw some comparisons between the case study organisations. I also highlight the theoretical contributions of this thesis, before discussing the gaps in my research and possible avenues for further fruitful study.  Finally, I briefly consider the practical implications of my findings for the Christian social action sector, and make some tentative recommendations for the future.

## 9.1. Key findings

This PhD has charted a considerable range of different youth engagement strategies and responses to generational change by Christian social action groups that can be split into three groupings: adult-forming, youth-empowering, and self-organising.

The CARE Leadership Programme and Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy represent an 'old' model of engagement that follows certain historical evangelical trajectories, such as a focus on leadership and strategic influence, and the training of young people to become the leaders of the future.  This model, which can be summarised as adult-forming, hopes to instil in young adults 'correct' values and principles so that, through the positions of influence they are expected to occupy in the future, they can exercise change.   CARE and Christian Concern view external traditional institutions such as government and the legal system as very important and possessing the main agency to solve social problems.  However, this agency will only be fulfilled if these external

institutions are reinvigorated with Christian values and virtues. CARE and Christian Concern thus offer programmes for young adults who prioritise discourses of leadership and how to be a Christian in public life. However, the young adults who came into contact with these organisations embraced alternate narratives of change to the top-down visions offered, instead stressing possibilities for action in a church or local context, and being rather less focused on policy. In opposition to Christian Concern in particular, young adults expressed a far more nuanced, sensitive and careful elaboration of conservative Christian moral concerns, distancing themselves from Christian Concern's polemical tone. In these two main ways – alternative visions of change and nuancing – the Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy can be seen as not necessarily being overly in-keeping with Millennial sensibilities.

The Christian Aid Collective and Tearfund Rhythms represent two attempts by large organisations to establish a new way for young adults to engage with 'big charity', thus reinvigorating themselves as institutions, attempting to restore young people's trust in large NGOs and providing young people with empowering and accessible forms of engagement. These initiatives are consciously marketed at Millennials, demonstrating certain organisational understandings of generational change, and intentional responses to these socio-cultural dynamics. The imagined young adult subject of the Collective and Rhythms is socially and politically interested but looking for ways to respond, is enthusiastic to use their voice, wants to incorporate social justice concerns into their daily life, and – as a group –are heavily influenced by their peers. It is evident that this perception is resonating with Millennials themselves. Rhythms in particular has created an especially compelling narrative, which young adults have internalised. This is partly due to the different – and more amenable – religious context within which Rhythms are operating. As the chapter on long-term sustainability suggested, however, there is a risk that, in trying to make these issues accessible and engaging, Rhythms especially may risk making the solutions to these complex structural problems seem 'too easy', erasing narratives surrounding the messiness and difficulties embedded in political change-making

activities.  Both initiatives may also correspond with neoliberal narratives of citizenship, rather than presenting alternative ways of being.  The Christian Aid Collective internship's discourse of 'getting into development' is a particular example of this.

Just Love and SPEAK represent two Millennial student responses to issues of social action concern, both of them characterised by a key rhetoric of self-organising and 'we want to do it ourselves'.  Both are shaped by very particular religious contexts – charismatic Christianity and post-evangelicalism respectively – but share certain features, such as an emphasis on being a community and a movement and a focus on active participation.  In their expression of these features in local face-to-face contexts, Just Love and SPEAK offer distinctive ways for Millennials to engage.  These characteristics, whilst attractive to Millennials, are accompanied though by various problems and limitations. When it comes to their long-term sustainability, however, these two initiatives represent very different trajectories.  Just Love looks to become increasingly institutionalised and increasingly clearly demarcated as an evangelical group.  As a movement, it has grown quickly in just a few years, though this growth is currently restricted to the UK's more prestigious universities.  Its strong alliances with significant players in the evangelical world and the high proportion of young church-goers that are in evangelical churches would suggest further growth can be expected, at least until decline sets in within charismatic evangelicalism to a greater extent than its current rates.  Just Love is impressively vivacious and active and provides young adults with ways to become active in their communities, including experiences that may pull these middle class young people out of their comfort zone.  In addition, Just Love's recent foray into the issue of sexual violence demonstrates a tendency to want to deal with issues that evangelical churches have not traditionally dealt with well.  Furthermore, they are doing this within a context of widely reported problems of campus cultures of sexual harassment.  By contrast, SPEAK's influence within the student world has eroded in recent years.  It seems likely that SPEAK will become a community that ages together.  This will bring with it certain power and certain difficulties.  Moreover, SPEAK looks set to be more beset than Just Love by

various processes of wrestling over, and grappling with, difficult issues.  Whilst this gives SPEAK the

edge in terms of encouraging critical thinking, it may also inhibit their potential for action.

