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Disrupting the Shard Perspective: Leading a Culture of Justice for the Reimagined Church

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DISRUPTING THE SHARD PERSPECTIVE:
LEADING A CULTURE OF JUSTICE FOR
THE REIMAGINED CHURCH

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

The dissertation presented and the words within these pages are dedicated to my mother and father, Annie & Tyrone Baynham, whose strength, guidance, and fortitude pushed me to see beyond limitations and see the possibility of a more extraordinary life.

It is also dedicated to my sons, Brenten and Tyler Harmon, in hopes that these words will help give them wisdom and guidance, as the Millennial and Gen Z (Zoomers) generations who are eager to attribute justice for all. May they lead with the words in Micah 6:8 to seek justice, love mercy, and humbly walk with God toward redemption and freedom.

Finally, it is dedicated to the quartet of the vulnerable, the marginalized, the peacemakers, and the protectors of justice, truth, and righteousness. May this labor of love open the doorway to the hearts of many and bring sustainable change to a world that has seemed to have forgotten you.

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To my husband, Dr. Garfield O. Harvey, words could not encompass all my gratitude for you. Thank you for giving your support and time to make me see the hidden potential that dwelled inside me to create works that may change our communities and, hopefully, the landscape of our world. Thank you for your counsel as well throughout these past three years. You are an amazing husband, supporter, confidant, and friend.

EPIGRAPH

"In the moment of crisis, the wise build bridges, and the foolish build dams."

(Nigerian Proverb)¹

"God sees the Church for what it is while we see the Church through our own lens."²

¹ Terri R. Lituchy, Bella L. Galperin, and Betty Jane Punnett, *LEAD: Leadership Effectiveness in Africa and the African Diaspora* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 89.

² Graham Hill and Scot McKnight, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 11.

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PREFACE

Disrupting the Shard Perspective: Leading a Culture of Justice for the Reimagined Church originates from a personal inquisitiveness, concern, and empathy for those experiencing injustices without a voice. The desire was to better understand the evangelical church's current landscape concerning justice by exploring different churches' engagement in their community. However, data collected during this research revealed a deeper issue within the evangelical church. It revealed there is a perception of silence from some community members toward the Church, which then enables a negative perspective of the Church pursuing social action. The community's perception of the evangelical church's silent position toward justice issues led to a deeper inquiry into understanding how this perception toward justice issues originated. For example, was the perception self-inflicted? Or was this perception projected upon it through lack of understanding or connection? Other contributions to this silence highlighted in this research include the influences of sociological and psychological attributes.

Before engaging in this research, the reader should be aware of two important elements. First, when the phrase "the Church" appears, it references only the evangelical church collective defined by the research. It also includes research of the "Big C" church and data from popular Christian survey resources, including Barna, and sampling of different denominational congregations within and outside the United States. The intentionality of data collected from both within and outside of the United States assists in quantifying the field research, narrowing it from a global to a local context to understand that fragmented perspectives of justice have the ability to cross-cultural and geographical lines. Second, the stories presented are from this ethnographer's point of

view, encompassing experiences in those contexts, and are not intended to be applicable to all leadership spaces or cultural environments.

The research presented here provides the reader with an overview of the definitions, theories, theological frameworks, and examples of justice. Though this research will not provide a singular injustice focus, it will analyze psychology, sociology, and theology systems to better understand the complexity of justice as a concept. Hopefully, its conclusion adequately addresses justice issues faced in local, national, and global landscapes. Furthermore, it provides possible solutions for those who wish to address these issues by creating a partnering culture for suitable societal influence and change.

The problem is not if justice issues exist. Instead, the problem presented herein exists in understanding how fragmented perspectives prevent some churches' social involvement toward resolving justice issues and creating social and cultural change. Therefore, evangelical churches must reimagine their cultural influence and leadership in bringing about social change.

GLOSSARY

The Church is used within this project to represent the churches that participated in the research survey and church data collected from surveys. The denominations represented in this research include Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, non-denominational, and other evangelicals within the United States, the United Kingdom, Africa, and Jamaica. In some cases, according to the research, it indicates the “Big C” church—the universal church.

Civil righteousness is derived from Luther’s political ethics, which suggests the social morality of which all rational people—Christians included—are capable, in the form of law-abiding political justice. Christians are called to join with others—whatever their faith—in efforts to translate God’s moral laws into civil laws of the nation.

Communitas is a Latin term used to describe an unstructured community of people that are seen as equal. In this community, there is “a strong sense of solidarity and bonding that develops among people experiencing a ritual, rite of passage, or other transitional state together.”³

Diakonia is a Greek term translated in English as ministry; it means service, or ministering, especially by those who execute the commands of others or of those who, by the authority of God, proclaim and promote religion. It is also the “ministration of those who render others the offices of Christian affection,” especially those who help meet a need by collecting or distributing charities.⁴

³ “Communitas English Definition and Meaning,” Lexico Dictionaries | English (Lexico Dictionaries), accessed October 11, 2021, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/communitas>.

⁴ “Diakonia Meaning in Bible - New Testament Greek Lexicon - New American Standard,” biblestudytools.com, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/diakonia.html>.

Dikaioisune is a Greek term that means the doctrine concerning how man attains a state approved by God; integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, the correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Evangelical is a term derived from the Greek word evangelion, which means “gospel” or good news.⁵

Enculturation describes the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values.⁶

He, Him, and His are the pronouns of God, capitalized in reverence and respect to His deity.

Justice, in its general definition, means “fairness, correct treatment, or equitable distribution of resources, but biblical justice is more than mathematical distribution of goods. The Bible speaks of justice as the chief attribute of God, with biblical justice inextricably tied to God's mercy and grounded in the relationship between God and humankind.”⁷

Injustice is the absence of justice, which includes violation of the rights of another or an unfair or unjust act.⁸

⁵ Jonathan Merritt, “What Is an 'Evangelical'?”, *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, July 7, 2021), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/evangelical-christian/418236/>.

⁶ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “Enculturation,” accessed July 23, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enculturation>

⁷ D. N. Freedman and Allen C. Myers, “Micah, Mercy and Justice,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 757-894 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 757.

⁸ “Injustice Definition & Meaning,” *Merriam-Webster* (Merriam-Webster), accessed November 12, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/injustice>.

Koinonia describes intimate spiritual communion and participative sharing in a common religious commitment and spiritual community.

Psychic numbing describes a “psychological response to traumatic events, characterized by decreased responsiveness to and a feeling of detachment from the external environment and a reduction in the ability to acknowledge and express emotion.”⁹ It is an indifference that settles within individuals when confronted with an overwhelming calamity, where emotional guard rails prevent them from engaging in changing circumstances that harm other people or environments.

Participatory mode is a subgenre of documentary film styles “in which the filmmaker is included in the film’s narrative and directly interacts with the film’s subjects.”¹⁰ In this mode, the interaction between the filmmaker and the subject happens in front of the camera through narration, with interviews showcasing the filmmaker's “truth” of those interactions. A prime example of this mode is Michael Moore’s *Bowling for Columbine* (2001), although, the filmmaker also incorporated observational and reflective modes.

Shard perspective is a term coined by researcher and social entrepreneur Shermika Harvey to emphasize the needed balance within the ambiguity essence of the fragmentation perspective moving from organizational culture to individual subculture groups, be it ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.

⁹ “Psychic Numbing English Definition and Meaning,” Lexico Dictionaries, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/psychic_numbing.

¹⁰ Master Class Staff, “Guide to Participatory Mode: 3 Participatory Documentaries - 2021,” MasterClass, June 28, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/guide-to-participatory-documentaries#what-is-participatory-documentary>.

Social disruption is a term used in sociology to describe the alteration, dysfunction, or breakdown of social life, often in a community setting. Social disruption is, in a sense, a metamorphosis of the world which implies a “radical transformation, in which the old certainties of modern society are falling away and something relatively new emerging.”¹¹

Social perception, or interpersonal perception, is the study of how people form impressions of and make inferences about other people as sovereign personalities. Social perception refers to identifying and utilizing social cues to make judgments about social roles, rules, relationships, context, or the characteristics of others.

Social reality is a term to describe the reality perceived by individuals and their subjective versions of it and the version formed by the cumulative subjectivity of the society. It is based on the intersubjective perception formed between individuals and their surroundings.

¹¹ Ulrich Beck, *The Metamorphosis of the World* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2016), 2.

ABSTRACT

Justice issues undulate amid society. They are entrenched into society's substructures, philosophy, traditions, and behaviors, and often stand uncontested over centuries. Biblically and historically, the Church's counteractions toward society's ills bestowed a sense of peace and community amid justice issues. However, as the justice crisis has increased steadily in the United States since the 1950s, the Church's presence submerged instead of being the forerunner. Therefore, many evangelical churches in the United States are viewed through their silence regarding injustice.

The Church, designed as a foundational agent for social and cultural change, stands at the cusp of a revolutionary historic moment, ready to reclaim its position within society. This dissertation research aims to determine how the Church unknowingly adapted to this perception of silence; how this perception affects its position as a cultural influencer, catalyst of change, and effective Christian witness; and how disruption provides an opportunity to revitalize the Church's social and cultural influence within society.

This dissertation proposes a solution to address the ongoing tension of social justice and evangelism while actively embracing the role of social advocacy through a reimagined vision of the Church. Section One defines the shard perspective and examines the relationship between the Church and justice issues, unveiling the hindered views preventing the Church from operating in the fullness of its missional mandate. Section Two presents a culture of justice model to challenge the shard perspective and highlights how others address it within the Church and community. Section Three offers a solution to address the issue through cultural disruption within the reimagined Church. Sections

Four and Five outline the artifact of a website with blogs and a short docuseries featuring pastors, theologians, community leaders, and stories of those affected by injustices.

Finally, Section Six summarizes the project and explores the need for further research.

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

“If you wrested a shard of glass from its setting in a beautiful mosaic, took it home and placed it on the table, and declared to anyone in earshot, ‘This is a magnificent piece of art!’ No matter how lovely that single shard was, it in no way captures the glory of the whole.”¹² In essence, the realm of justice is like a mosaic piece of artwork where one can explore the intrinsic ties of justice issues, the human experience, self-preconceptions, concerns, ethical fairness, and the significance of its impact on the individual and the society. It is composed of different perspectives, thoughts, definitions, theories, cultures of justice, and even concepts of living justice, acting in justice, and pursuing justice. To understand justice in this light is to conclude “it's not only about single pieces—it's also about all the pieces working together in a stunning whole.”¹³ All too often, though, “the desire to pursue justice can only be lived out or understood in a single shard.”¹⁴ One paramount “concept is that the justice of a community is measured by their treatment of the poor and oppressed (Isa. 1:16-17; 3:15).” Within this section, the reader is invited to explore these facets of justice further through ethnographic stories, studies, and research exploration.

¹² Lynette Edge and Gregory Morgan, *Partnering with God: Being a Missional Salvationist* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2017), 14.

¹³ Ken Wytsma and D. R. Jacobsen, *Pursuing Justice: The Call to Live & Die for Bigger Things* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2013), 7.

¹⁴ Wytsma and Jacobsen, *Pursuing Justice*, 6.

The Origin Story—Ministry Context

Realization of this hindered view of justice came to light for me in 2017 at JL Zwane Center for Training & Leadership Development while on a doctoral advance with Portland Seminary. During the Q&A session following a lecture on “Reconciliation Without Justice” with Wilhelm Verwoed, researcher and grandson of former apartheid prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd, a young South African woman stood up from her table of friends. She began to share the fear and frustration of injustices faced by her generation. Ironically, her frustration about the issues of injustice facing the South Africans sounded peculiarly familiar to the African Americans and other people of color’s (POCs’) experiences in the United States. If memory serves correctly, this topic surrounded police brutality among young people and the fear they face within their community.

At the end of her sharing, one of the doctoral students, a Caucasian evangelical lead pastor, asked the question, “How can we help bring change?” An innocent and genuine question, perhaps, but there were African American students in the room whose experiences and fears within the United States were equivalently the same as those of the South African woman. It is unfathomable to believe it was the intention of that doctoral student to deliberately ignore the issues faced by African Americans in the United States. Immediately following the question, an intense heaviness filled the room as two fellow African American women in the doctoral program shared their own experiences, deep reflection, frustration, and angst about the lack of addressing these issues in the United States. Two thoughts came to mind after the experience. The first thought was how can a people separated by geographic distance and time share such historical and present

intergenerational trauma? The second thought came from a quote I heard many years ago by American journalist Carl Thomas Rowan that states “it is often easier to become outraged by injustice half a world away than by oppression and discrimination half a block from home.”¹⁵

This story does not serve to minimize the active injustices faced in South Africa, nor does it serve to grandstand the undeniable injustices of those in the United States. Instead, it serves as a backdrop to evaluate the altered views of injustices within society and the Church in the aspect of shards—fragments of shared stories isolated over time by perceptions, proximity, and even cultural relevance through the individual experience.

Perceptions of injustice have been “conceptualized as cognitive appraisal reflecting the severity and irreparability of injury or condition-related loss, as well as externalized blame and perceived unfairness.”¹⁶ Though this definition is reflective of physical injury, it is also applicable to emotional and mental injury. The effects of mental and emotional injury will be described in further detail later in this dissertation. Nevertheless, in either circumstance, the way in which issues of justice are perceived and interpreted determines how individuals respond to those injustices.¹⁷ Socially, an individual’s perception of the cause of injustice may factor in one’s “attempts to rescue or

¹⁵ “A Quote by Carl T. Rowan,” Goodreads (Goodreads), accessed May 17, 2021, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/241084-it-is-often-easier-to-become-outraged-by-injustice-half>.

¹⁶ Michael J. Sullivan, Whitney Scott, and Zina Trost, “Perceived Injustice,” *The Clinical Journal of Pain* 28, no. 6 (2012): 484, <https://doi.org/10.1097/ajp.0b013e3182527d13>.

¹⁷ Janice M. Steil and Joyce Slochower, “The Experience of Injustice Social Psychological and Clinical Perspectives,” *From Research to Clinical Practice* (1985): 217, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4820-7_10.

make restitution to the victim or, alternatively, in attempts to blame the victim.”¹⁸

Internally, an individual’s experience or perception of others as victims or perpetrators of injustice has emotional and psychological impact.¹⁹ In this respect, an individual’s perception will alter their social conduct to respond to injustices toward others.

