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Finding God as a millennial

ABSTRACT

Currently, limited information is available on the spiritual inclinations of the millennial age bracket in South Africa. This research aims to fill this knowledge gap. The researcher proposes amalgamated ethnography as the method of inquiry for this project. The participants indicated strong feelings of conflict and rebellion that have inspired a spiritual quest for meaning and purpose as a method to assist with guiding behaviours, along with a need for connectedness with others. The participants are still in a developmental process and, currently, in a state of immature spiritual development. The researcher also stipulates the limitations and recommendations of this research and emphasises that this proposal should stimulate conversation and further research into the role of spirituality in the identity formation of millennials.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to investigate the spirituality of the millennial generation, in order to gain insight into the spiritual preferences of this age group in South Africa. There is a growing interest in the religious inclinations of the millennial age bracket. This research thus seeks to contribute to this growing knowledge (Drumheller 2005:50).¹ Attention is also paid to the influence of digital culture as a growing phenomenon among this generation and to the spirituality of this cohort.

This empirical research endeavours to move past the subjective perceptions and experiences of the world (Schnell 2011:409). As the first-order



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1 The information regarding the spiritual preferences of millennials has expanded in recent years, but the work of Drumheller still remains, due to citation impact.

discourse,² human praxis entails that practical theology is experiential by nature, meaning that the subject matter is human actions and discourse (Ganzevoort 2004:30). This experiential nature of religion prompts an investigation into the practical side of belief, using scientific methods (Heimbrock 2005:273). In contrast to philosophical theories, the empirical sciences should be related to the perceivable reality, and the means for gaining such knowledge should implore deductive logic (Heimbrock 2005:275). This scientific method of gathering empirical data is used to gain an understanding that can be implemented in the service of research interests.

Many emerging adults no longer view traditional religion as an adequate channel for their spiritual quest. Spirituality has thus become an alternative way of exploring the self and the purpose of life (Sheldrake 2012:6). With regard to the millennials, religious beliefs are highly individualised and can be attributed to their high value for critical and independent thinking in relation to spiritual questions, and for forming different religious beliefs rather than accepting a set dogma (Arnett 2002:459). An interest in spirituality forms part of a broader process of cultural change in the 20th century.

2. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

As mentioned earlier, there is a need to study spirituality from the perspective of the action. In order to research spirituality in practical theology, the *action* will be *in the form of practice as an expression of spirituality*. In this section, the motivating method is that *journaling is an action that can be regarded as a spiritual practice for the purpose of empirical research*.

Christian behaviour such as *journaling* may fall under the rubric of *spiritual discipline* and may be used by millennials to leverage technology to build into their daily life practices (St. John 2013:6). The essence of creativity may lie in the overlapping relationship of inner and external reality. Striving for an ideal state may be realised in this overlap (Loo 2018:188).

Hermans (2014:123) mentions that the only way in which to build a theory on problem-solving is to study the acts of problem-solving. Practical theology uses praxis as its telos, and this approach aims to transform practice (Ganzevoort 2009:10). For this reason, this study focuses on the journaling activities of participants that have been created as an expression of spirituality, as well as what these works represent for various individuals engaging with the journals in focus groups.

2 First-order is the discourse of religious and non-religious individuals and the communities to which they belong.

An ethnographical methodology was chosen, in which the researcher proposed *amalgamated ethnography* as the method of study in this project. This method combines various ethnographic approaches into one process. This acknowledges the contribution of the researchers as in auto-ethnography, the contribution of the participants as in para-ethnography, the digital elements of network ethnography, and the contextual diversity of multisited ethnography. The application of this *amalgamated ethnography* becomes evident as a suitable method in the section on sampling and data collection.

3. DESCRIPTION AND MOTIVATION OF EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY

A non-probability, purposive sampling was done, as befits a qualitative approach (Aldiabat & Le Navenec 2011:8). Participants must be part of the millennial generation, be aged between 18 and 35 years, and have access to a WhatsApp account and a mobile device. An invitation to take part in the study was posted via a social media (Facebook) advertising campaign, affording all genders and ethnic groups an equal opportunity to participate. The ideal size of the research group is ten participants, representing various ages in the millennial generation as well as different genders and ethnic groups. The participants are required to use their mobile device, in order to access the social media platform WhatsApp and its various features.