Rhythms, the Collective, Just Love and SPEAK all represent burgeoning new models or, to some

degree, alternatives to the 'old' model, as represented most clearly by CARE.  Firstly, whilst CARE

and Christian Concern place much emphasis upon traditional institutions – even if these are seen as

needing to be redeemed – the attitudes of the 'new' models are more ambivalent in terms of their

relationship with institutions, as indeed are the attitudes of young adults who participate in the

Leadership Programme and the Wilberforce Academy.  Secondly, the forms of engagement offered

by the 'new' models demonstrate, albeit not perfectly, a shift from notions of 'dutiful' citizenship to

the 'actualising' citizen, to adopt the terminology suggested by Bennett et al. (2011).  Whilst there is

still some sense of the dutiful citizen, through emphases on recycling, volunteering and helping

others, there is also much more focus upon personal integrity and the kind of person who you are

becoming.  These 'new' models also come closer to Bang's conceptualisation of the Everyday Maker,

though this is mediated through a faith-infused lens.

However, the changes in direction that Rhythms, the Collective, Just Love and SPEAK represent

should also be identified as partial, with lingering influences of the pervasive old model, particularly,

for example, notions of leadership and influence.  In addition, all the groups operate within histories,

traditions and legacies of which they may not be fully aware.  It is also important to realise that,

despite the ways in which these groups have distanced themselves from some of the problems of

the old model, they bring with them new problems and difficulties.  Thus, all six case study

organisations are limited in some way when it comes to how effective and sustainable their young

adult engagement strategies are.

## 9.2 Theoretical contribution

One of the key premises and starting points of this thesis was that there was very little literature that discussed the interactions between Millennials, Christianity and socio-political engagement, though plenty that considered the relationship between any two of these. As a result, the line of investigation taken by this thesis has not been able to take advantage of a specific existing theoretical framework. It has, however, engaged with a wide variety of different theoretical contributions from a range of disciplines and fields, finding many moments of resonance with these diverse sources. Each chapter of this thesis – by necessity as a result of the very different kinds of organisations considered (in terms of their causes of concern and their religious positioning) – has also had to engage with distinct bodies of literature. This need is symptomatic and illuminating of the fragmentation of contemporary Christianity in the UK, and the pluralisation of political identities and political organising. That this thesis has had to attempt to thread together many different strands of literature is thus partly a result of this fragmented reality, and complex empirical landscape.

In order to consider the theoretical contributions that this thesis has made, I will return now to consider the main areas of scholarship considered in the literature review, exploring what my findings may contribute to: generational scholarship; literature on contemporary Christianity and the Millennials; and literature on the Millennials and politics. Finally, I will reflect on my research's implications for the study of contemporary Christianity, Millennials and socio-political engagement.

### Generational scholarship

The term 'Millennial' has become heavily loaded in recent years with an array of unhelpful stereotypes and generalisations, many of them negative, such as 'lazy' and 'entitled'. It has also featured as 'clickbait' in a number of journalistic headlines and, I would argue, become devalued by over-use. I have used the term 'Millennial' in this thesis with a degree of tentativeness, employing it

primarily as useful shorthand for a particular group of people 'coming of age', and being shaped in their formative years by the conditions of a particular time period.