Additionally, proximity presents an even more complex factor in viewing, understanding, and evaluating justice. By definition, proximity “hinges on the idea of closeness, both physically and metaphorically.”²⁰ Perhaps, taking a deeper prospective, proximity to injustice may determine how an individual responds, processes, or pursues action toward inconsistencies of justice. In some cases, proximity to injustice can cause psychic numbing in those seeing the injustice take place because of the magnitude of people affected. In other cases, others may use the power of proximity to bring about change. Bryan Stevenson, an American lawyer and social justice activist, suggests that the closer people are willing to get to others suffering, the higher the understanding of the nuanced experience of their suffering and the inequality experienced, and hopefully that will lead to the power to change the world.²¹

One’s view of reality is often contingent on proximity to those experiencing injustice; hidden biases created by fragments of perspectives lead to skewed perceptions.

¹⁸ Steil and Slochower, “The Experience of Injustice,” 218.

¹⁹ Steil and Slochower, “The Experience of Injustice,” 218.

²⁰ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “proximity,” accessed October 1, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proximity#learn-more>.

²¹ Leandra Fernandez, “Empathy and Social Justice: The Power of Proximity in Improvement Science,” Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, January 27, 2017, <https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/blog/empathy-and-social-justice-the-power-of-proximity-in-improvement-science/>.

For example, in race issues, the racialized theory of the model minority perpetrates a perception of universal success among Asian Americans, de-emphasizing systemic racism and the role racism has in the persistent struggles of other minorities. Thus, causing a potential wedge between the Asian community and other people of color.²² Likewise, in economic problems and poverty, the notion of thinking the solution is to tell people to apply for better jobs and pull themselves up by their bootstraps is a problem in itself. It also serves as an example of hindered bias, since it views social issues from an individualist perspective, one that ignores the reality that all experiences or circumstances are not equal. Failure to see beyond this individualized perspective prevents many people from seeing the real issues within the world, their community, and their sphere of influence through ministry.

Many churches in the United States have some form of missions initiative—whether it is an initiative to build orphanages in Africa or a school in Guatemala, build water wells, or commission and send missionaries to other countries to teach about the gospel. Although the Church is called to both local and global missions, the local mission initiative is often limited or nonexistent. It may be that the nature of much of local missions has to do with social injustices that are too radical or too risky for the Church’s intended involvement. Social injustices are a complex and complicated scene on a local and global front, where lines are drawn in the sand and choosing a side—perceived or concrete—is unavoidable. The Great Commission should broadly be conceived as “the work of Christians in the world to minister in a word and deed to gather together to do

²² Kat Chow, “‘Model Minority’ Myth Again Used as a Racial Wedge between Asians and Blacks,” NPR, April 19, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-blacks>.

justice.”²³ Consequently, the “argument for promoting evangelism over social action... has some flaws but it does not mean evangelism is not vital but rather to deny that it can carry the weight of obedience to the rest of the Bible’s commands regarding our social responsibilities in the world.”²⁴

The Problem

For many people worldwide, it is difficult to imagine a time before mask mandates, lockdowns, pandemics, and political and social unrest. The current state of the world is a mere shattered reflection of its former years. Job loss increased; schools closed, reopened, and closed again; local restaurants closed their doors, never to open again. Besides the healthcare issues in the pandemic, this newly perceived crisis-driven world has always existed, yet it was hidden under the mask of social constructs formed by perceptions of a unified and collective consciousness. The years leading up to the pandemic revealed that the pendulum of the collective consciousness swung less toward juxtaposition and more toward disjunction. The world no longer attested to a cohesive vision of life, society, and the future. Instead, it found itself trying to bridge societal divisions and forge a new path forward in a world filled with uncertainty.

The world is in a state of emergency and, bearing witness to its current state, it “looks and feels increasingly like the chapters that might immediately precede a work of

²³ Shermika Harvey, “Finding Wonderland,” *DLGP.com* (blog), October 24, 2019, <https://blogs.georgefox.edu/dlgp/down-the-rabbit-hole/>.

²⁴ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 319.

futuristic, dystopian fiction.”²⁵ In addition, conflict, displacement, growing economic insecurity, and austerity²⁶ characterized the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Headlines about suicide bomb attacks, xenophobic rhetoric, systemic gun violence, and the continued movement of those fleeing civil war and environmental catastrophe have foregrounded social justice issues pertaining to race, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, and a host of other factors.²⁷

In the aftermath, social concerns are on the rise and “the oppressed thirst and fight for basic rights, such as freedom of speech, expression, and association.”²⁸ Unbeknownst to others, these individuals often fight in isolation, with only those within their community who share their stories and experiences. Unfortunately, before the year 2020, when isolated events of injustice occurred, only those who directly experienced the injustice (the community members) were affected by it. However, today with the technological advances and easy accessibility to share injustices via social media through live feeds from cell phones, those in isolation gained comrades across the globe in their fight. When there is an increase in publicity, there is a unified response by others outside the community. The world pays attention.

²⁵ Jean Card, “Could America and the World Become a Real Version of Dystopian Fiction,” *America the Dystopia?* May 13, 2016, <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2016-05-13/could-america-and-the-world-become-a-real-version-of-dystopian-fiction>.

²⁶ Shane Duggan et al., eds., *Social Justice in Times of Crisis and Hope: Young People, Well-Being and the Politics of Education*, vol. 34 of *Global Studies in Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 1.

²⁷ Kari M. Grain and Darren E. Lund, “The Social Justice Turn: Cultivating ‘Critical Hope’ in an Age of Despair,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 23, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 45-49.

²⁸ Card, “Could America and the World Become a Real Version of Dystopian Fiction.”

Protests of injustice across the globe summon an outcry for the oppressed, endowed with the fundamental rights mentioned earlier, including the right to live. In addition, the cry echoes for “justice, equity, compassion, and understanding.”²⁹ A study by Boston University, “Count Love,” revealed in 2017 alone, the United States had a record 4,296 protests with over 5,402,011 people³⁰ addressing “political corruption, climate change, racial equity, immigration, police violence, and economic security”³¹ on national and regional levels. In addition, according to the Carnegie Endowment, from 2017 to 2021, more than 110 countries experienced significant protests lasting from two months to over two years³² in response to heightening justice issues on the global front.

Nevertheless, as many embraced this cry, many also opposed it. The actions of the participants under the protest were under scrutiny and often portrayed as violent and destructive. For example, the study Crowd Counting Consortium (CCC) reported that the US Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) stated that the “summer of 2020 experienced 100 days of violence and destruction in cities.”³³ In contrast, CCC’s study including these said 100 days found that of 7,305 of those events held in May and June, 93% involved no property damage or police injuries, and approximately 98% reported no

²⁹ Duggan et al., *Social Justice in Times of Crisis and Hope*,” 1.

³⁰ Benjamin Rodefer et al., “Counting American Protests: Count Love Project Reveals Protest Patterns,” Boston University, November 15, 2017, <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2017/counting-american-protests/>.

³¹ “Global Protest Tracker,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/interactive/protest-tracker>.

³² “Global Protest Tracker.”

³³ Kenneth Best, “Study of 2020 Protests Shows Difference between Reality and Perception,” UConn Today, October 16, 2020, <https://today.uconn.edu/2020/10/study-2020-protests-shows-difference-reality-perception/>.

injuries.³⁴ The findings of this report and the response of individuals to protest justice issues shows there is a stark difference between social perception and social reality.

At first glance, it appeared that the pandemic brought a leveling to humankind, in a manner of speaking, because of its non-discriminatory nature. However, it unveiled and intensified the nature of the already-present disparities within society. Those disparities, especially concerning the quartet of the vulnerable, including the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, and the poor, are now at the forefront of societal concerns. The increased homeless and houseless population found difficulty securing a location to shelter in place. Shelter-in-place equated to a shared tent in the park, a car or van on the side of the road, or a spot underneath a highway bridge. There was no convenient or suitable access to clean running water to wash hands or food stocked away to last the duration of the stay-at-home order. Essential workers put their lives at risk every day, so the general population maintained some ability to acquire their essential needs, as they struggled to keep themselves safe and protected as well.

For most churches and individuals, the consolation is that the pandemic served as a rest or reset. It was as if God had allowed everyone the opportunity to recalibrate their thinking and approaches to see the world and the people in it differently.

The Great Division: Evangelism and Social Action

Unfortunately, there was another complexity of the pandemic, including the years leading up to and following it: the complexity of the pendulum swing of social justice

³⁴ Kenneth Best, "Study of 2020 Protests Shows Difference between Reality and Perception," UConn Today, October 16, 2020, <https://today.uconn.edu/2020/10/study-2020-protests-shows-difference-reality-perception/>.

within the evangelical church and its presence proved authentic. While disagreements over politics, COVID-19, and social issues are dividing people into irreconcilable camps, the phenomenon was felt acutely in the Church, a place where worshippers seek an escape from the tensions of everyday life.³⁵ Instead, many polarized congregations debate the validity of issues such as societal changes, systemic racism, immigration, moral responsibility, and political affiliations.

In *The Divided Church*, published in 1999, the authors wrote of a Lutheran seminary professor (unnamed) who suggested in order to address the fundamental shifts in the axioms of culture, the “current society requires forced social experiment.”³⁶ The book also indicates that amid massive suffering, the church is “a haven and a community engaging in pioneering creativity,” being the “social glue for a culture in trouble.”³⁷ Undoubtedly, “in times of crisis and social disruption, people look to the Church for spiritual guidance and assurance.”³⁸ However, many churches are not providing guidance and assurance; instead polarization has taken its place. This polarization affects society in the way church or religion perceived and accepted. Ultimately polarization in the church

³⁵ Janet Adamy, “Abortion, Guns and Trump: A Church Group Tries to Navigate America’s Divisions,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 18, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/abortion-guns-and-trump-a-church-group-tries-to-navigate-americas-divisions-11608298552>.

³⁶ Richard G. Hutcheson and Peggy L. Shriver, *The Divided Church: Moving Liberals & Conservatives from Diatribe to Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 57.

³⁷ Hutcheson and Shriver, *The Divided Church*, 57.

³⁸ John C Dorhauer, Traci Blackmon, and Karen Georgia Thompson, “UCC National Leadership Speaks out about Church Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19),” United Church of Christ, March 13, 2020, https://www.ucc.org/news_statement_ucc_national_leadership_speaks_out_about_church_response_to_coronavirus_covid_19_03132020.

is “counterproductive, supporting the shadow side of the status quo,”³⁹ seeking individual instead of collective interest for the betterment of the society.

In this disruptive time of the pandemic, it is hard to understand the reasoning behind the churches’ continuous contention with social issues when the evidence of humankind’s suffering is so present, and it is clearly outlined in scripture the church’s responsibility to address that suffering. For “the message of justice is woven throughout the Bible, the prophets especially issued a strong call for the covenant community to recognize God as the God of justice and repent of their injustice.”⁴⁰ Moreover, God has commanded His people, according to Micah 6:8, to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him. He has also commanded His people to care and provide for the least of these, the quartet of the vulnerable. Despite these instructions, among evangelicals there remains “an unbiblical separation between justice and evangelism.”⁴¹

Therefore, the existing culture of the evangelical church in the United States suggests that change is necessary. If the Church is called to subdue and take dominion of the world, producing multiplication of godly living, love, healing, and redemption, it has a responsibility to recognize and understand its position as architects of culture through justice. Unfortunately, “the experience of social disruption and generalized mistrust”⁴²

³⁹ Hutcheson and Shriver, *The Divided Church*, 57.

⁴⁰ Freedman and Myers, *Micah, Mercy and Justice*, 894.

⁴¹ Peter Slade, Charles Marsh, and Peter Heltzel, *Mobilizing for the Common Good the Lived Theology of John M. Perkins* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 177.

⁴² Matthew Continetti, “The Social Costs of COVID-19,” *National Review*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2020/04/20/the-social-costs-of-covid-19%E2%80%88/>.

alongside the partnership between politics and religion has created negative attention toward the Church and hindered the progress of social change.

While many churches answered the charge within to pursue change in the arena of social justice, others debated the validity of the need for the Church's involvement in such issues. Some went so far as to claim that the social justice movement is "an onslaught of dangerous and false teaching that threaten the gospel, misrepresent Scripture, and lead people away from the grace of God in Jesus Christ."⁴³ Other debates include the order of priority of the two commandments that govern Christians' answer to human needs: "The Great Commandment" in Mark 12:30-31 and "The Great Commission" in Mark 16:15. Thus, the church stands divided on justice in correctly interpreting the scriptural context of justice and living out the scriptural mandate for justice.

Consequently, as the debate continues, some move into action while others have drawn a line in the sand, effectively diminishing its influence on and response to justice issues. In turn, cross-generational thoughts, mindsets, and varied perceptions of justice percolate throughout the Church, creating a great divide. The younger generations are in an upheaval concerning the planet's conditions, the economy, and lack of attention and thought toward social injustices. Meanwhile, the older generations are divided against each other in their response due to their cultural influences and individualized worldviews.

⁴³ CT Editors, "John MacArthur's 'Statement on Social Justice' Is Aggravating Evangelicals," Christianity Today, September 12, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/podcasts/quick-to-listen/john-macarthur-statement-social-justice-gospel-thabiti.html>.

Often, the presence of social injustice within any community influences its members to look for allies to come alongside them. Consequently, the tension of justice issues has been around for centuries within the Church in reference to evaluating whether it should undertake fighting social injustice issues. Unfortunately, this conflict appears to have left the Church split in half between those who stand on the sidelines of injustice and those who pursue justice work within their communities. With a house so divided, the Church has become ineffective in both arms of its ministry. Accordingly, this suggests that the communities need an influential, unbiased voice for social advocacy.