For millennials to take part in the research, the creation of a Facebook advertisement for participant selection was generated. This platform allows the researcher to use generic images and 90 characters to word the advertisement. This platform also allows the researcher to target a specific audience that meets the criteria listed above.

This target group was selected, on the basis of age, to form part of the millennial generation. A further selection was made on the basis of location to allow all the participants the opportunity to attend the in-person focus-group session in the area of the researcher. The final boundary for the campaign was the selection of an area interest from the list available from the platform. The most suitable interest on the list was the word "religion". By using these boundaries, the potential audience for this advertisement consisted of 67,000 individuals who met this criterion. The payment options for the campaign then determined the number of individuals who would see this advertisement.

Based on the payment options, between 840 and 2,400 individuals a day will see the advertisement. Clicking on the sign-up button located in the advertisement allowed any potential participant to provide the researcher with his/her name and e-mail address. When they choose to sign up for the

research project, the sign-up form mentions that a consent form will be sent to them via email as well as further steps in the process of participation.

Upon receipt of the details of potential participants, the researcher sent them a consent form via e-mail, explaining further steps in the process. The first ten potential participants who completed the consent form and thus committed to participate in the project formed the study group.

This research project made use of amalgamated ethnography, as proposed by the researcher. This method is formulated by combining various ethnographic methods, along with the further description of the research process. As the advertising campaign is the process of participant selection, which was described as non-probability, purposive sampling, it also forms part of an ethnographic method that is part of amalgamated ethnography. In addition to the various techniques mentioned above, an interest in the social dynamics of computer-mediated communication also emerged (Howard 2002:551). This led to the development of network ethnography, where the researcher makes use of ethnographic field methods and selects sites, using social media analysis. In this method, identifying several nodal events does not dilute the evidence as social interaction, as the primary focus remains on constantly making richer contextual detail (Howard 2002:561).

Once the participants have committed to the project, the next step in the process was a *journaling activity*. This journaling activity as a spiritual practice formed part of para-ethnography, where the researcher does not hold the ethnographic authority, but takes the efforts of the participants seriously in the production of academically relevant knowledge (Islam 2015:232). The researcher provided the participants with various guiding questions at the beginning of the week, and this process continued for approximately four weeks. These guiding questions were formulated based on a prior extensive literature study, in order to understand and describe spirituality, digital culture, and the millennial generation and to provide the initial understanding. They were distributed via the WhatsApp group.

List of questions for the journaling exercise

1. *What are the outlines of Spirituality? (SRQ1)*

- 1.1 What is the essence of spiritual identity for you?
- 1.2 How does your spiritual identity inform other aspects of your view of the self?
- 1.3 How will you describe the relationship between you and God?
- 1.4 Describe a very intense and exceptional experience of God's presence?

- 1.5 What are the most prominent names and descriptions you use for Jesus Christ?
- 1.6 What does Jesus Christ do for you in your life?
2. *Who are the millennials? (SRQ2)*
 - 2.1 How do you make meaning of challenging experiences in your life?
 - 2.2 What does your spirituality mean for you?
 - 2.3 How are your views regarding your spiritual identity different from when you were an adolescent?
 - 2.4 What are your attitudes to work?
 - 2.5 What are your attitudes to finances?
 - 2.6 What are your attitudes to politics?
 - 2.7 What is your general attitude to society and all its problems?
3. *What forms part of the spirituality of millennials? (SRQ3)*
 - 3.1 Are there specific rules on how you should behave towards others in your community and outside your community?
 - 3.2 What is considered bad (taboo, vice) and good (virtue) in your spirituality?
 - 3.3 Describe a very intense and unique experience of God for your generation?
 - 3.4 What do you strive for in your relationship with God?
 - 3.4.1 Or: What do you consider to be spiritual maturity?
 - 3.5 Who would be considered a Saint or person of exceptional spirituality in your community?
 - 3.6 What helps you deepen your relationship with God?
 - 3.7 What does your spirituality mean for you?
4. *What is the role of new spiritual movements such as the digital culture in the identity formation of millennials? (SRQ4)*
 - 4.1 Do you consider yourself a digital native, or at what age were you exposed to technology?
 - 4.2 Which online communities are you part of?
 - 4.3 How do you consider outsiders to your community?
 - 4.4 What is done in the community to guide members to spiritual maturity?