However, I hope the findings of this thesis caution against any one-dimensional stereotypes of the Millennial generation.  My findings help to highlight some of the fragmentation and heterogeneity in terms of the identities, attitudes and behaviours of this generation.  My research participants are fairly unified and homogeneous in demographic terms, being all of them British, middle-class and Christian (and furthermore most of them church-goers), and, in addition, predominantly white.  Yet, they demonstrate considerable variety in their approaches both to doing faith and doing politics, as well as how they reflect upon these themes.  This cautions strongly against any generalisations about the Millennials.  If Christianity offers such scope for highly varied attitudes and subjectivities, then the 'secular' world would be assumed to offer similar, if not greater, scope.

Nonetheless, it would be inappropriate to render the concept of a generation completely meaningless, as, I would argue, it does still possess some weight and analytical significance. However, whilst much scholarship on generational change has considered a generation either in terms of concrete situational factors (such as certain political events) or in terms of certain characteristics (like 'entrepreneurial'), this thesis, I would contend, points more to the importance of prevalent cultural norms and values that serve to shape the members of a  generation, albeit in diverse ways.  This notion of prevalent cultural norms is rather more slippery than concrete situational factors, and rather more difficult to pin-down and articulate.  However, it also possesses more weight than the crude idea of generational characteristics.  Prevalent cultural norms and values will indeed influence a generation, but the nature of this influence will be shaped and filtered by the other demographic contexts that different members of this generation inhabit and occupy.

The crucial prevalent cultural value that I found to be negotiated by my research participants was the value of choice and tolerance for individual choice in belief and behaviour. My findings thus have resonance with the work of such scholars as Heelas and Woodhead (2005) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002). My own research participants inhabited various different religious and political spheres, which positioned them in varied ways in terms of their relationship to the 'secular' mainstream and prevalent cultural values. However, the sanctity of individual choice and of tolerance was strongly present, though in different ways. For example, Wilberforce Academy attendees were strongly aware of these cultural values, and referenced them in their critique of Christian Concern's approach to the issues that they care about, while retaining – to varying degrees – opposition, for example, to same-sex marriage. They thus exhibit the 'struggle for coherence' expressed by Strhan's participants, being shaped both by the cultural and normative conditions of late-modernity and their conservative evangelical sub-culture. These cultural conditions were negotiated differently by others of my research participants. SPEAK members, for example, expressed some struggle between their want to encourage others to live differently or spur others into action and their implicit value placed upon individual choice, as expressed, for example, in not wanting others to feel judged or accommodating others' preferences. That my charismatic evangelical participants were less reflective on such issues may be a product of the symbiotic relationship between charismatic evangelicalism and cultural values of individualism (Warner 2007; Herriot 2015).

To return to some of the major debates that have characterised generational scholarship, I would suggest that we are observing certain very important shifts in cultural values. This shift may be felt more keenly and strongly by those who are old enough to have witnessed it, but its effects are likely to be experienced most strongly by those who have grown up during and after this shift. However, these cultural values are filtered by other demographic and experiential factors so that they are experienced very differently; they may be taken for granted, or they may be actively, and perhaps

anxiously, negotiated.  Millennials inhabit a time in which certain cultural values are prevalent and influential, but the nature of this influence is filtered by a multitude of different factors.  I hope that my findings have helped to demonstrate this, and that they simultaneously caution against generational stereotypes while revealing the reality of cultural change.

It should also be noted, however, that my findings demonstrate elements of generational identity being constructed.  For example, Tearfund Rhythms has a clear view of this generation, which has both resonated with and been internalised by young adults who have participated in Rhythms.  As a result, this particular conceptualisation of a generation has become to some degree self-reinforcing, as members of a generation may enhance roles and identities prescribed to them externally.  The socially-constructed nature of generations has been explored by Vittadini et al., attention being drawn to Alanen's concept of 'generationing', 'by which different generations […] interdependently construct each other by purifying their distinctive sets of practices' (2014: 66). McDaniel has also identified generations, similarly to gender, as both a process and a performance (2007 in Vittadini et al. 2014: 73).   My research participants should then be understood as responding to certain generational construction processes, which they may further reify or, alternately, seek to disrupt.