Brief Introduction to the Shard Perspective

Just as the single shard of the mosaic in the opening of this dissertation highlighted the importance for its return to become a part of the larger masterpiece, so too is the shard perspective in the understanding the totality of the mosaic of justice. Going back to that illustration, take into consideration the pandemic and racial issues. When one looks at these crises from an individualist point of view, both may be interpreted only through the lens of one's own experiences, foundational truths, cultural awareness, and encounters with such issues. The shard perspective serves as a theoretical framework adapted for this research project from the fragmentation perspective. The fragmentation perspective identifies "a web of individuals, sporadically and loosely connected by their changing positions on a variety of issues. Their involvement, their subcultural identities, and their individual self-definitions fluctuate, depending in which issues are activated at a

given moment.”⁴⁴ The shard perspective adopts the premise of the fragmentation perspective while emphasizing the impact that subcultural identity exposure has in determining moral allegiance. Furthermore, this perspective emphasizes the fragmented viewpoint in which individuals process and interpret the suffering of others within and outside of their cultural group.

For example, in 2018, not too long after the massacre at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the men’s ministry in a Washington State church planned to go forward with their shooting range event despite hesitation from two men from Florida who recently moved to the state. When discussion arose around the protest from the survivors for stronger laws on gun purchases, the response for the senior pastor was something to the effect of “it is our constitutional right to bear arms. The government is trying to control us and prevent us from protecting ourselves.” Now, this pastor was quite aware that the men had personal connections with people working in and attending the school at the time of the massacre. He even posted his thoughts boldly on social media and, unfortunately, some of his congregants followed in his course. Instead of the pastor seeing this as a moment to have compassion for those suffering and teach others values of empathy and compassion, he embraced and understood that moment from his fragmented shard of the story.

Research on this topic uncovered the interplay of varied perspectives even within subcultures that help individuals and organizations understand their own “philosophical perspectives, meanings, attitudes, values, beliefs, [and] ideas that underlie the cultural

⁴⁴ Joanne Martin, *Culture in Organizations: Three Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 153.

practices and products of a society.”⁴⁵ Unfortunately, though the shard perspective can prove beneficial to the individual or subculture, it could be detrimental and debilitating to cross-cultural relationships. Therefore, there is a need to disrupt the shard perspective to be able to see beyond individual or subculture lens to embrace a cross-cultural impact or influence.

The Leadership Story—Ministry Context

Though I grew up going to a multiethnic/multicultural church, my leadership journey has been quite a diverse one. It began in a predominately African American church plant in the early years of ministry. Later it transitioned to a multiethnic/multicultural church to working alongside my husband as the only African American and Jamaican leaders in a church over the past four years. Being the only POC leadership couple has not been an uncommon occurrence. In fact, most of our leadership styles, strength, and experiences thrived in these settings where we were the minority presence. In our post-doctorate seminary experience, we were the only Black students in our cohort and, prior to moving to California, my husband and I served a predominantly slightly older Caucasian congregation in Anacortes, Washington. When we arrived, we took our time to engage with the culture of the congregants and community while building personal relationships, which allowed us to strengthen our leadership ability to flourish cross-culturally. For Good Friday, we partnered with other churches in the community for service, where every pastor took a portion of the Last Seven Words and ministered it as

⁴⁵ Uttam Gaulee, *Rethinking Education across Borders: Emerging Issues and Critical Insights on Globally Mobile Students* (Gateway East, Singapore: Springer, 2020), 292.

one sermon, while worship team members from their churches came together to sing worship at the services. In addition to that, whenever someone was in need, the churches would come alongside each other to fulfill those needs. Now, everything was not perfect in Anacortes. We had our share of racially induced experiences; however, we also had experiences that cultivated *communitas* and the full expression of *koinonia*. We found a community and family there and formed lifelong friendships that remain to this day.

When we transitioned in 2019 to Livingwater Church in Berkeley, California, our new leadership context felt different in the aspect that it was a younger congregation with approximately 200-plus millennials and Gen Z (Zoomers) of mostly Asian descent. Hungry for God, this congregation carried not only a desire to understand God's mission but also to see God's justice be fulfilled in their community. Being a witness to their hearts in action as they feed the homeless, stand up against human trafficking, and get involved in gospel-centered justice work initiatives across the globe to minister to children and young adults has brought me such hope and admiration for the future of justice work through the hands of the church.

At the beginning of 2020, their concerns turned toward my family with the increased media on police brutality among people of color. Text and Facebook messages flooded our devices: "How are you and your family doing? I know the Black community is hurting. Can we do anything for you?" Unfortunately, the initial response they received was something to the effect of, "This has always happened; the rest of the world is finally getting to see what's always been there." Not the best of responses to a generation that has not fully seen these injustices firsthand, but it was what I had to offer at the time. The current issues were not something new to me; they were an everyday lived experience.

As a woman of color with a Jamaican husband and two Black sons (African American/Jamaican descents), there is a constant underlying presence of fear and experienced trauma, often tucked away through departmentalization to live and function in the world.

That moment provided insight into my own hindered perspective. I grew up with firsthand knowledge of the injustices toward minorities in the United States. It was commonplace for elders of the family to share the stories of our mixed heritage and the atrocities endured from slavery to the civil rights movement and there were moments you even found yourself interwoven in some of the shared experiences of those stories. However, the stories ended with examples of those who paved the way for our family and the hope and responsibility to continue to help bring change to the world despite the opposition of injustice. For decades, the young in our family were groomed to move past the lamenting process into a place of action, integrating ourselves in government positions, law enforcement, higher education, and religious institutions to make changes for a better future for our families and communities.

I had to change the lens of my perspective from my lived experience to understand this new experience my congregation was facing. I had to shift from the perspective founded in my lived reality of these racial issues to one that empathized with the thoughts and emotions of my sons alongside a generation of their peers within our church who were deeply burdened and trying to grapple with understanding this justice issue themselves.

As soon as some form of grounding of understanding took place, the attacks on the Asian community began to rise, and the violent act on March 16, 2021 in Atlanta was

at the forefront. With gathered thoughts and a deep breath, I took time in one of the gatherings to address the women of my church. Unknowledgeable of how to properly articulate the dialogue for such the gravity of violence against this community, the best course of action was to begin the dialogue, be a listening ear, and lean on the knowledge of other women ministers from the Asian community to bring insight not only for myself but the women at Livingwater. Therefore, I reached out to theologian and author, Rev. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, whom I came to know through the Healing Practices of a Radiant event, days after the Atlanta massacre. Incorporating her teaching as a part of the Women of Livingwater Fearless Speaker series brought clarity to the historical premise of systemic systems of hatred and inequality of race relations and helped address the underlying truth that these issues have always existed. Just as the elders in my family tradition, she spoke with grace, giving hope, comfort, and solutions for possible ways to move forward.

In a December 2019 article, “18–35-Year-Olds Rate the Church’s Reputation for Justice,” adapted from Barna’s *The Connected Generation* report, young Christians engaged in church reported their church “helped them understand the needs of the poor (45%) and marginalized (36%), and provided opportunities to serve those in their community (38%).”⁴⁶ Likewise, practicing young Christians stated that “their church has equipped them with an understanding of social justice (35%) or that they’ve found a cause or issue they’re passionate about through their church (31%).”⁴⁷ Further in the

⁴⁶ Barna Group, “18–35-Year-Olds Rate the Church’s Reputation for Justice,” Barna Group, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/churchs-reputation-for-justice/>.

⁴⁷ Barna Group, “18–35-Year-Olds Rate the Church’s Reputation for Justice.”

study, it is noted, “a slight majority of 18–35-year-old respondents feels the Church is definitely (16%) or probably (42%) making a difference on issues of poverty and justice.”⁴⁸ The remaining three-quarters of the respondents in the survey believed “the Church is making a difference to some extent (73%), compared to only one-third of those who claim no faith (32%).”⁴⁹

In an independent survey for this research, “Social Advocacy and the Church 2020,” young Christians within this same age range feel the Church overall responds negatively (22%) or neutral (15%) to social justice issues. Meanwhile, Christians 35 and older, feel the Church overall responds positively (11%), very positively (4%), negatively (26%), very negatively (4%), or neutral (18%) to social justice issues. Though the percentages are similar to the data from Barna’s survey, when it comes to partaking in social justice work, Barna indicates 43% and the independent study conducted for this research indicates a slightly higher percentage of 68%. The remaining 32% indicated non-involvement in justice issues due to the following issues: limited time and resources, not a part of the mission of the church, not biblical, not enough training and skills in this area, and other (unknown) reasons. The data between the surveys show evidence of variance in perceptions and interpretations of the understanding of justice work, which may be due to “a direct reflection of the Church’s actions (or inaction)”⁵⁰ toward justice issues.

⁴⁸ Barna Group, “18–35-Year-Olds Rate the Church’s Reputation for Justice.”

⁴⁹ Barna Group, “18–35-Year-Olds Rate the Church’s Reputation for Justice”

⁵⁰ Barna Group, “18–35-Year-Olds Rate the Church’s Reputation for Justice.”

Contextualizing Justice and the Church

Society is full of eras of injustices, including the present, and unfortunately, Christianity has been stained with either being tied to these injustices or avoiding participation against injustices. Thus, as the Church remains divided between the Great Commission and the Great Commandments, injustices are taking place, and there are limited voices of reason and reconciliation on the battleground. Consequently, the question of justice should not be up for debate.⁵¹

One of the most challenging tasks of the Church is to clearly define the term justice in a matter that holds both its biblical foundation and modern social implications. By definition, justice is “the maintenance or administration of what is just, especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments and the principle or ideal of just dealing or right action.”⁵² And though there are several aspects or viewpoints of the realms of justice, the appropriateness of one’s perspective depends on the context at hand.

In a sociological sense, justice is founded in the definition below.

Social justice is a state of affairs (either actual or ideal) in which (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed per some allocation principle (or set of principles); (b) procedures, norms, and rules that govern political and other forms of decision making preserve the fundamental rights, liberties, and entitlements of individuals and groups; and (c) human beings (and perhaps other species) are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social actors, including fellow citizens.⁵³

⁵¹ Shermika Harvey, “Give Me That Old Time Religion, Is Good Enough for Me?” *DLGP.com* (blog), March 16, 2020, <https://blogs.georgefox.edu/dlgp/give-me-that-old-time-religion-is-good-enough-for-me/>.

⁵² Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Justice,” accessed April 24, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice>.

⁵³ Susan T. Fiske, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Gardner Lindzey, *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 1122.

Whereas, in a philosophical sense, it is still in agreement with the sociological apprehension of justice. It is implicit to the “fairness, correct treatment, or equitable distribution of resources.” Consequently, it is also concerned with living conditions, equity of income distribution, the origination of opportunities, and eradicating inequalities.⁵⁴ In a biblical/theological sense, justice is not solely based on the temporal circumstances of humanity but it is also eternal. It surpasses the mere benefits, distribution, and balancing of services and goods. Justice is a “kingdom of God issue. It is a gospel-centered issue. It is not political, even though politics can facilitate or restrict the flow of justice. Ultimately, the roots of social justice originate in the heart of God and the pages of scripture.”⁵⁵ Rooted in the character of God, justice is what he demands of those that follow Him, and it is tethered to His mercy and versed in the relationship He has with humanity.⁵⁶

At its very essence, the message of justice can be summarized in the entirety of Micah 6:8: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?” In itself, the biblical conception of justice is founded in the Hebrew words *misphat* and *tzadeqah*. Separated, *misphat* means to treat people equitably, and *tzadeqah* means

⁵⁴ “Social Injustice,” The Encyclopedia of World Problems & Human Potential, November 6, 2018, <http://encyclopedia.uia.org/en/problem/133064>.

⁵⁵ Terry Crist, “Theology of Justice,” in *Hillsong Teachings* (New York, NY, 2018), <https://teaching.hillsongstore.com/products/friday-masterclass-theology-of-social-justice-terry-crist>.

⁵⁶ D. N. Freedman and Allen C. Myers, “Micah, Mercy and Justice,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 757.

righteousness and justice. Combined, both terms produce justice known as “primary and rectifying justice.”⁵⁷

Rectifying justice is *misphat*. It means punishing wrongdoers and caring for the victims of unjust treatment. Primary justice, or *tzadeqah*, is behavior that, if it was prevalent in the world, would render rectifying justice unnecessary, because everyone would be living in right relationship to everyone else. Therefore, though *tzadeqah* is primarily about being in a right relationship with God, the righteous life that results is profoundly social.⁵⁸

Biblically, justice is to make right before God, loving one’s neighbor as oneself, and its foundation is in the character and nature of God. Relationally, it means living in right relationship with God, one another, and natural creation. It is a “relationship with the Lord—namely, holiness; and, at the same time, a relationship with human beings—namely, recognition of the rights of each person and especially of the despised and the oppressed, or in other words, social justice.”⁵⁹ The subjective reality of justice begins with connecting to spiritual security in God and the intrinsic nexus of *Dikaioisune*. Justice is the work of God and, to an extent, also the work of those who believe in God.⁶⁰ Now, taking this contextualization and integrating it with a cultural component, the Church could move freely between God’s righteous nature and the justice attribute of God’s hand upon humanity.

Churches should be safe places to explore in-depth issues that tear society apart, issues such as “racism, poverty, lawlessness, hunger, women’s sense of exclusion, even

⁵⁷ Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 347.

⁵⁸ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 347.

⁵⁹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 176.

⁶⁰ Gutierrez, *Essential Writings*, 176.

the alienation of the elderly, youth or the disabled.”⁶¹ The evangelical Church today cannot remain silent and cannot proclaim a gospel in which it does not live, and the Church “cannot carry out a real social ministry without knowing the Lord and hearing his call to justice and peace.”⁶² Evangelism and justice are not interchangeable in God’s mission. If churches began to understand “God-centric, not Church centric,”⁶³ they would have the ability to completely reframe their overall understanding⁶⁴ of God’s intended plan for humanity. For, “mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purpose to restore and heal creation”⁶⁵ and the Church—collectively and individually—is called to be the vessel He uses to accomplish this task.

When understanding the tasks associated with the mission of God, often only one scripture is emphasized, which is the one known to many as the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV), “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” Many churches have taken this scripture as their foundational truth and commission for missions—global missions with little to no focus on local missions.

⁶¹ Hutcheson and Shriver, *The Divided Church*, 166.

⁶² “Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish,” in *Pastoral Letters and Statements of the United States Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 536.

⁶³ Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998), 4.

⁶⁴ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 4.

⁶⁵ Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 4.

However, Acts 1:8 (ESV) suggests a strategic plan to perform the Great Commission. It states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The foundational truth of the mission of God is clear, and His mandate is for His people to make disciples and do so by beginning in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the outermost part of the world. Often mission work begins in the reverse with Samaria and outermost at the starting point and ending in Jerusalem.