4.5 How much time per day do you spend on technology?

4.6 What online activities do you take part in?

4.7 What is the impact of technology on your views of the self?

4.8 What is the impact of technology on your spiritual identity?

As the researcher's experiences may have influenced these questions, the researcher also took part in the journaling activity. The researcher's active participation in the research forms part of auto-ethnography, where the researcher's experiences become a source of insight that could have been a biased view (Islam 2015:232). The journaling exercise took place over the course of approximately four weeks, with one theme or secondary research question (SRQ) as the focus area for a particular period. The results of the journaling exercise then formed the basis of the first set of data to be coded, by making use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) as a method of coding and analysis via ATLAS.ti software. The result of this coding was then used to guide topics in discussion in a focus group conducted with the whole group in person, with all participants present at the end of each week.

The second process was a discussion guide structured around themes that were identified from the journals of the participants. The researcher also applied the four Fs of reviewing in the focus group, in order to provide structure to the discussion. This reviewing technique was selected, as the researcher is familiar with, and has received training in this method. The four Fs are described as follows:

- Facts: Participants discuss specific points that have been revealed through the journaling activities, and the discussion is limited to points only.
- Feelings: The next step is to use the facts mentioned in the previous step and discuss specific feelings that have emerged in the process as a result of these facts.
- Findings: The discussion revolves around what can be learned from the facts and feelings that have been described.
- Future: The last step in the process is to determine how the lessons that have emerged from the previous three steps can be applied to the future in the daily lives of the participants.

The results of the focus-group discussion were then again coded, using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) as a method of coding and analysis via ATLAS.ti software, Atlas.ti, forming the second group of data

points. The data collected through the journaling activities and the focus group were then compared with the material described in the literature study.

The various locations used for data collection (journaling and focus groups) formed part of multisited ethnography which recognises the disbanding local, contained spaces and follows the circulation of cultural objects (Islam 2015:232). The summary of the study was then based on the triangulation of the data from the different sources, namely the literature review, the journaling exercises, and the focus-group discussions. This combination of sources adds to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Aldiabat & Le Navenec 2011:9). This allows the researcher to formulate the appropriate reaction, in order to meet the criteria of the fourth practical theological task, namely the pragmatic task (*How might we respond?*), that aims to provide an appropriate response. Osmer's four practical theological tasks functioned as an interpretive guide for the research.

4. EMPIRICAL DATA AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Participant selection

As mentioned earlier, an invitation to participate in this study was extended via a Facebook advertising campaign launched on Saturday, 14 September 2019. This campaign ran for ten days. The results of this campaign are given in Figures 1 and 2:



Figure 1: Audience engagement

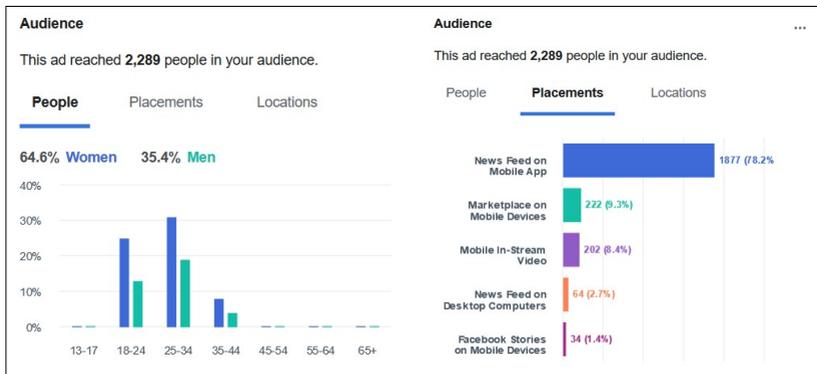


Figure 2: Audience demographic

Figure 1 shows the number of individuals (2,289) who were reached through the advertisement as well as the engagement, whereas Figure 2 shows what demographic was reached (64.6% female; 35.4% male, predominantly aged between 25 and 34 years) as well as the place where the advertisement was seen (78.2% via mobile devices). Seeking participants via the Facebook advertising campaign failed, as nobody provided his/her details by clicking the sign-up button. As this process was insufficient, it was supplemented by posting an invite to take part in the project in a Bloemfontein classifieds page on Facebook as well as by sending direct messages to the researcher's friends, with a further request to distribute the message. By combining these various methods of advertising, 20 individuals responded and received an email which contained the consent form.

This first email was followed by various other emails encouraging the interested participants to complete the consent form. The ten individuals who completed the consent form received another email with a link for them to join the WhatsApp group. *A total of eight participants (forming the study group)* joined the group and received further communication. This group was then used as the primary form of transmission of the journaling activities as well as information pertaining to the focus-group discussions. Notifications sent via the group included the questions that form part of the weekly journaling activity as well as arrangements regarding the time and date of the focus-group discussions. The next section examines the data collected from these activities.

4.2 Empirical data

Due to the various sources of data, the researcher used multiple methods of analysis to make sense of the information collected. In order to be able to deal with large amounts of qualitative data (five journaling activities and focus groups), the researcher chose to make use of electronic or computer-assisted coding and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) as the method of coding and analysis via ATLAS.ti software. All of the journaling activities were received via email, and these documents were added to ATLAS.ti without making any alterations, along with recordings of the focus groups. This software allows the researcher to code the raw data from the documents and recordings. Due to the nature of the raw data, various methods of coding were used. These methods will be systematically described along with the data. The data was coded by making use of the first-cycle and second-cycle coding. The first cycle forms part of the initial coding and the second-cycle methods are used for analysis (Saldaña 2009:45).

The first journal activity was distributed via the WhatsApp group on Monday, 30 September 2019. Participants were asked to write a short description of themselves, including their date of birth, thus providing the researcher with some attributive information on the participants.³ This first set of data was coded using attributive coding for the necessary descriptive information (Saldaña 2009:55). For the purpose of this research project, the identity of the participants is kept anonymous. Participants are identified by gender and the first letters of their name. The results of the first journaling activity can be summarised as follows:

Journal activity 1

Females	Males
Female_1M: Born 1995 (age 25) Devout Christian in the Dutch Reformed Church Not very active on social media, but does post to Facebook and Instagram	Male_1G: Born 1988 (age 32) Devout Christian in the Dutch Reformed Church, but uncomfortable with the system and considering to leave the church Active on social media

3 The participants also indicated their respective religion in this section. This study made allowance for various belief systems, although the questions are framed from a Christian perspective, as this study is in the field of practical theology.

Females	Males
<p>Female_2Ad: Born 1995 (age 25)</p> <p>Christian, but does not attend church on a regular basis, with a preference for the Baptist church</p> <p>Active on Facebook and Instagram, with a preference for Instagram</p>	<p>Male_2C: Born 1996 (age 24)</p> <p>Converted from Baptist to Christian to Wiccan</p> <p>Not very active on social media</p>
<p>Female_3An: Born 1996 (age 24)</p> <p>Devout Christian</p> <p>Not very active on social media</p>	<p>Male_3L: Born 1997 (age 23)</p> <p>Devout Christian, with a preference for traditional churches</p> <p>Not active on social media, with no profiles</p>
<p>Female_4C: Born 1993 (age 27)</p> <p>Agnostic</p> <p>Active on social media</p>	<p>Male_4D: Born 1994 (age 26)</p> <p>Did not specify a religious affiliation</p> <p>Not very active on social media</p>

The first set of questions relating to the study was distributed on Monday, 7 October 2019, followed by a focus group on Friday, 11 October 2019. This process was continued for the following four weeks. All the participants were actively involved and interested in the topics and, therefore, did not require any motivation to keep them involved. The data of these activities were coded, using the first-cycle coding method of InVivo coding, which makes use of a word or short phrase from the actual language used by the participants (Saldaña 2009:74), as in the example below:

Short extraction from participant's journal

Male_2C: There seems to be a theme of rebellious counter movement¹ to anything that breaks social contract²...