## Contemporary Christianity and the Millennial generation

This study has perhaps been unusual in its focus upon the experiences of young Christians that are, in the main, embedded in traditional Christian institutions (i.e. church) and who get involved, formally or informally, in a Christian organisation of some form.  This positions my research participants as rather marginal in terms of the religious landscape of the UK, and I hope that the findings of this PhD have contributed in some way to exploring the lived experiences of this marginality.  Guest et al.'s work (2013) draws attention to the fact that, of Christian students, evangelical Christians are in the minority.  However, my findings suggest that marginality is not a felt experience for charismatic evangelicals, who do not perceive themselves to be a minority, but rather

a sizeable and influential grouping.  By contrast, non-evangelical Christian students (and those with

less routinized church-going practice) do feel marginal, though they are not numerically.  This

captures two main findings of significance: charismatic Christianity's sense of optimism (as well as its

failure to recognise alternate visions and versions of Christianity); and the struggle, for those

Christians whose Christianity does not take an institutional form, for alternative forms of being and

belonging.


I would also like to suggest that studying a group such as this – that, through their forms of religious

beliefs and belonging, are not demographically representative of the wider generation – can in fact

be a useful way to consider the dynamics of change.  The young adults I have studied are perhaps

not at the 'cutting edge', but instead offer a way in which to study how the 'old' and the 'new'

interact, which can serve to illuminate both in interesting ways.  For example, in focusing on young

people largely within the sphere of institutional Christianity, this thesis has drawn attention to the

ways in which young adults are negotiating the institutional parameters of church and faith-based

organisation in the increasingly post-institutional fabric of the UK.  Whilst focusing on young, church-

going Christians may on the surface appear to be an almost anachronistic direction for research, this

focus has enabled what I hope has been an interesting discussion of the dynamics of change and

continuity within contemporary Christianity, and within political organising.  This research project

has also hoped to widen the scope of focus in terms of the ways in which young people and religion

are considered, drawing more attention to the political.  This represents a contribution to an area of

literature that, especially in the UK, is rather small.

## Millennials and politics

My research participants expressed the faltering emergence of new post-institutional political

identities, struggling for a vocabulary to describe their political identities and behaviours, and

continuing to ascribe fairly narrow definitions to 'the political', demarcating their own behaviours

and attitudes as distinct from the 'properly' political sphere.  I would argue that this struggling emergence of new vocabularies is mirrored in theory, and that my research participants' voices throw light upon this deficiency.

Bang's conceptualisations of the 'Everyday Maker' and the 'Expert Citizen' go some way towards trying to provide a new vocabulary for political identity and activity, but seem to be more helpful in their name and in what they suggest than in their more defined application by Bang, which serves to limit and narrow two concepts that, on the surface, seem highly pertinent.  This highlights what seems to be a common problem within attempts to conceptualise emerging forms of political identity.  There is a tendency to offer interesting concepts (in terms of their semantic implications), but apply them narrowly.  The way in which Bang applies his concepts, for example, is mainly within the sphere of citizens' initiatives, whilst Bennett et al.'s useful terms of the 'dutiful' and 'actualising' citizen are applied to distinguish between the realms of online and offline political activity respectively.  I would argue that some of my research participants share similarities with Bang's 'Everyday Maker' broadly conceived but not in its narrow application; similarly, some demonstrate similarities with Bennett's 'actualising' citizen, but not just as a form of online behaviour.

My findings suggest that such terms could be usefully widened in their application.  The 'expert citizen', the 'everyday maker', the 'dutiful' citizen and the 'actualising' citizen might be usefully thought of less as complex categories containing many characteristics, but as useful terms that capture the particular *essence* of lots of different types of political activity and identity.  Removing these concepts from their specific applications and considering whether they might represent broader forms of identity than their more narrow uses thus far might be a useful starting point for future research. From there, it might be possible to consider different sub categories of political activity and identity within these broad frameworks.  My research suggests a real need for new conceptualisations and understandings of emerging political identities; and these concepts, reflected

upon more broadly, do offer something very useful.  Alternately, such concepts might be better

understood as 'ideal types' with a whole spectrum of nuanced positions between them.  Owing to

the fact that processes of change are never complete, young adults can also be expected to oscillate

between the two in complex ways, and, furthermore, in ways which are shaped by such factors as

religious faith.  The table below captures what I believe is the essence of these concepts removed

from their specific contexts of application:

| The dutiful citizen | Organisational forms of civic engagement, rooted in a sense of duty |
| The actualising citizen | Looser forms of organisation, rooted in self-actualisation |
| The Expert Citizen | More institutional, project-orientated approach to change-making |
| The Everyday Maker | Local, practical, ad hoc orientation to change-making |