He desires for His people to proclaim the gospel and fill the world with His presence. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Church to follow the instructions of His sending and fulfilling this mandate. Without knowing the complete and relative nature of the mission of God, it is possible to misinterpret or misunderstand the biblical context of the “sending of God” translated from the theological term of *missio Dei*. Therefore, “in order to fulfill our commander’s intent... we must take time to form a compelling biblical picture of it.”⁶⁶ The biblical picture involves “understanding mission from the perspective of *missio Dei* [which] invites us to look for where God is working in the world and join him there.”⁶⁷ Also, it involves an accurate emulation of God’s kingdom mandate for the Church. Therefore, it is beneficial to begin with the mission of the Church, which is the *missio Dei*.

⁶⁶ G. K. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 15.

⁶⁷ Edge and Morgan, *Partnering with God*, 4.

The Latin Christian theological term/phrase *missio Dei*, coined by German missiologist Karl Hartenstein, translates the “sending of God” or the “mission of God.” Hartenstein uses this term/phrase to demonstrate that the triune God has been on a mission from eternity past. Theologically, the *missio Dei* is depicted in the following statement. First, God the Father sends the Son. The Son sends the Spirit. The Father, Son, and Spirit then send the Church; “it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”⁶⁸ Thus, the mission of the Church is the mission of God. The goal is not to view mission as “primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God”⁶⁹ since He is doing the sending. David Bosch, a South African missiologist and theologian, explains this attribute of God in respect to *missio Dei* in the following passage:

God is a missionary God...Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.⁷⁰

The article “Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World” by J.R. Woodward, adds another element to the attribute of God in *missio Dei*, stating:

God’s mission [is] to set things right in a broken and messed-up world... to redeem the world and restore it to its intended purpose. The church exists to fulfill God’s mission, and when we participate in God’s mission, we become living signs of God’s intended future for the world, bringing glory to God. In other

⁶⁸ J.R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 27-28.

⁶⁹ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 390.

⁷⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

words, mission exists because God is a missionary God. And a church which is not on mission is either not yet or no longer the church or only a dead church— itself in need of renewal.⁷¹

In the postmodern day, the Church's interpretation or understanding of the mission of God has become convoluted and often detached from its original design.

Missio Dei is profoundly a God-centered approach to mission instead of a mission-driven from humanity's perspective. God's mission is local, global, relational, and ecumenical, and "our participation in local or global mission is part of the bigger picture of *missio Dei*."⁷² And this invitation to refocus on the *missio Dei* in the mission can help redefine the Church's approach to evaluate how it relates to social justice. Sherron George suggests the "fullness of the spiritual, material, social, and planetary life comes through God's multidimensional mission actions that include evangelism, compassion, and social justice."⁷³

The early church knew this concept of social justice well. It was renowned for identifying with the poor and weak. Eventually, though part of a minority religion, they were seen to have the right to speak for the local community. In *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, Alan Kreider suggested the church had this position due to their self-identity as "resident aliens" or *paroikoi* "a familiar legal term, which many Christians from 1 Peter throughout the early centuries used to express their identification with cultures which they nevertheless embodied new approaches and

⁷¹ Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 28.

⁷² Sherron George, "God's Holistic Mission: Fullness of Parts, Participants, and Places," *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 3 (March 2013): 286-287, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0091829613480625>.

⁷³ George, *God's Holistic Mission*, 287.

insights.”⁷⁴ With new perspectives and possibilities, the symbolic and social language of the Christians were familiar and helped to interact with the struggles of the people. The self-identity led to a lifestyle in which its social reality transcended the Roman Empire by “corresponding with other churches, by providing hospitality to travelers, supporting fellow Christians.”⁷⁵ Even when the word came forth that prisoners were in distress, the Christian community would provide them with necessities, including food and drink. In a broader viewpoint, the early church communities were characterized by sharing their economic wealth and soliciting care for the poor—and not only the poor within their community.⁷⁶ These acts of servanthood extended to the widows, orphans, and the poor and oppressed. Ironically, caring for the poor and the weak became a significant “reason for the cultural influence the church eventually came to wield. If the church does not identify with the marginalized, it will itself be marginalized. That is God’s poetic justice.”⁷⁷

The world is changing, and with it, the identity of the church. The church’s identity and purpose have become convoluted in the public’s perception in response to its limited or lack of concern toward justice issues. It has become more distant yet combative, more inward-focused, and intolerant. The church has become inward-focused,

⁷⁴ Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf et Stock, 2007), 15.

⁷⁵ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 18.

⁷⁶ Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 19.

⁷⁷ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 225.

allowing a world that knows little about it to speak on its behalf, creating tensions and presenting a manufactured identity.

There has been a plethora of books in recent years about how Christians can change the world. Many of them urge us to engage society, mobilize our forces and win the culture war. But... whenever the church tries to rule the world, it never goes well for us. Indeed, we would suggest most of the criticisms leveled at the church by its detractors relate to the church's abuse of temporal power. It's nice to imagine the church as an ancient remedy that brings healing and repair to a diseased system, but increasingly, people have spoken of the church more in terms of a virus than a tonic.⁷⁸

In the United States today, evidence of a post-Christian, not post-religious, culture is increasing. Being that “America was once a Christian nation,”⁷⁹ influences and values were often aligned with the Judeo-Christian systems of philosophy. Consequently, the world has drastically changed. The “increasingly post-Christian culture, the influences, and values shaping emerging generations are no longer aligned with Christianity.”⁸⁰ As a result, the younger generation has established disdain in their hearts for the church. Emerging generations have contributed to this disdain for the church by labeling the church as being 1) an organized religion with a political agenda, 2) judgmental and negative, 3) dominated by males and oppressive to females, 4) homophobic, 5) arrogant in its claims all other religions are wrong, and 6) full of fundamentalists who takes the whole Bible literally.⁸¹ The colossal issue for the Church is its “inability to connect with nonbelievers in a way that they understand. Isn't it a major issue that the evangelical

⁷⁸ Michael Frost, *To Alter Your World: Partnering with God to Rebirth Our Communities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 114-115.

⁷⁹ Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), Introduction, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, Introduction, Kindle.

⁸¹ Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, Introduction, Kindle.

church exists as a subcultural cul-de-sac, unable to speak the gospel intelligibly to most Americans, and is perceived to be concerned only with increasing its power rather than a common good?”⁸² The Church can utilize times of disruption to facilitate change and birth a cultural revolution, but only if it addresses its fragmented perspectives of justice and realigns with the mission God has granted it as peacemakers and cultural innovators.

Conclusion

In this section, several possible hinderances were identified which may contribute to the negative perception of the Church toward justice. These include but are not limited to 1) internal theological debates flowing outward into the public’s view, 2) the ideological and intellectual debate of the premise of justice, 3) lack of cultural and social influence due to its current detachable and unrelatable nature, 4) lack of understanding the entirety of the mission of God, 5) lack of consistent presence in times of disruption, and finally 6) limited perspective of justice and injustices within the community it was called to serve.

Justice is a complex topic and varies in political, biblical, and theological dimensions. However, the ones holding individual shards often determine the narrative of justice, including how it is carried out and implemented in society. Thus, the understanding of that single shard is isolated and non-transferable in the understanding of other shards. Nevertheless, collectively, the shards become a complete mosaic, a picture portraying the world's wholeness and brokenness of justice. Justice carried out without the intention of healing, restoration, and redemption is like looking at that one shard.

⁸² Keller, *Center Church*, 225.

Likewise, redemption without the intention of healing and restoration can leave one railing the consequences of the shard perspective. Suppose each church collectively brought its single shard together and established a centralized mission to carry out justice? In that case, the world may be better for it. For the truth is that God envisions all the shards coming together as one entire mosaic, pursuing righteousness and justice as kingdom ambassadors and cultural creators in the world.

As stated before, this world is on the verge of a revolution and those who control the narrative of the culture of justice determine the outcome of justice.

SECTION 2: PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The previous section introduced the shard perspective, briefly established the concept of justice, examined the variations of the shard perspective through an ethnographic lens, and highlighted some of the current debates among the Church and society concerning justice issues. In Section Two, the aim is to 1) introduce the concept of a culture of justice, 2) highlight churches and faith-based organizations leading effectively in justice work, and 3) provide a proposed solution to revitalize or reintroduce a culture of justice that withstands disruption. The information provided in this section is represented through an ethnographic lens of field research either through personal interviews and through volunteerism with highlighted churches and faith-based communities.

Furthering the Conversation of the Shard Perspective

The Church has struggled with the complications of creating a culture of justice that encompasses both evangelism and social action for centuries. Culturally contextualized, the shard perspective highlights the multiplicity of views, acknowledges ambiguity, and focuses on the ambiguity, irony, paradox, and multiple interpretations that do not coalesce into a consensus⁸³ within an organization, in this case, the Church. For the Church, the “assumption is that there are some aspects of a cohesive culture that bind

⁸³ Ryan E. Smerek, “Cultural Perspectives of Academia: Toward a Model of Cultural Complexity,” *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (2010): 381-423, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8598-6_10, 385.

organizational actors, but at the same time there are factions, subcultures, and occupations that differentiate units of an organization.”⁸⁴ Despite the ambiguity, shifting of alliances, and unclear cross-denominational goals of a unified stance toward injustice, perhaps a meta-theoretical approach can narrow concepts and interactions with culture toward higher levels of abstraction rather than a single approach.⁸⁵ More in this meta-theoretical approach will be detailed in Section 3. One concept in this approach to disrupt the single shard perspective is the creation of a culture of justice that can translate across cultural, political, religious, regional, and racial barriers.

Creating a Culture of Justice

When creating a culture of justice, it is important to differentiate that though it includes cultural justice, it is not cultural justice itself. In some aspects, justice is cultural; on the other hand, cultural justice speaks only to “culturally specific conceptions of what is just.”⁸⁶ A culture of justice considers all conceptions of justice, evaluates them, and seeks a unified way to conceptualize justice and ways in which justice can be accomplished. It should 1) integrate practices of justice into the development of the organization’s systems such as mission and vision; 2) deepen relationships, leadership, members, and community; 3) equip and mobilize those members to respond to justice issues; and 4) create a visible authentic narrative of justice through shared experiences, stories, and resources.

⁸⁴ Smerek, “Cultural Perspectives,” 385.

⁸⁵ Smerek, “Cultural Perspectives,” 385.

⁸⁶ Robert Charles Elliot, ed., *Institutional Issues Involving Ethics and Justice*, vol. 1 (Oxford, United Kingdom: Eolss Publisher/UNESCO, 2009), 298.

One of the ways to initiate a culture of justice is to identify if the organization—in this case, the Church—actively has a *community of practice*. A community of practice (CoP), a concept proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger, is a group of individuals who share common concerns or passions for a topic or area and learn how to better execute or interact regularly in that area.⁸⁷ It is important to note that having community in a name does not make it an actual community of practice. A community of practice must include 1) the domain—“a network of connections between individuals;”⁸⁸ 2) the community—joint activities, discussions, helpers to one another, sharing of information and resources;⁸⁹ and 3) the practice—community members are practitioners, developing a “shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice.”⁹⁰

Unfortunately, not all communities operate in all three elements at one given time. They may include the domain, but then limit it to their leadership within the church. They may include the community, but it may lean more toward the execution of activities with little to no shared discussion outside of the network. Often the missing element is the practice, where shared experiences and stories among the church leaders and its members serve to be vital in the development of the shared practice—in this case, practices of

⁸⁷ Etienne Wenger and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, “Introduction to Communities of Practice,” Wenger, December 1, 2021, <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>, pg. 1.

⁸⁸ Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, “Introduction to Communities of Practice,” 2.

⁸⁹ Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, “Introduction to Communities of Practice,” 2.

⁹⁰ Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, “Introduction to Communities of Practice,” 2.

justice. To become a community of practice, all three elements must be cultivated for an effective culture of justice. With these elements in mind, the following churches and faith-based organizations introduced are creating cultures of justice within their church and community through partnerships that are cross-regional, ecumenical, and/or formed through relationships with the government.

Leading the Way

In an endeavor to identify and analyze how other churches and faith-based organizations have attempted to address the varied perspectives of justice and perceptions of the Church toward justice issues, the field research conducted for this dissertation is separated into five areas: 1) partnering cultures of justice, 2) the impact of the Church and social action within the community, 3) ecumenical justice work, 4) evangelical churches on mission, and 5) bridging barriers of perceptions. The reflective manner of the field research presented allowed for in-depth insight and firsthand experiences with several pastors, churches, and faith-based organizational leaders who actively and relevantly lead the way in justice work around the United States. Their presence within the communities they serve has contributed to the disruption of the shard perspective. It continuously counters the perception of the church's silence or inability to create a culture of change. The organizations and churches presented in this section have moved beyond the perceived complacency of the Church and reached outside their buildings to enter objectively into a complicated conversation with their communities and began addressing the social tensions of immigration, racial equity, and homelessness, while carrying out simultaneously evangelism and social action.

The information from the field research presented in the following pages contains an ethnographic point of view of encounters with churches, faith-based organizations, and other non-government organizations in the United States, with some initiatives extending into global territories. Some of these encounters were produced through program involvement. Interviews were conducted with founders and leaders within these organizations to understand how their justice work helps to alter the negative perception of silence by the Church.

Partnering Culture of Justice Cross-Regionally—Addressing the Racial Divide

On June 21, 2020, a short documentary film titled “We Hear You” premiered on Facebook Live. The film gave the audience an insider’s view on the Church’s presence during the riots, looting, and protests spawned around the world after George Floyd’s death. With a camera crew and a network of volunteers and staff, Jonathan Tremaine (JT) Thomas, founder of the Civil Righteousness movement, and Andrew Chalmers, director of the film and founder of Take the City, partnered to create a film. This film captured the “untold story of how the church is responding to the cries of our nation for justice and racial equity”⁹¹ and centered in Ferguson, Missouri. The film invited the harsh realities of injustices faced in the community for decades and the pain of not being heard. It also showed another side that is not often portrayed in the media. It showed God’s love and compassion through His church and community unification through prayer and action.