Example of InVivo code:

1. *rebellious counter movement*
2. *social contract*

Due to the multiple types of data and the uncertainty as to what to look for, descriptive coding emerged as the primary first-cycle method. Descriptive coding summarises the essential topic of a passage or section of text or recording in a word or short phrase. This method of coding entails the identification of topics and not abbreviations of the content, where the material is the substance of the message (Saldaña 2009:119). This resulted in a large

number of complex codes that required further coding. The InVivo codes were grouped together in descriptive topics, as in the example below:

Descriptive codes	InVivo codes
relational	aanbid half beide hulself en ander mens can be expressed online connected me to people connection with other like-minded connectiveness crave community human relationships link people little room for individual lose your sense of individuality lower their standards and values to fit more accepting of people mutual respect online community propagates the same modes of thinking settle easily to fit in with the crowd unity and togetherness
acceptance	aanvaarbaar aanvaarding soek accepted people keep posting pool of non-conformity soek aanvaarding understanding voorkoms in foto's wants to be accepted

Focused coding was used for the second cycle (coding the descriptive codes), in order to categorise the coded data as an initial analytical strategy. This form of coding followed the initial first-cycle coding, in order to develop the most salient categories in the data, and required decisions regarding the initial codes that make the most logical sense (Saldaña 2009:155).

From the descriptive codes, a selection was made based on the number of InVivo codes within the group or topic. From the second cycle of coding, the six categories that emerged from the data are listed below, along with the dictionary definition of each code.

- Conflict: an active disagreement between individuals with opposing opinions or principles.
- Holistic: dealing with or treating the whole of something and not simply a part.

- Individuality: the qualities that make an individual or thing different from others.
- Information: facts about a situation, individual, event, and so on.
- Spiritual: relating to deep feelings about beliefs, especially religious beliefs.
- Transcendence: an experience that goes past normal limits, or the ability to achieve this.

These six categories are the descriptive codes that contained the highest number of InVivo codes. Like the main categories, all the other descriptive codes could also be summarised under these six main categories, as illustrated in the table below:

Focused code (Category)	Conflict	Holistic	Individuality	Information	Spiritual	Transcendence
Descriptive code (Topic)	Confusion Questioning Judgemental Rebellion Fluctuate Escape Capitalism	Emotions Relational Plurality Life balance Ecological Equality Experience	Acceptance Selfish Opinionated Negative traits Personal	Technological Social media Apps Online identity Online religion	Existential Christian foundations Meaning and purpose	Self-actualisation Growth Authenticity

4.3 Discussion

Emerging adults, aged between 18 and 25 years, are typically confused and overwhelmed by what is seemingly required of them. A primary challenge in this stage of development is an “identity crisis”, where young individuals face the challenge of evaluating their abilities, interests, and childhood influences, in order to apply this knowledge to exploring possible futures (Arnett 2006:24). During the period of emerging adulthood, the focus tends to be on self-development and on becoming independent and self-sufficient. This process includes the formation of different beliefs regarding religious issues (Arnett 2002:452). The turn to spirituality is, partly, a quest for the self, and this turn often has its origins in the attempts to discover a personal identity within a holistic sense of selfhood (Grenz 2002:92).

Other research has found that the present social situations do not afford the individual the opportunities in society to express his/her spiritual qualities.