My research also hopes to challenge what seems to be a preoccupation within the literature with

online political activities, at the expense of politics as a relational lived experience, and something

that is negotiated and reflected on both on- and offline.  The majority of the outputs of the

MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, for example, yield little of interest

in terms of how young people think about their political identities and activities, but rather provide

fairly abstract lists of specific online behaviours.  Whilst it is undeniable that social and digital media

have changed the fabric of politics, studying online spaces merely as constituted of a series of 'acts'

would not seem to be an especially illuminating approach.  Rather, it is important to consider how

these online acts interact with the offline, how they are thought about, reflected upon and

negotiated by the participants, and how they are manifested relationally.  I have tried through this

thesis to go some way towards responding to Soep's challenge to consider the 'theories of change'

(2014: 13) with which young people operate, but future research in this direction would be helpful.

This would seem to be not only theoretically important, but also potentially of interest to Millennials themselves as they grapple with what it means to be political in a complex social, cultural, economic and political landscape.

## Contemporary Christianity, Millennials and political participation

During the course of this thesis, I have suggested that the forms of Christian social action groups available for young adults in the UK can be categorised as falling into three categories, in terms of their strategies: adult-forming, youth-empowering, and self-organising. This threefold typology allows for greater nuance and variation than the typologies offered by Bennett et al. and Bang, and more neatly captured the identities of my case study organisations. The work of Bennett et al. and Bang was still, however, useful for considering the political identities of my young adult interviewees. Taking Bennett et al. and Bang's concepts as 'essences', as suggested above, my own suggested categories can be considered in relation to these, and the chart below summarises these relations. It should be noted that my own categories refer to the strategies deployed by the case study organisations, whilst those of Bang and Bennett et al. refer to the forms of political identity and activity I found to be prevalent among my young adult research participants. It should also be stated that these are simplified categorisations of complex attitudes and behaviours.

| My typology (referring to the strategy of the case study organisations) | Dutiful or actualising? (referring to the strategy of the case study organisations) | Case study organisation | Dutiful or actualising? (As expressed by young adult participants) | Expert Citizen or Everyday Maker? (As expressed by young adult participants) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adult-forming | Dutiful | CARE Leadership Programme | Both actualising and dutiful | Everyday Maker |
| | | Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy | Both actualising and dutiful | Everyday Maker |

| Youth-empowering | Actualising | Tearfund Rhythms | Actualising | Everyday Maker |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | The Christian Aid Collective | Actualising | Expert Citizen[167] |
| Self-organising | Actualising | The SPEAK Network | Actualising | Everyday Maker |
| | | Just Love | Both actualising and dutiful | Both Everyday Maker and Expert Citizen |

This chart demonstrates that Bennett et al.'s concepts, taken in what I believe to be their essence, map neatly onto the discourses and strategies of my case study organisations, and to my own typology. The 'adult-forming' groups encourage a dutiful form of engagement, whereas the 'youth-empowering' and 'self-organising' groups encourage primarily an actualising form of engagement. However, it is more complicated when it comes to the attitudes of young adult participants. Firstly, these attitudes may not correspond with the strategies of the organisations. Secondly, relating Bennett et al. and Bang's concepts to my own framework with regards to the perspectives of participating young adults does not yield a simple picture, but rather a complicated one, in which the categories suggested by Bennett et al. and Bang are influenced by religious faith in tricky ways that defy too neat an image. This calls for more research that attempts to categorise faith-based forms of social action. For considering young adults' involvement, however, I believe my threefold framework offers a useful typology.