⁹¹ Civil Righteousness “Civil Righteousness, Inc. - We Hear You,” Civil Righteousness, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://civilrighteousness.org/>.

The goal of the film was to inspire action in the church by 1) compelling people to listen more and have hard conversations; 2) inspiring people to pray for the nation; and 3) responding to injustice and racial inequality in a biblical way. The film is a piece of artwork that embodies experiences, testimonies, and biblical fortitude to create a culture of justice not only in Ferguson but as a template for the nation. Moreover, albeit the film itself impacted the community and the Church by providing an essential resource to facilitate conversations of justice and race relations, each organization holds its own contributions to creating a culture of justice.

On the week of July 6, 2020, I had the opportunity to interview both JT Thomas and Andrew Chalmers about the film and their organizations' —launched between 2013 and 2014—impact on social justice in their communities. The following paragraphs come from that conversation. Civil Righteousness was launched in St. Louis, Missouri, to address the racial unrest due to police brutality. Meanwhile, Take the City launched in the surrounding area of Columbus, Georgia, to mobilize the Church to revitalize their cities through “proclamation, compassion, and justice.” Each of these movements was uniquely designed for its community and they launched within months of each other; two movements in the United States in two different locations, with one purpose—to see change take place within the community through the lens of God’s justice. That justice is to live right with God and one another, and to do so through love and compassion. These two organizations joined together to help shed light on the public perception of the Church’s silence and proposed a truth-seeking and collective agenda for racial reconciliation, and their impact on the communities they encounter is remarkable.

Civil Righteousness: Pursuing Reconciliation and Restorative Justice. In the interview with Thomas, he explained Civil Righteousness is the external expression of what he has been carrying for decades. It was birthed through him wrestling with the complexity of racism, slavery, and God's sovereignty amid these atrocities and processed through his lens of being a product of a lineage of freedom fighters, educators, pastors, and missionaries. It was during the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, he had an epiphany. In his epiphany, he recognized that

The tactics of taking to the streets marching, boycotting, sitting in, ... are strategies employed 50 or 60 years ago. Why are we relying on 60-year-old technology in that arena, but we don't lean on 50- to 60-year-old technology in other arenas in society? Those strategies were led out by the Church, and they were given by God, and they were sourced in prayer. Strategies that came from the Lord for a season and a time to deal with what they were dealing with within that season and that time, but to do that over and over again and expect different results is unwise. Furthermore, the Church is not leading this narrative. In the midst that there are all of these different agendas, these ideological agendas that are being attached to it and we see a generation that is getting radicalized. In a sense, these agendas are co-opting the pain of the Black experience in America and then radicalize a generation toward a solution that is no solution at all—which is a violent revolution.⁹²

Therefore, in 2014, with a mission to pursue “reconciliation and restorative justice through spiritual, cultural, and economic renewal”⁹³ and a set of pillars to engage injustice, restore communities, and build bridges,⁹⁴ Civil Righteousness began to create a culture of justice that would impact many communities. Though its beginning started out as a response to address an immediate injustice within its city walls, within the following four years, it transitioned from a movement to a non-profit organization whose models of

⁹² Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview by Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

⁹³ Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview by Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview by Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

education, healing, equipping, and empowerment programs and initiatives has permeated in the heart of communities and churches beyond its city's limits. Initiatives such as *CR University*, *The Table*, *Pray on MLK*, *Trauma Healing Table*, and *Mobilization* have grown the movement to contribute the genuine reflection of Thomas's redefinition of civil righteousness, which can be summed up in this quote he shared, "inequity deserves a civil rights movement, which deal with the external. But iniquity, sin and unrighteousness at a heart level and thought level which governs out actions...require a civil righteousness movement."⁹⁵

At the time of the interview, the final preparation was being made for the coursework of *CR University* and *The Table* was not yet launched. However, the *Pray on MLK* and other initiatives, including the distribution of the film, were well on their way, impacting people across the United States. As a part of the field research, I had the opportunity to participate and speak at the *Pray on MLK* event, alongside my husband and other pastors from the Bay Area in Oakland, California. The presence of several churches uniting for silent prayer on the sidewalk of a busy street with words of solidarity, healing, hope, and reconciliation written on tape across their mouths showed a community that the Church cares for justice, but it was more impactful to know at that very moment other churches throughout the country were uniting to do the same. It was refreshing to witness believers from varied faiths, backgrounds, ages, ethnic groups, and cultures unite for the cause of pursuing justice in love, word, and action. There remains an intense need for healing a wound in this nation and that wound is spiritual,

⁹⁵ Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview by Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

psychological, and emotional.⁹⁶ In the end, the Church has been given the gift of reconciliation and Jesus's justice agenda for internal transformation which leads to external reformation.

Civil Righteousness' Impact on Creating Cultures of Justice. Civil

Righteousness expanded its reach in 2016, gathering over 100 spiritual leaders from around the country to address the historical racial divide in America and a multicultural awakening,⁹⁷ now carrying civil righteousness to churches and communities. Historically, Civil Righteousness conducted conferences and civil righteousness weekends of training and teaching in different cities, but the current pandemic has alternated that quite a bit. In the meantime, they have developed a 12-module comprehensive curriculum called Civil Righteousness 101. This course on civil righteousness encompasses both biblical worldviews and principles on peacemaking and reconciliation as well as providing practical tools for engagement. In addition to the curriculum, it has launched podcasts, prayer walks, and various trainings to help churches and believers become equipped in marrying both theology and sociology. Today, it has over "400 volunteer organizers in 50 states and several countries including Canada, Australia, South Africa, and the UK."⁹⁸ Civil Righteousness is creating a culture of justice through helping to call the church to assume its role as the governing agency of peacemaking, of oneness, of reconciliation, and/or justice with righteousness in this time.

⁹⁶ Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview by Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

⁹⁷ "Civil Righteousness, Inc.," Civil Righteousness, Inc., accessed October 4, 2021, <https://civilrighteousness.org/>.

⁹⁸ "Civil Righteousness, Inc.," Civil Righteousness, Inc., accessed October 4, 2021, <https://civilrighteousness.org/>.

Take the City: Unifying and Mobilizing the Body of Christ. While Civil Righteousness focuses on works of justice in a community-church relationship, the ministry Take the City focuses on the healing the church from the inside in order to be effective outward. In his interview, Chalmers communicated that at the beginning of Take the City's initiative to unify and mobilize the churches together to impact the city, he recognized an underlying issue of "many churches not wanting anything to do with each other; [they] worked independently for each and had no knowledge of what the other churches were doing."⁹⁹ Therefore, the first steps of the initiative were to unite the churches in prayer and then unify them in evangelism and acts of kindness (justice work). Though evangelism and justice work are important, Take the City's main focus is to first unify the body of Christ.

It's great to speak up about what's happening in our cities, and pastors need to say something. But there's a deep cancer in the Church, it's division. Before we even go to preach about how there's injustice in law structures, systemic racism, and white privilege... there's a deep divide... a deep amount of pain in the Church ... we need to deal with that first. In the church, we should be able to come together. We should not deal with racism in the church. We should not deal with denominationalism. We should be able to come together if we love Jesus.¹⁰⁰

After having meetings with different church leaders through his community of Columbus, he uncovered a major divide and pain among the churches between the African American and Caucasian churches. In the year 2020, there were still areas where systemic racism is present within their churches. Understanding the dynamics of the churches for the last five-plus years, Chalmers's Take the City organization has been "working on the conversations of seeing the healing that is needed in relationships, seeing

⁹⁹ Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

justice established in our community. A lot of the injustice in the church is not blatant racism, but this subtle pain that has lingered. And the way that things have always been has caused a lot of pain, specifically in the African American community.”¹⁰¹

Pioneering networking development initiatives to bring pastors of different races and denominations has made a tremendous impact on the church body and its community. For example, major progress in the City of Atlanta has been made, where leaders began to meet up for conversation and meals had led to genuine relationships where Black and White pastors who have never been to each other’s churches now share their pulpits. The relational equity placed in these relationships has formed a camaraderie in joint efforts to speak upon injustice issues in the communities with the governor, mayor, and police force. Chalmers noted in his interview that “until the relational depth and healing takes place in the church, it’s hard to [place it unto] these larger social justice issues and causes.”¹⁰² But once the healing and relational equity are established, the church can help produce broader change.

Take the City’s Impact on Creating Cultures of Justice. Take the City’s impact on creating a culture of justice is through its ability to create initiatives and resources that challenge the church to deal with internal issues and translate those processes to the community. Though its focus is the church body, it also has a robust justice work presence through its programs Redeem and Beautifully Made, initiatives to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation within the city while providing employment to survivors. It also spearheaded We Hear You as a tool to be used by

¹⁰¹ Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

¹⁰² Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

churches, particularly white evangelical churches, to begin the conversation about systemic racism. Take the City has been positioned to operate as a unifying agent in their city and this is done through networking development and understanding that every step is one toward healing and rebuilding the place of brotherhood to be effective agents of change in the world.

Impact of the Church and Social Action within Community

The Northern California non-profit organization Project Peace East focuses on “biblical justice by activating a network of churches to serve their communities.”¹⁰³ The volunteerism activities of “sweat equity,”¹⁰⁴ as the organization proposes, are the non-monetary benefits of time and labor that provide meaningful interactions between volunteers, project location staff, and participants of the programs at the location.

From 2019 to 2021, I volunteered for further field research on the bridge of social justice work between the Church and non-faith organizations alongside Livingwater Church with this organization at locations such as City Center Men’s Shelter, Oakland International High School, and Sylvia Mendez Middle School. The experience in volunteering eventually became an integral part of this research in evaluating churches’ involvement with faith-based organizations. To date, Project Peace has partnered with over 43 churches crossing multiple denominational lines to contribute to the sustainability and efficiency of ten public schools ranging from elementary to high school

¹⁰³ Project Peace, “Project Peace,” accessed August 10, 2019, <https://www.projectpeaceeastbay.org/>.

¹⁰⁴ Project Peace, “Project Peace,” accessed August 10, 2019, <https://www.projectpeaceeastbay.org/>.

and over thirteen social service providers in East Bay, California through its Days of Service.

In addition to the Days of Service, this organization provides a public forum called the Peace Speaker Series that tackles specific and local questions surrounding inequity in the context and history of East Bay. The Speaker Series is a platform for changemakers to “spark a thoughtful and often disquieting dialogue about pressing local issues and connect the dots between faith and action.”¹⁰⁵ The hope of the series is for speakers and their organizations to share the message and additionally grow their network of supporters and that there is a deepening of awareness around social justice issues and greater opportunities to become involved in Project Peace.¹⁰⁶

The impact Project Peace contributes to creating a culture of justice in the communities it serves surpasses the mere interaction of its partners and volunteers, for it fosters building communities through relationship and challenges individuals to look beyond socioeconomic status, race, gender, or religion to care for one another. It also challenges those involved to do the “hard work” not only physically, but intellectually and emotionally. Through the organization using “sweat equity” in its mission, it engages emotional equity to help contribute changes in mindsets and perspectives because the source of the need is tangible, relational, and very present.

¹⁰⁵ Project Peace, “Project Peace,” accessed August 10, 2019, <https://www.projectpeaceeastbay.org/>.

¹⁰⁶ Project Peace, “Project Peace,” accessed August 10, 2019, <https://www.projectpeaceeastbay.org/>.

Ecumenical Justice Work in the Bay

In the *2018 Social Advocacy and the Church* questionnaire, Alan Roselius, Board Chair of B.O.C.A., indicated that social advocacy should be a part of its mission and should involve community education, policy, and systems on a state and local level and it should partner with other advocacy organizations and churches.¹⁰⁷ B.O.C.A. accomplishes this as a non-profit faith-based organization consisting of seventeen congregational memberships representing over 10,000 families in Berkeley, California. The denominations represented include Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Quakers, Disciples of Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, United Church of Christ, African Methodist Episcopal, Episcopal, Conservative/Masorti Judaism, United Methodist, and Unitarian Universalists. Its mission is “to train and empower leaders to become activists for positive change in schools, healthcare, affordable housing, community safety, and fair immigration policies.”¹⁰⁸ The ecumenical nature of the organization’s approach further “help[s] deepen relationships with public officials to achieve & uphold justice, equality, and dignity for community members”¹⁰⁹ and has allowed the organization to also address issues of gentrification, displacement, and racism in the day-to-day experience of many Berkeley residents.

¹⁰⁷ Alan Roselius, “Social Advocacy and the Church Questionnaire: Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action (BOCA),” Google Form Survey, December 19, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/SocialAdvocacyandtheChurch2019>.

¹⁰⁸ “Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action,” Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action, 2013, <https://www.bocaberkeley.org/>.

¹⁰⁹ “Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action,” Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action, 2013, <https://www.bocaberkeley.org/>.

According to Roselius, though, there is a realization that the Big Church may be viewed in a negative light, he professes, “faith-based organizations are more needed now than ever with... increasing polarized society with the highlighting of evil ...in society especially toward those that often can’t ...defend themselves.”¹¹⁰ For more than 25 years, B.O.C.A has provided advocacy in Berkeley “in healthcare for children, feeding the hungry and advocating for the stranger in a foreign land.”¹¹¹ It also often provides educational forums and social media resources to speak into social justice issues. The organization realizes the challenge in getting others involved in social justice ministry, but Roselius articulates it is important for those involved in justice work to push onward and encourage others to take steps to get involved. For Christians, and the Church, “we must advocate for those that have no voice to speak for themselves.”¹¹²

Church Partnering with God—Missio Dei in Action

Christian Life Center (CLC) has found a renewed life in evangelism and a public presence in Fort Lauderdale through community-based initiatives and partnerships with local government and social services programs through their Outreach Ministry. CLC was my church home for many years, and I witnessed its impact in the Broward County

¹¹⁰ Alan Roselius, “Social Advocacy and the Church Questionnaire: Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action (BOCA),” Google Form Survey, December 19, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/SocialAdvocacyandtheChurch2019>.

¹¹¹ Alan Roselius, “Social Advocacy and the Church Questionnaire: Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action (BOCA),” Google Form Survey, December 19, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/SocialAdvocacyandtheChurch2019>.