This is suggested as a motivating factor for psychological tendencies of deviant behaviour and negative personal changeability, which are motivated by lower emotions and needs (Yachina 2015:1578). From the findings of this study, this may be related to the turn to spirituality, as noted in the focused code categories of *conflict* and *spiritual*. The participants in this study mentioned that they experience some form of existential crisis as a result of the multiple exposures, causing a rebellion against any form of tradition, creating the desire for a quest for meaning and purpose. Further studies in the field of spirituality have indicated that spirituality is a developmental driving force behind the search for connectedness, meaning, and purpose (Pawar 2009). This is also strengthened by empirical and conceptual work, indicating that spirituality is incorporated into ideals and values (Nelson *et al.* 2017:389). Research into spirituality in management education found that spirituality impacts on ethical values and features in guiding behaviour (Nelson *et al.* 2017:390). This notion is also strengthened by research suggesting that the more spiritual the individuals in the trials were, the more prone they were to realise the ethical impropriety of personally benefiting at the cost of the larger good (Comer & Vega 2011:31). In this study, these sentiments were also echoed in the descriptive codes *meaning and purpose* and *equality*. The participants indicated strong feelings of conflict and rebellion that inspired a spiritual quest for meaning and purpose as a method to assist with guiding behaviours, along with the need for connectedness with others.

Spiritual development has been identified as a theoretical context for the establishment of spirituality (Nelson *et al.* 2017:395). This spiritual development is a process that enhances the psychological welfare rooted in intuitive thinking. Another study found that young individuals became more committed to integrating spirituality as they grew older (Nelson *et al.* 2017:395). On the basis of the findings of these studies, the researcher believes that the participants in this study are still in a developmental process and currently in a state of young spiritual development. The development of spirituality is considered to cause mental growth as well as moral underpinning. This correlates with the literature, in that millennials are in a developmental stage in life, and part of this development is identity formation and spiritual growth.

Some research has suggested that North Atlantic countries are living in a culture of authenticity. This culture has been stimulated by social and economic factors since the post-World War II prosperity boom, consumer culture, and increased urbanisation. This culture of authenticity has its origins in the 1960s' counterculture movements, with slogans such as "*Do your own thing.*" and "*Be yourself.*". Research among millennials shows that, in many ways, they continued where their parents left off and still embrace these slogans. It is the nature of this "counterculture" spirituality to reject labels,

and this may be the reason why it is often overlooked (Watts 2018:245). The spiritual framework of millennials is characterised by a preoccupation with the inner life of the individual and adherence to a self-ethic, where individuals serve as their own source of guidance. This spirituality of the millennials focuses strongly on direct experience and is supported by an experiential epistemology (Watts 2018:245-246). In this research project, this is echoed in the focus-group categories *holistic* and *transcendence*, where participants expressed descriptive topics such as *life balance*, *equality*, *experience*, *growth*, and *authenticity*. These sentiments of self-development contribute to the unique identity for which these millennials are striving in their process of identity formation.

With regard to the impact of digital culture and spirituality, research mentions that, in a time of global unrest, the internet becomes a go-to platform for the development of provocative ideas with regard to politics, sexual orientation, and religion. This can be noted in events such as the rise of ISIS that can be associated with technologies of the millennial age. These findings are based on the pseudospeciation⁴ in identity diffusion that is common among members of ISIS who were not born in the Middle East. Erikson also pointed out that, in times of strife, the force of pseudospeciation may be strong for both groups and individuals. In times of identity marginalisation, these extremes may include deviant and self-destructive behaviour (Kay 2018:269). In terms of sexual orientation, research found that higher aspects of spirituality, separate from religiosity, are associated with higher self-esteem and LGB identity acceptance. These aspects related to self-esteem and acceptance include the development of inner peace, a sense of oneness with the world, self-awareness, and hope (Stern & Wright 2018:1085). These sentiments were also reflected in this present study in terms of *information* and *individuality* associated with digital culture. These focused codes included descriptive codes such as *acceptance*, *opinionated*, *online identity*, and *online religion*. As these millennials are subjected to various stimuli, which were established to create confusion and rebellion, young individuals are exploring information that can help them form their identities, spiritualities, and authentic opinions.