## 9.3 Remaining silences

There are two main 'silences' that I have been especially aware of as I have undertaken and completed this research. Whilst this PhD has by no means tried to provide a comprehensive review

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[167] Due to the prominence of the 'getting into development' discourse

of the entire Christian social action sector in the UK, there are two arenas that have been particularly neglected and might merit further study.

Firstly, this PhD has not explored social action projects initiated by churches and congregations. This stemmed initially from a conviction that it was interesting to explore different organisational forms, the findings of my Masters research having explored self-definition as Christian without church attendance. For this project, however, church was a central orientating feature of many of my research participants' lives. The currently ongoing 'Megachurches and social engagement project' at the University of Birmingham may well provide future insight into some of the themes I have considered. Though it doesn't have an explicit focus on young adults or generational change, megachurches do attract lots of young people and this study may be of subsequent interest.[168]

Secondly, my research has not considered festivals, an incredibly important part of young adults' Christian engagement. This has meant the omission of Greenbelt, an especially social justice-orientated festival, and also the youth festivals of Momentum and Soul Survivor, including Soul Survivor's recent initiative, Soul Action, which aims to engage youth in social action projects. Festivals operate as temporary spaces of collective effervescence that may be highly influential, although their longer-term influence is debatable. Spaces of contemporary pilgrimage like Iona and Taize also offer spaces where social issues are discussed in a collective environment. Taize in particular is a gathering place for thousands of young adults from all across Europe each summer and concern with social justice issues is embedded into Taize worship.[169] An exploration of how festivals and places of pilgrimage present social issues and how young adults respond to this could be a very interesting avenue of further study, particularly the extent to which festivals equip young adults to take what they have learnt into their everyday context.

[168] The focus of the Megachurches and Social Engagement study is mainly, however, the role of these churches in building 'social capital'.
[169] An interesting article by Pritchard (2015) explores Taize both as a place of pilgrimage and as a place where publics are formed.

## 9.4 Practical implications

Whilst this PhD has been driven by various empirical and theoretical questions, it has also been deeply entangled with my own experiences as a Millennial, as a 'sometime-activist', and a 'sometime-Christian'.[170] This research has subsequently for me been inseparable from a series of philosophical and existential questions.  How should we live?  How should we act in a world in which 'all our hands are dirty' (Roy 2004 in Littler 2008: 2)?  How can we change the world we live in?  I do not pretend to have come anywhere near to having answered these questions, age-old yet always shaped by the particularities of the context of their asking.  Nonetheless, I would like to conclude this thesis by suggesting that Christian social action groups could usefully try to strike a balance between the 'opposites' suggested below – and that even a recognition of these pairs of tensions, and an awareness of where a group situates itself, could be fruitful.  The decision to include this concluding section was also influenced by Gergen's recent assertion that research should not only be concerned 'with the intent to illuminate, understand, report on, or furnish insight into given states of affairs' but also with 'value based explorations into what it could be' (2014: 287).  Whilst much of my research has indeed been about 'mirroring' an existing situation, and gaining understanding thereof, I am reluctant for that to be where this thesis ends.  For Gergen, this form of academic 'mirroring' can too often 'lend inertia to conventional forms of life' (2014: 293).  Space does not permit me to explore fully 'what is to become', but I hope nonetheless to engage in a little, albeit brief and tentative, 'future forming' (2014: 294).[171]

### Between being and doing

Spaces simply to 'be' are important.  In a context of busy lives and much-reported high rates of mental health problems, this would seem to be increasingly imperative.  The SPEAK Network in

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[170] I use these terms as a conveniently brief expression of my slight discomfort with fully self-identifying as either an activist or a Christian.

[171] This is also influenced by my experience during the course of this PhD of doing research for and with two Christian NGOs.  This consisted of an evaluation report for Micah Challenge (a development advocacy charity) and of recommendations of how to attract greater numbers of young people for the environmental movement, Green Christian.  The subsequent section thus also draws on some of the things I learnt, and reflected upon, as a result of these experiences.

particular seems to provide people who may feel burnt out with a space to be in community with like-minded people and take refreshment from this. However, this cosiness of community may lead to a lack of socio-political action, and associated frustration with this. In contrast, SPEAK may simultaneously sometimes feel like a pressured environment to excel in ethical 'doing', conflicting with individuals' personal constraints and capacity levels. Accounts of contemporary activism (for example, Occupy) show a similar tension between these two different impulses, and it is also an historical debate within Christianity. Christian social action groups should demonstrate awareness of these two – simultaneously potentially contradictory and potentially mutually reinforcing – impulses, and attempt to create a balance between them, or even just a theory of their relationship.