¹¹² Alan Roselius, “Social Advocacy and the Church Questionnaire: Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action (BOCA),” Google Form Survey, December 19, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/SocialAdvocacyandtheChurch2019>.

community in the late 1990s to early 2000s through serving and evangelizing within underserved populations and partnering with other churches to regularly outreach through events in the local parks. In addition, “traditionally they have always had a strong prison ministry outreach.”¹¹³ Though CLC has always been a great supporter of global missions and disaster relief initiatives, a reemergence of local mission started to materialize again in the mid-2000s with a food pantry program and school outreach. During the pandemic, this reemergence expanded through relationships with the local government, local schools, and more community initiatives. In an interview with the Outreach Pastor, Shawn O’Neill, in July of 2021, he shared:

The goal of the Church is to see people empowered. To see people rise out of poverty. To see the same things that Jesus advocated for in the Bible...To see the oppressed to be lifted up. To see the poor to be fed...to visit those who are in jail. Those are the things that Christ says when you do this to the least of these my brethren, you done it unto me...Though there are secular programs that try to meet the exact same needs; the end in itself is to meet that need. But our end is to see people liberated but [also] to see them reconciled to a loving God.¹¹⁴

Christian Life Center had been a forerunner in sponsoring global missions, but its local mission expansion through its Outreach Ministry has contributed to an impact within governmental and educational establishments within several cities in Broward County. The partnerships cultivated with the city and other organizations, such as Feeding South Florida and Hope for South Florida, have allowed it to serve, feed, and minister to over 21,300 families. Collaborating with organizations such as For Kids on foster care issues and the City of Fort Lauderdale with a new pro-literacy initiative, Little Free Libraries, to combat book deserts in the city, its impact will affect generations to

¹¹³ Shawn O’Neill, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 16, 2021.

¹¹⁴ Shawn O’Neill, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 16, 2021.

come. In addition to these initiatives, the outreach ministry has built relationships with the local communities, where the church brings food and conducts services in those communities. Its impact on a culture of justice emphasizes the importance of shared partnership between the church, government, and other social organizations for the betterment of the community at large. With arms of ministries active in volunteerism, financial support, and prayer, CLC is poised to be a prominent and productive advocate of change in South Florida.

Bridging Barriers of Church and Community

Leading at the forefront of tearing down barriers and bridging the gap between Christians and non-Christians is the organization The Doubters Club. It launched from an encounter in a Denver, Colorado coffee shop between a church planter pastor and a coffee shop owner on the basis of one question. “What kind of church do you go to?” The coffee shop owner laughed and said, “I don’t go to church. I’m an atheist.” Some would have left the conversation there but, the pastor replied, “Oh, I used to be atheist too” (true statement). Then he asked, “If you did go to church, what kind of church would you go to?” After some hesitation, the coffee shop owner said, “I’d go to the church that would allow me to ask questions and doesn’t judge me for thinking differently.” The pastor took that answer to heart. When the pastor returned some months later for a church plant, he had a unique idea for the coffee shop owner—a place where an atheist (the coffee shop owner) and a Christian (the pastor) could model friendship and pursue truth together. Thus, the beginning of The Doubters Club came to fruition with a conversation and five key rules scribbled by an atheist and a pastor on a napkin in a Denver coffee shop. The rules are as follows: 1) we value respect above being right; 2) we listen without

interrupting; 3) we are a safe place; 4) we understand and accept differences of opinions; and 5) we listen with an open mind. The pastor who shared this story in an interview is Preston Ulmer, founder of The Doubters Club, author, and director of Network Development for the Assemblies of God.

The model of friendship and pursuit of the truth together is done in the context of a larger group actively participating in monthly conversations. Each month, a topic is voted upon and is discussed in the following meeting. The meetings are led and the conversation on the topics are modeled before the group by co-moderators—one believer and one non-believer. All aspects of the meeting are purposeful, with first welcoming the attendees, reiterating the rules, introducing the co-moderators noting their beliefs, expressing the goal of the meeting, and allowing time for conversation and questions at the end. This intentional approach to communicating contributes to a relational element, and the sense of empathy and compassion through listening that develops is important in breaking barriers of perceptions.

Since the meeting is open to people with varied belief systems and perspectives, it is beneficial to create a methodology to process those interactions for a desired outcome in the communication. The Doubters Club has developed training through the understanding of neuroscience and how the brain is wired. Each co-moderator completes the training to navigate the emotions and thoughts of the participants and negotiate the proper guidance of interactions. Thus far, this methodology has bridged barriers between Muslims, Christians, agnostics, atheists, Satanists, and more, producing concrete and lifelong friendships. One of the key points Ulmer conveyed is that The Doubters Club is:

Not about conversion. Our goal is friendship and truth together...In evangelical circles it's about conversions. How do we make you Christian today? In The

Doubters Club it's more [about] how do we help you to become like Jesus together. ...For the last twenty years...the church has celebrated all these conversions. Well the largest group in American is made up of four [groups]—it's the nones, dones, ex-evangelicals, and de-converted. We [the Church] had over 32 million people in the United States who now say, 'I used to be a Christian and I'm not anymore.' So, all those numbers [of salvations] we celebrated in the last twenty years...[if not] all of them are not staying Christian.¹¹⁵

Ulmer believes this is because these conversions were founded on what “Jesus talks about [as] faulty foundations.”¹¹⁶ According to him, these foundations are faulty because the Church does not take the time to know each person and their stories. Instead, the Church wants to [quickly] get the gospel out and get people to accept Jesus, but then “avoid at all cost people stories”¹¹⁷; their stories are their foundation. Now those people by default become a part of the largest religious group in the United States -the non-religious group.¹¹⁸

Ulmer did communicate that people have come to know Christ through The Doubters Club. By building relationships and hearing their stories—their foundational truth—The Doubters Club has made sure their biblical, theological, and spiritual foundations are secure. In fact, each Doubters Club is tethered to a local faith community. This is because people continue to grow and their community will continue to shift, so, “we want them to be tethered because that’s a healthy expression of Jesus—like-minded people on a journey [together].”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Preston Ulmer, interview with Shermika Harvey, December 15, 2021.

¹¹⁶ Preston Ulmer, interview with Shermika Harvey, December 15, 2021

¹¹⁷ Preston Ulmer, interview with Shermika Harvey, December 15, 2021

¹¹⁸ Preston Ulmer, interview with Shermika Harvey, December 15, 2021

¹¹⁹ Preston Ulmer, interview with Shermika Harvey, December 15, 2021.

Cultural barriers are being broken because The Doubters Club's intentionality toward relationships has opened minds and created conversations of healing and understanding who Jesus is and his place in this world and their lives. When people of different cultures and religions can come together to seek truth, their communities are transformed. That truth is not an intellectual understanding of the word, but it is what is considered as "the common good."¹²⁰ There are over 70 Doubters Clubs worldwide, and partnering with co-moderators for vast religious beliefs are 75 or so ministers of the gospel. Needless to say, an impactful cultural narrative is being shared about the common good, and the Church is leading the narrative—Christians partnering with those that do not look like them, think like them, or act like them.

Conclusion and Proposed Solution

As noted earlier in this section, one of the ways to counter the shard perspective is through creating a culture of justice, and that culture should reflect a community of practice. Each faith-based organization and church highlighted through my ethnographic journey has exemplified both a shared culture of justice and practices lived out within the community and the church. It is evident from the stories shared of the cultural and social impact that they are transforming their communities, and some are transforming nations. It is also evident that when perspectives are communicated, evaluated, and properly challenged, perceptions can change. The perception or narrative of the Church has been convoluted. "Church should be leading the narrative"¹²¹ of justice, but instead, others

¹²⁰ Preston Ulmer, interview with Shermika Harvey, December 15, 2021.

¹²¹ Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

have stepped in with their own narratives. It's understandable to acknowledge that the Church, as an individual and collective body, has far to go in the area of healing and reconciliation within itself.

SECTION 3:

DISRUPTING THE SHARD PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Currently, the world is in a place of social and cultural disruption, and the world is watching to see the Church's response. Therefore, "it is important to lean into those spheres because it is going somewhere. And if we [the Church] choose to have anything to do with it, then we are not going to be a part of that change in our society...going in a direction that we don't want."¹²² The fact that the "most cause-oriented generation is so disconnected from the most cause-oriented organization in the world—the church"¹²³ should be evidence of a need to move toward change. The Church is situated in a position in this season and time of disruption where correction can be made to change the perception of silence, thus repositioning itself to carry the gift of healing and reconciliation to the world. If there was a pivotal and opportune time to change its place in the history of this nation, it is now. The Church can no longer afford to be seen through negative social perceptions of disconnection; it needs to model how justice looks. A revolution has already begun. It seeks a reckoning of past atrocities for the world accompanied by present remnants today. The church may need to depart from the thought of reform and renewal directly to the foundation of its practice and theology, and instead reestablish its identity and presence in the earth.

¹²² Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

¹²³ Andrew Chalmers, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

The remaining pages of this dissertation explore the application of such a revolution through the proposed reimagined church. It will be exhibited in the context of the reimagined church to assist those who feel challenged to envision a way forward to promote justice in a social capacity without compromising the sanctity of leading people to salvation. On the contrary, leading the culture of justice as the reimagined church provides a pathway to salvation through encountering those in need, assisting in supplying that need, and building a transformational relationship beyond that connection. This notion will be revisited later in this section. This section moves from a brief synopsis of the biblical stance, to the historical perspective of the evangelical, theological understanding of justice, and finally to an application that provides a powerful tool to bridge the barriers of justice in and through the church.

This dissertation does not aim to convince those who are adamant that social justice is not a biblical or kingdom principle. Instead, the goal is to guide those ready to see the church operate in the fullness of its biblical and social purpose and position. Its premise begins with the question, *Where is Church?* Standing alone, the question has little meaning, but it holds a different weight in a context of social justice and disruption. The Church has been placed under a mental microscope, and the view of its influence is subjected to individual interpretation. In instances, the Church is seen in a positive, effective, adaptive, productive, and reflective because of the personal connection, involvement, or the seen action of the Church during disruption and justice work. In other cases, the Church is seen negatively, as combative and unproductive, because of its political alignments, debatably disconnected nature, and open rejection of social justice work. In other instances, the Church is not seen at all because of its avoidance of social

justice issues. There is evidence of a portion of the Church who impacted society through their work in the previous section. However, the evangelical church in the United States is still viewed through the context of silence concerning injustices. With this newfound discovery of the underlying presence of a hindered public perception conveyed by the assumed silence in social disruption, the question evolved: *how can the Church once again reestablish itself as an influential agent of cultural and social change?*

The proposed approach to answering this question is to reimagine the church with an active culture of justice encompassing both a community of practice and a cultural disruption model. These practices and models can be a valuable practical instrument in repositioning the church as a social and cultural innovator even during times of disruption.

Forgotten Biblical Story of Justice and the Prophets

In creating a biblically founded approach for the Church to address justice in the earth, it is beneficial to reflect on paths led by others in scripture. In this brief examination of Micah, Zechariah, and 1 Corinthians, the connection between social responsibility and God's righteousness is made clear. The Old Testament outlines what it means to live in righteousness concerning justice lived and pursued, and the identity of one's neighbor, and the New Testament outlines how to love that neighbor.

In the book of Micah, there was a period of political and social unrest similar to the past several years in the United States. Micah describes a time of economic prosperity for some, but a division arose. Theology and economics themes within scripture "do not

inhabit separate universes but combine in the biblical experience and practice of redemption.”¹²⁴

In several commentaries, Micah 6 is set as a courtroom with a lawsuit summons between God and His people, the Israelites, for a breach of a contract pertaining to their covenant. The Israelites were rescued from the grasp of captivity in Egypt. They experienced hope and freedom in the Promised Land. However, they are being charged with neglecting their covenant with God. The charge is the lack of moral and/social responsibility concerning their neighbors.

The judicial proceedings were a “contest between the Lord and His people, the prophet holds up before the Israelites their ingratitude for the great blessing which they have received from God (verses. 1-5), and preached to them that the Lord does not require outward sacrifices to appease His wrath, but righteousness, love and humble walk with God.”¹²⁵ The Israelites’ sin was breaking the divine law. Instead of repenting and changing their hearts, they continued to negotiate with God by presenting blood sacrifices of rams and even offering children; this was unacceptable to God.

It is as if the Israelites had forgotten their past, as they had done countless times before. They conducted themselves

without memory, with historical amnesia, without the slightest desire or interest in remembering and recognizing what God had done in the past. The circumstances become conducive to such aberration when one does not remember who God is and all that God has done throughout the history of humankind. It is in this state

¹²⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright and Jonathan Lunde, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 107.

¹²⁵ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 492.

of “memory-erasure” that everything can be reduced to a product, a commodity, a negotiable object.¹²⁶

The “recitation of Yahweh's (6:4-5) followed, rejection of the extravagant rituals as means of reconciliation (6:6-7), and a verdict that is sketched out by the crowning verse (6:8); fitting regarded and celebrated as the ultimate definition of ethical religion and as one of the supreme ethical discoveries of the history of religion.”¹²⁷

Micah set forth a compelling and concise summary of what the Lord requires for justice and loyalty.¹²⁸ Micah states, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?”¹²⁹ A deeper study of this scripture provides the following understanding:

Do Justly. As stated earlier, God’s heart for justice extended back to the time of Moses, and the same God has no change of heart in the book of Micah. God sees the injustices of His children, and this was the first step in bringing judgment against them. To do justly was the opposite characteristic of the people of Israel at that time. Therefore, it was first in God’s directives to the Children of Israel. In the Hebrew Lexicon, justice is מִשְׁפָּט mishpat. Mishpat, in its most “basic meaning, is to treat people equitably. It means acquitting or punishing every person on the merits of the case, regardless of race or social

¹²⁶ Esteban Voth, “What Does God Expect of Us? Micah 6–7,” *Review & Expositor* 108, no. 2 (2011): pp. 299-306, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003463731110800211>, 304.

¹²⁷ Blessing O. Boloje, “Extravagant Rituals or Ethical Religion (Micah 6:68)? Ritual Interface with Social Responsibility in Micah,” *Old Testament Essays* 32, no. 3 (April 16, 2019): pp. 800-802, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2019/v32n3a3>, 802.

¹²⁸ D. N. Freedman and Allen C. Myers, “Micah, Mercy and Justice,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 757-894, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 894.