It has been mentioned that young individuals are hooked on electronic media, where relationships are mediated through social media and self-image changes with each photo, video, or text. This has impacted on worship services. Scholars have labelled this concept a religious revolution and termed it Dataism or techno-humanism (Peters 2017:212). However, Watts (2018:249) compared this religious revolution with Troeltsch's "*spiritual*

4 Pseudospeciation refers to the tendency of human beings as species to differentiate themselves from other members of the same species. This influences the identity formation of millennials in the digital age.

religion” that focuses on mysticism. In this comparison, mysticism emphasises a “*direct inward and present religious experience*”. This form of spiritual religion is most prominent among the educated classes and does not compete with modern science. This form of spirituality suggests an invisible church that is described as “God alone”. These communities insist on neither rigid conformity nor long-term commitment and are based on the need for freedom and unrestricted movement of the Spirit (Watts 2018:250). Spirituality, in this sense, seeks formlessness at all costs. It will be unrecognisable if labels are imposed on it, because, as soon as it is established, the spiritual seekers will reject it (Watts 2018:253).

Perhaps the most valuable insight into the contemporary religious situation provided by a consideration of Troeltsch’s discussion of spiritual and mystical religion derives from his observation that it is more compatible with modern thought than either sect or church religion ... This remark, when taken together with his other observation that mysticism flourishes in an urban environment and among the educated classes, provides the basis for an explanation of the rise of the new religiosity, an explanation rooted in the assumption that of the three types of religion it is spiritual and mystic religion that is best “adapted” to survive in the socio-cultural environment of a modern society (Campbell 1978:152).

This research project established that millennials face unique challenges with regard to their identity formation and spirituality. It was found that this generation is the best-educated generation. They are digital natives who are continuously connected. These factors make their spirituality and the development of their identity unique and in the process of development. A proposal can be made, based on the findings of these various studies, the findings of this research project, and the immature spiritual development of the participants. Although more research may be required, it may be postulated that maturity in faith may increase as the spiritual ego progresses along the line of identity diffusion (Reymann *et al.* 2015:111). Therefore, the *researcher suggests* that the religious revolution expressed in a *turn to spirituality*, as voiced by the participants in this study, is *motivated by and driven according to the needs and experiences of individuals*. This need- and experience-driven motivation can be described by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

The researcher’s proposal is the result of the triangulation between the literature study and the empirical research. Although this research was conducted with care and all the possible variables were considered, there may still be some limitations. The following section describes these limitations, along with the various recommendations for future studies.

4.4 Limitations and recommendations

Christian spirituality is challenged to provide its own perspective on human growth and development. This is a daunting task considering the dominant scientific views (Perrin 2007:222). The purpose of this research was to investigate *the role of spirituality in the identity formation of millennials*. For this purpose, the study was restricted to millennials in Bloemfontein, South Africa. This restriction limited the study in the sense that it did not consist of ethnic, cultural, or religious diversity. Although many African millennials are connected to the internet, many are not aware of the full potential of this technology. This results in a lack of usage and online opportunities. The literature revealed that the challenges those South African millennials face in order to become digital citizens are their historical background and socio-economic position. The lack of this diversity may be ascribed to privileged participation, where individuals are already privileged in some spheres of life (Buckingham 2013:13). This study included eight participants, with similar interests and a Christian foundation to some extent. It examined the spirituality of the millennial generation, without comparing the spirituality of other generations.

Recommendations for future research on this topic are to broaden the scope, in order to include a more significant number of participants, thus creating the opportunity to add more diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture and religion. A comparative study should also be considered, where the findings are compared with a global perspective as well as with the spiritualities of other generations.

Due to the limitations of this study, the researcher acknowledges that results may vary if this research is repeated among other groups or locations. However, this investigation has provided adequate results to stimulate further discussion on the topic of millennial spirituality and identity formation, as well as on spirituality in the broader understanding of the word. This limited study has shown some correlation with the literature, where the process of a young adult's identity formation has been described as a journey of becoming "at home" in the universe. This metaphor can be elaborated on by acknowledging that the cultivation of wisdom requires a balance between home and pilgrimage. This duality of home and pilgrimage indicates a dialectical tension that suggests a journey of discovery and recognition. This concept is more in line with the Christian notion of vocation and the philosophical idea of individuation than the fluid content of the digital self (Horan 2011:90). In the digital environment, the paradoxical tension of identity formation, as both created and embedded in the divine, may well be one of the most challenging elements of religious identity formation (Hess 2014:16).

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