## Between the coherent narrative and the critical voice

The groups I studied varied between those with a particularly clear-cut worldview (CARE, Christian Concern, Tearfund Rhythms and Just Love) and those with a slightly more fluid one (the Christian Aid Collective and the SPEAK Network). CARE and Christian Concern are fairly directive and Just Love and Tearfund Rhythms also provide a clear answer to the question of 'how should we live?', whilst SPEAK members by contrast seem to grapple with such questions rather more. The former tendency may either lead to critical alienation from a group – as was the case with Christian Concern – or the internalisation of a group's narrative inhibiting both critical thought and more complex forms of engagement with issues of social concern. The latter may allow for deeper critical thought around issues and the expression of different views, but may also be an uncomfortable space where no clear 'answers' can be found. It is likely that a group may want to encourage one or the other of these two alternatives, but they should be aware of what this may preclude.

## Between exclusivity and diversity

The discourses of the case study organisations, and the reality of their practices, can also be split into those with more exclusive, or clearly demarcated, forms of identity (CARE, Christian Concern, Tearfund Rhythms and Just Love) and those that emphasised diversity (the Christian Aid Collective

and SPEAK).  Whilst the former clearly excludes certain kinds of participation, the latter may prevent

a clear sense of unity of purpose.  However, within a context of increasingly balkanised politics and

the prevalence – for young people in particular – of social media 'echo chambers', the development

of groups that allow for the expression of diversity and for mature expression of difference would

seem important.  My findings in particular exposed some key problems relating to divisions between

young non-evangelical and evangelical Christians.  There seem to be fewer spaces available for

young people with non-evangelical faith who may feel alienated by evangelical forms of Christianity.

Similarly though, evangelicals may also feel less at home within these non-evangelical spaces.  There

would seem to be a major challenge in encouraging dialogue between these two groupings.


## Between 'personal' and 'structural'

The change-making orientations of the case study organisations reveal what seems to be something

of a paradox.  CARE and Christian Concern are concerned with issues that are essentially ones of

personal morality, behaviour and attitudes, but address them through targeting policy and the law.

By contrast, Christian Aid and Tearfund are concerned with structural problems of global injustice,

but their youth engagement work places considerable stress on individual lifestyle change.  There

seems to be a bit of a mismatch here, which calls for social action to be properly matched to its

issues of concern.  Whilst personal lifestyle change may represent an accessible 'way in' to social

justice concern and also represent a way of living with integrity, it is not in itself enough, and there is

need for an increased language of political organising.  In a context of disengagement with – or at

least ambivalence towards – party politics, there also seems to be a struggle to articulate

alternatives.  New political discourses and practices are thus emerging in faltering ways.  There is

subsequently a need to be able to articulate narratives of change which clearly challenge structural

problems, while also allowing for personal, holistic responses.

## Between 'top-down' approaches and being member-led

For more self-organised groups, this is a key balancing act, SPEAK and Just Love occupying different positions along the spectrum. Whilst a more top-down approach may inhibit members' full participation and lead to the quietening of alternate voices, being more member-led also brings problems with it, such as slow decision-making procedures, a lack of coherence and unclear direction. Groups should be aware of the kind of organisational framework in which they are operating. If they work with a formal structure, attempts should be made to make this accessible and open to diversity. If they operate under an informal structure, there should be awareness that this does not equate to a power void or vacuum, but instead is shaped by various power relationships. The lack of direction that can come from an informal structure should also be acknowledged.

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These recommendations or reflection points are not fully comprehensive. However, it is my hope that they can open a discussion about creating opportunities for engagement that are both empowering for those individuals involved and challenging to the unjust structures that we inhabit.

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