¹²⁹ Micah 6:8 (NKJV).

status. Anyone who does the same wrong should be given the same penalty.”¹³⁰ When combined with the Hebrew word *sedaqa*, it translates to “righteousness and justice.”¹³¹ While *sedaqa* “refers to the ethical and moral standards or equality of all people before the law,”¹³² *mishpat* can refer “to the process of deciding a civil or religious government execution of a judgment, or rights of an individual under civil or religious law.”¹³³

Conversely, *mishpat* means more than deciding judgments

for wrongdoing. It also means giving people their rights. Deuteronomy 18 directs that the priests of the tabernacle should be supported by a certain percentage of the people’s income. This support is described as “the priests’ *mishpat*,” which means their due or their right. *Mishpat*, then, is giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care.¹³⁴

Another combination of justice in scripture is *mishpat* and *tzadeqah*. When these two words combined, they are known as “primary” and “rectifying justice.”¹³⁵

Rectifying justice is *mishpat*. It means punishing wrongdoers and caring for the victims of unjust treatment. Primary justice, or *tzadeqah*, is behavior that, if it was prevalent in the world, would render rectifying justice unnecessary, because everyone would be living in right relationship to everyone else. Therefore, though *tzadeqah* is primarily about being in a right relationship with God, the righteous life that results is profoundly social.¹³⁶

Love Mercy. The children of Israel became lovers of themselves, doing what they considered was right in their own eyes. They did not help the poor in their society; they

¹³⁰ Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 3.

¹³¹ Freedman and Myers, *Micah, Mercy and Justice*, 757.

¹³² Freedman and Myers, *Micah, Mercy and Justice*, 885.

¹³³ Freedman and Myers, *Micah, Mercy and Justice*, 757.

¹³⁴ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 4.

¹³⁵ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 10.

¹³⁶ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 10.

took advantage of them. Hence, the first directive prescribed is to love mercy. To love mercy means one is required to delight in mercy. As God does, one must be glad for any opportunity to good and do it cheerfully.¹³⁷ In Hebrew, love is, וָאֶחָבַת wə-’a-hă-bat, which means to love, and mercy is “defined as the compassionate disposition to forgive someone or to offer aid, assistance, or help to someone in need. Closely related concepts are grace, goodness, love, loving-kindness, compassion, and patience.”¹³⁸

There are two words for mercy in the Hebrew language that mean slightly different things. The first Hebrew word for mercy is חֶסֶד he-sed or חֶסֶד che-sed which means goodness or kindness, or, “God’s unconditional grace and compassion.”¹³⁹ The second is נָחַם, or haman, which signifies

the essential quality of God (Ex 3:4-6; Deut. 4:31; Ps 103:8). This is the quality (hesed) covenant love demonstrated throughout their history (cf. Deut. 30:1-6, Is 14:1, Ez 39:25-97) by which his covenant relationship with his chosen people despite their unfaithfulness. (Rom 9:15-16, 23; Eph 2:4). Israel was often reminded of the relationship between God’s hesed and their covenant with God (Deut. 7:8, Kgs 8:23; Neh 1:5; Is 55:3; Dan 9:4).¹⁴⁰

Walk Humbly. The Israelites were wealthy and acquired status in the marketplace. They were admired and looked upon highly because of their position and covenant with God. But, as with wealth, they tended to be self-reliant and do just enough to keep covenant status. As a result, the people became prideful and entertained rituals from their neighboring societies. This directive, to walk humbly, is two-fold in nature. This notion of “to walk humbly” includes both the duty of “do justly or justice” and “love

¹³⁷ Matthew Henry, *Micah 6:6-8* (Peabody, MA: Hendricks Publisher, Inc, 1991), 1542.

¹³⁸ Freedman and Myers, *Micah, Mercy and Justice*, 855.

¹³⁹ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Freedman and Myers, *Micah, Mercy and Justice*, 885.

mercy.” In walking in a humble posture, one must take the Lord our God in covenant, attend to him, and adhere to him as one’s own and must take up constant care to please him.¹⁴¹

In Hebrew, walk, לָכֶת le-ket or לָכֶת le·chet, means to go, come, or walk. In this passage, one should walk in agreement with God in the posture of humbleness; וְהִצַּנְתָּ has-nê-a’ or וְהִצַּנְתָּ ve·hatz·ne·a’, which means to be modest or humble. In other words, to walk humbly with God is to know Him on an intimate level and be mindful of the treasured things of His heart.

The summation of the scriptures is simply, “To walk in the way of the Lord...means doing for others what God wishes to have done for them, or more particularly, doing for others what (in or more particularly, Israel's case) God has already done for you (deliverance from alien status in Egypt and provision of food and clothing in the wilderness).”¹⁴²

Consequently, in this short passage, coined in the same spirit of Christ in Matthew 33:37-38, Micah epitomized the quintessence of the teachings of the prophets. It also summarized the entire divine law “in a single chord of five notes: fear, walk, love, serve, and obey.”¹⁴³ These words for the Israelites were not “a comprehensive statement of human responsibility before God, but an indication of what Micah’s audience needed to do to get back on the right track in their relationship with the Lord. The message is that

¹⁴¹ Matthew Henry, *Micah* 6:6-8, 1542.

¹⁴² Wright and Lunde, *The Mission of God’s People*, 89.

¹⁴³ Wright and Lunde, *The Mission of God’s People*, 89.

obedience is more important than sacrifice (cf. 1 Sam 15:22).”¹⁴⁴ God desired a covenant with His people, and thus three directives were given to them by Micah.

Regrettably, this is not the first time Israel received these directives. Similar directives were given to Israel in Deuteronomy 10:12: “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” The only missing component is to love your neighbor, which is proclaimed in the New Testament. “1 Corinthians 13 indicates God still expects his people to treat others with Christlike love and to live in devotion to him.” This passage invites the perspective of “(1) the necessity of love (vv. 1-3); (2) the character of love (vv. 4-7) and (3) the permanence of love (vv. 8-13).”¹⁴⁵

In the book of Zechariah, the prophet sounds another warning to the people of Israel to turn away from their self-centeredness and stubbornness and honor the law of the Torah concerning their neighbors. In case the Israelites forgot whom their neighbors included, Zechariah notes, they have the lowly in their society as well as the wealthy. The prophet identified a people now known as “the quartet of the vulnerable, the widows, orphans, visitors, and the poor, but our list can easily be expanded.”¹⁴⁶ According to Tim Keller,

¹⁴⁴ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2009), 647.

¹⁴⁵ Dan Liroy, “The Supreme Importance of Promoting Equity, Kindness, and Humility: A Descriptive and Comparative Analysis of Micah 6:1–16 and 1 Corinthians 13:1–13,” *Conspectus—The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 25 (March 25, 2018): 56-91, <https://doi.org/https://www.sats.edu.za/liroy-supreme-importance-promoting-equity-kindness-humility>.

¹⁴⁶ Rodney D. Bullard, *Heroes Wanted* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 124.

in premodern, agrarian societies, these four groups had no social power. They lived at subsistence level and were only days from starvation if there was any famine, invasion, or even minor social unrest. Today, this quartet would be expanded to include the refugee, the migrant worker, the homeless, and many single parents and elderly people.¹⁴⁷

Justice for the quartet of the vulnerable is at the heart of God's mission. As revealed in the scriptures, it was the heart of the prophets and psalmists, too.

The prophets and the psalmist do not argue the case that alleviating the plight of the lowly is required by justice. They assume it. When they speak of God's justice, when they enjoin their hearer to practice justice, when they complain to God about the absence of justice requires alleviating the plight of the lowly. They save their breath for urging their readers to actually practice justice to the quartet of the vulnerable low ones.¹⁴⁸

Could it be that God is yet sounding another alarm to get the Church back in the right standing with Him in this present time of injustice? Now, it would be an overstatement to think that any church individually can tackle all the world's injustices on its own—thus partnering with other political and faith-based organizations to bring about change within the communities it serves. Micah and the other prophets worked within the community alongside government and political leaders to call for change.

The times of memory-erasure must end. The Church cannot afford to keep repeating the failed steps of those who came before them. Instead, it needs to look to the past for a more straightforward path of wisdom for the future. No matter what the consensus is in the Church concerning social justice, social justice by any means is justice, and sometimes that justice is held in a social context. Justice is biblical. Justice is a commandment given by God decades ago. Justice is the character of God, and the

¹⁴⁷ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 76.

Church is His image-bearer on the earth. Furthermore, “justice is what love looks like in action. There is no mission without justice. Working for justice might be considered an inevitable outcome.”¹⁴⁹

Present Story of the Church and Justice

The historical story of church and justice is a complicated one, where evangelicals have often found themselves on the negative side of history. An example of this is found in the writing of the Christian minister and philosopher John M. Perkins. He writes in *Let Justice Roll Down*:

One of the greatest tragedies of the civil rights movement is that evangelicals surrendered their leadership in the movement by default to those with either a bankrupt theology or no theology at all, simply because the vast majority of Bible believing Christians ignored a great and crucial opportunity in history for genuine ethical action. The evangelical church...had not gone on to preach the whole gospel...It wasn't a question of what “team” to join. In terms of social justice, evangelicals just didn't have a team on the field.¹⁵⁰

This quote was written in 1976, and unfortunately, to this day, evangelicals struggle with being on the field or avoiding it altogether. Evidence of this thought can easily be found on social platforms of influential evangelical pastors and churches. In fact, as of today, 17,346 evangelicals, including lay members, ministers, and lead pastors have signed *The Statement on Social Justice & the Gospel*, a statement that claims the social justice movement is an “onslaught of dangerous and false teachings that threaten the gospel, mispresent Scripture, and lead people away from the grace of God in

¹⁴⁹ Edge and Morgan, *Partnering with God*, 14.

¹⁵⁰ John M. Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 99.

Jesus.”¹⁵¹ The statement also suggests that the cultural narrative of justice has infiltrated the evangelical church and is “currently undermining Scripture in the areas of race and ethnicity, manhood and womanhood, and human sexuality.”¹⁵² There are several proclamations throughout the statement whose interpretations can be challenged. The mere knowledge that this magnitude of the evangelical leadership openly challenge that the social realities and experiences of those experiencing injustice are invalid is a hindrance in itself.

Understanding the Times

Just as plants need sun, water, and good soil to thrive, people need love, work, and connection to something larger. That something larger might take various forms, but a sense of connection to God is its most visceral incarnation. And that kind of connectivity is hard to replicate.¹⁵³

Times are changing, and people no longer subscribe to religion because it is the religion of their parents. Instead, people are following their spiritual instincts, “looking for a more direct experience of the sacred, for greater immediacy, spontaneity, and spiritual depth,” in the words of an astute observer of the American scene.¹⁵⁴ More people are educated today than in the former centuries, and the world is experiencing a time in which intellectuality and science reign over religious beliefs. The notion that one cannot

¹⁵¹ CT Editors, “John MacArthur's 'Statement on Social Justice' Is Aggravating Evangelicals,” ChristianityToday.com, September 12, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/podcasts/quick-to-listen/john-macarthur-statement-social-justice-gospel-thabiti.html>.

¹⁵² CT Editors, “John MacArthur's 'Statement on Social Justice' Is Aggravating Evangelicals.”

¹⁵³ Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 30.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 506.

be both intellectual and spiritual is an absurdity, since Christians invented the university, and the foundation of most universities, including Yale, Princeton, Harvard, and Georgetown, to highlight a few, is Christian. Sciences even find their roots in Christianity, “yet science is seen as antithetical to Christianity.”¹⁵⁵

The problem today is not that one cannot be intellectual and spiritual. It is the desire to become more philosophical to replace spirituality. It is as though spirituality, the stories of the Bible, personal spiritual experiences, and God himself are trying to be explained away. But the more science tries to debunk God, the more evidence reveals that something higher than ourselves created the universe. Even to some extent, it appears as if “Christians have dug [their] own grave. The entrenchment of the culture has led many believers to lose touch with their heritage, while Christians and atheists alike assume that secular means normative.”¹⁵⁶ Changing the narrative is fundamental in Christians’ capacity to meet their opposition face to face and brace themselves adequately to address the hard questions in our society.

Several years ago, the *Hard Questions* craze had people running through the front doors of many churches in South Florida. Facing the world’s concepts of life, relationships, sexuality, and God were mainly the focal points. Unfortunately, as the years went by, opportunities to ask the hard questions or even be equipped to answer the hard questions faded into the background, and the world started answering questions meant for the church. Books such as *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion* by Rebecca McLaughlin give many believers of Christ ample

¹⁵⁵ McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, 20.

¹⁵⁶ McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, 20.

foundational truths to answer an array of challenging questions and give skeptics new insight into the world of Christianity.

Our society is full of eras of injustices, including the present. And unfortunately, Christianity has been stained with either being tied to these injustices or avoiding participation against injustices. Thus, as the Church remains divided between the Great Commission and the Great Commandments, injustices occur, and there are limited voices of reason and reconciliation on the battleground. However, the question of justice should not be up for debate. McLaughlin explains “that forgiveness ethic is coupled with the command not to take revenge. But this is not ultimately an abandonment of justice. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that final justice lies in the hands of God. Christians are commanded to protect the weak and vulnerable, but not seek their own revenge of vindication.”¹⁵⁷

In other words, Christians are not to seek revenge when wronged, but they are still called to stand up and seek others, for this is an attribute of true religion. True religion is founded on truths of love, charity, and justice for all. In true religion, the widows, the orphans, and the oppressed are cared for and the gospel and the Christian stance are uncompromised by the world's influences. For, as James 1:27 says, “pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

¹⁵⁷ McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, 29.

Unequal Sides of Justice

In addition to open statements of the current issues, evangelicals are unbalanced in their thoughts on what justice issues are considered social justice and biblical responsibility. Though the church can agree on some hardline social justices, not all injustices are equal. Throughout this dissertation, the monitoring of crucial present-day social issues was evaluated. Issues such as racism, police brutality, immigration, gun laws, and abortion were the major ones followed because of their presence within the media. They also pertained to a personal ministry context. Some of these issues were pinned against one another and sometimes even used to approve of these injustices. For example, although the church holds strong convictions on abortions, those convictions may not always transfer to systemic racism or immigration.

Most can agree on the commandment, "Thou shall not kill," so the vocalized proclamation is clear when it comes to the murder of unborn babies. However, that same principle is rarely considered for the unjust deaths of people of color. Likewise, they may take "one love one's neighbor as oneself" and provide food for the homeless yet threaten to send the foreigner back to sometimes impoverished and war-torn countries. Yes, there is a balancing act with the church's capacity to meet society's physical and social needs; but choosing not to respond should never be a second thought.

Within the Grasp of Social Justice

The *Social Advocacy and the Church* survey for this project conducted in 2019 and 2020 indicated a vital time for the evangelical church to change its views and involvement in social justice issues. In the fall of 2019, the survey notated the top five

understandings of social justice. They were, in order: 1) equality, dignity, and fairness; 2) human rights activism; 3) racial issues; 4) reconciliation and restoration; and 5) fair and just social benefits. It also indicated the following as the most critical social justice needs to address in the United States. They were, in order: 1) racial inequality; 2) human trafficking and immigration; 3) pro-life/pro-choice; and 4) children's rights.

Later in 2020, after the highly publicized social unrest, a second survey was conducted to see if the stance had any variations. The results showed only the category of equity remained in the same rank. The remaining ranked as the following: 2) human rights activism; 3) racial issues; 4) charity and compassion; and 5) fair and just social benefits. Reconciliation and restoration lost their place in the top ranking. There was a shift in the top five scales of the most important social issues that needed to be addressed. While racial inequality, human trafficking, and immigration remained in their respective ranks, pro-life/pro-choice moved to number five, and women's rights took fourth place. There could be many contributing factors to this change, but it could be due to the increase of Christian voices spurring non-reconciliation rhetoric across media and their churches.

The survey also revealed another surprising element. In 2019 when asked, *When social injustice happens on a local, national or global scale, should pastors advocate for change from the pulpit?* 40% said yes occasionally, 31% said yes often, 14% said yes—very often, 9 % said undecided, and 6% said never. When asked what social issues your church advocates for, most replied with homelessness, immigration, foster care, anti-human trafficking, poverty, education, charity, and righteousness; however, 28% indicated “none.” When asked the possible reason the church is not involved, the

results (ranked highest to lowest) were 1) not enough training and skills in these areas; 2) it is not the main component of the mission of the church; 3) Other (ineffective leadership, country of the United States under authoritarian regime); 4) Limited time and resources; and 5) Plan to get involved at a later time.

In 2020, the same survey asked, *When social injustice happens on a local, national, or global scale, should pastors advocate for change from the pulpit?* 37% said yes often, 33% said yes—very often, 22% said occasionally, and 7% said undecided. The shift in responses showed the percentage of occasionally lowered and the response of never did not rank. When asked what social issues does your church advocate for, most replied with issues with similar issues as in 2019 and only 13% indicated “none.” When asked the possible reason the church is not involved, the results (ranked highest to lowest) were 1) Limited time and resources; 2) It is not the main component of the church's mission; 3) Not enough training and skills in this area; and 4) Other. The responses of *it is not biblical* and *plan to get involved at a later time* did not rank.

The survey indicated a shift of perspective and action toward being a church body of justice. Still, there remain two categories the church could evaluate: training resources and mission. Though it is up to the church to choose to incorporate justice work as a part of the mission, those in need of training and resources can work with other churches to accomplish this goal.

Way Forward: The Reimagined Church

The reimagining of the church is not an emerging concept; however, it needs revisiting to find innovative avenues to be effective. In *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*, Frank Viola suggests the reimagined church is “one

that's built on the New Testament concept that the church of Jesus Christ is a spiritual organism, not an institutional organization."¹⁵⁸ Essentially, the reimagined church operates in the nature of the triune God, which means it is spiritual, social, and relational. The inner work of the triune God exhibited in the church through the mutuality of love, fellowship, dependence, honor submission, and authentic community is transferred to others outside of the church community.

Securely Aligning Missio Dei and Imago Dei

The missio Dei “mission of God” and the imago Dei “image of God” operate in the same realm. The factor in partnership with God is missio Dei—His sending, and one must bear His sending. The depiction of the Latin term is found in Genesis and 2 Corinthians. Genesis 1:27 (ESV) states, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) states, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is Spirit.” Derived from these scriptures is the idea that we are God’s image-bearers, which is unique to the relationship of God and humanity.¹⁵⁹

The concept of imago Dei is that righteousness and holiness are the crowns of the character of God, and humankind reflects this character of God in the world. It suggests that “if God is holy; therefore, man is too holy. God is righteous in the same since man is

¹⁵⁸ Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 17.

¹⁵⁹ Edge and Morgan, *Partnering with God*, 12.

righteous.”¹⁶⁰ Though the imago Dei was altered after the fall of Adam, the essence of the crown of being an image-bearer of God is not entirely lost. Though those gifts of righteousness and holiness of God for his image-bearers are “marred by the fall into sin, ...[they] are not lost to the fall of sin.”¹⁶¹

Imago Dei has two fundamental factors. First, imago Dei is God’s self-actualization in relationship with humankind and, second, it is God’s care and love for humanity. Many theologians believe “the image of God has a broader, more foundational sense”¹⁶² that humankind in the image of God is that we are thinking creatures, moral creatures, and feeling creatures. Thus, the imago Dei is transformative toward all of humanity, and His relationship toward them should translate to relational equity with God. Likewise, it should translate into the care and love for humankind among one another. This concept of imago Dei translates to image-bearers caring for one another in word and deed. Perhaps the poem cited in John Stott’s *Human Rights & Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century*, will provide a better lens of humanity.

I was hungry, and you formed a humanities group to discuss my hunger.
 I was imprisoned, and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my
 release.
 I was naked, and in your mind, you debated the morality of my appearance.
 I was sick, and you knelt and thanked God for your health.
 I was homeless, and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.
 I was lonely, and you left me alone to pray for me.
 You seem so holy, so close to God, but I am still very hungry—and lonely and
 cold.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ W. Robert Godfrey, “Human Dignity,” in *The Imago Dei, Human Dignity, and the Present Crisis*, 2020, https://youtu.be/PLsS3_Xrmkc.

¹⁶¹ Godfrey, “Human Dignity.”

¹⁶² Godfrey, “Human Dignity.”

¹⁶³ John Stott, *Human Rights & Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 35.

Jesus echoed this passage in Matthew 25:35-40. However, His closing statement ended differently.

“For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me [with help and ministering care]; I was in prison, and you came to Me [ignoring personal danger].” Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” The King will answer and say to them, “I assure you and most solemnly say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it for Me.”

God’s people, the redeemed image-bearers, inherited the mantle to care and serve those who have been marginalized, rejected, exploited, and silenced with dignity, compassion, respect, and honor. Therefore, “properly conceived, the church is the gathered community that shares God’s life and expresses it in the earth...the church is the earthly image of the triune God (Eph 1:22-23).”¹⁶⁴ The *imago Dei*’s divine partnership with *missio Dei* therefore proclaims the church is receipt of the inheritance of God as faithful image-bearers; image-bearers who are on a divine mandate to heal and restore the world.¹⁶⁵

Reframing the Thought on Disruption for the Reimagined Church

Disruption is a term that is often overshadowed by negative connotations. After all, by definition, it is “the act or process of disrupting something: a break or interruption

¹⁶⁴ Viola, *Reimagining Church*, 35.

¹⁶⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Temple* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 82.

in the normal course or continuation of some activity, process, etc.”¹⁶⁶ Even within the first section of this dissertation, disruptions to the social fabric brought about by the pandemic and racial unrest have made a lasting negative impression on how most view the world. The experiences acquired during this time of insecurity and uncertainty produced many patterns of disruption. However, just as disruption has a side that leans toward, it also has a positive connotation when utilized in the proper perspective.

Social Disruption. When a society encounters a social disruption, that “society is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos.”¹⁶⁷ Within its undisrupted state, a society “maintains the reality of the socially constructed reality but disruption produces a form of annihilation that denies the reality of whatever phenomena or interpretation of phenomena [that] do not fit into”¹⁶⁸ that reality. Most modern societies are pluralistic—having both a shared core reality and different partial realities coexisting in a state of mutual accommodation.¹⁶⁹ What occurs in this state is a “radical transformation, in which the old certainties of modern society are falling away and something quite new [is] emerging.”¹⁷⁰ Some welcome the new emergence because it presents an avenue to create renewed visions of old systems. Not all welcome it, though. Disruption is debilitating, causing individuals to employ the “fight or flight” response

¹⁶⁶ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Disruption,” accessed October 8, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disruption>.

¹⁶⁷ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 103.

¹⁶⁸ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 114.

¹⁶⁹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 125.

¹⁷⁰ Ulrich Beck, *The Metamorphosis of the World* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2016), 2.

based on the familiar scripts they tell themselves.¹⁷¹ Other individuals facing social disruption with increased social unrest retreat and adopt mental roadblocks to help maneuver their thoughts and emotions.

The first roadblock stems from psychic numbing, mentioned in Section 1, which is a psychological phenomenon that causes people to feel indifferent when a large number of people experience suffering. The response by many during this global pandemic can be viewed as psychic numbing. While one death was a tragedy, the continued daily rise of the death toll has been reduced to statistics. It is no longer the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Instead, it is simply numbers on a graph. This phenomenon does not suggest people lack empathy for others, but it reveals that the same person who might come to a person's aid in one instance might become numbly indifferent if the person in need is one of "too many." The challenge lies in determining how humans should value people and respond without allowing the bias of psychic numbing to influence the desire to help people in need.

The second roadblock stems from compassion fade, similar to psychic numbing but a cognitive bias. While psychic numbing relates to a person who feels indifferent, compassion fade relates to the decrease in the compassion a person might show when the number of victims increases.¹⁷² For example, if a person loses their home during a flood, a group of people might feel compelled to start a fundraiser to help that person. However, suppose a group of people loses their homes during a flood. In that case, the once-

¹⁷¹ Mark Lau Branson, "Disruptions Meet Practical Theology," Fuller Studio, December 5, 2018, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/disruptions-meet-practical-theology/>.

¹⁷² Ezra Markowitz et al., "University of Oregon Libraries," Compassion fade and the challenge of environmental conservation (Society for Judgment and Decision Making, July 1, 2013), <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/22102>, 397.

compassionate group might suggest that the victims reach out to the state or other organizations because they are too many for support.

These roadblocks do not often stay within the individualized state of existence. These feelings are shared with others in the individual community to find a common ground in thought, and sometimes those communal thoughts find their way in the Church. In response, a collective mindset of non-compassion is shared and hinders any assistance. The Church has the opportunity to become a redefined agent of change in the wake of recent social disruption, leaving the comfort of its walls and normal routine for a mission that is combative but rewarding in cultural evolution, societal shifts, and salvation of communities. One of the ways the Church can move from a place of enculturation of this cultural aspect of social disruption is to move toward cultural disruption.

Cultural Disruption. Unlike social disruption, cultural disruption confers an alternative perspective to the view of disruption. This counter view serves as an assessment of social disruptions and finds opportunities to bring a change. It is a term used in the business sector to convey the utilization of disruption that lends to the growth and transformation of an organization. Just as terms such as servant leadership are transferable between the public sector and the Church, the cultural disruption model can also be transferable to the Church. In cultural disruption, the goal is to provide “a ...narrative that outlines who the brand is, what it believes, what problem it exists to solve, and how it will go about solving it.”¹⁷³ The process of cultural disruption can build a practical framework for reimagining cultures of justice within the Church and its

¹⁷³ Marius Donnestad, “Cultural Disruption: Rethinking Brand Strategy,” LinkedIn, July 30, 2018, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/cultural-disruption-rethinking-brand-strategy-marius-donnestad>.

community. Considering the projected narrative of its beliefs in this meditative state, the Church can reconstitute its positional stance as a cultural and social innovator and evaluate the issues in which it can bring change, thus eliminating the shard perspective and moving toward a cultural and social innovation.

Ultimately, the process's findings are used to contribute to the Cultural Disruption model. The Cultural Disruption model defines and solves the Unique Cultural Problem the company faces by analyzing three criteria: differentiation, relevance, and authenticity (credibility).

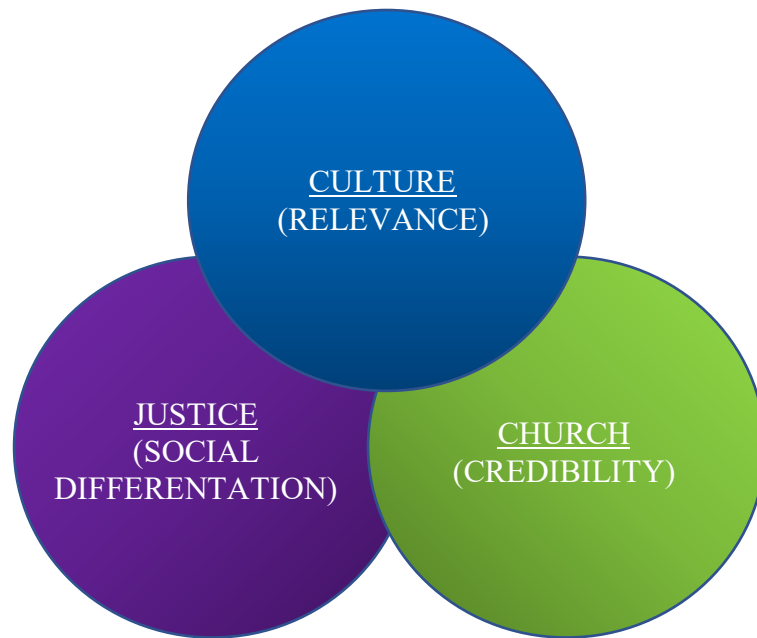


Figure 1—Cultural Disruption Model

These criteria are easily adaptable from the business world to the Church. With slight modifications to its phraseology, the transition for possible application can be seamless. The first criterion is differentiation, which refers to a set of “conventions and aphorisms that conveys the category’s orthodox of commonly held values and ideologies,

however subtle or unintended.”¹⁷⁴ In this criterion, in place of focusing on contending messages of those with conflicting ideologies, the goal is to understand how people perceive it, along with what problems it solves, fails to solve, or even creates.¹⁷⁵

The second criterion of relevance understands the culture and cultural shifts. In analyzing culture, social changes have a significant role. In relevance, “social changes create friction, making culture a goldmine for tensions and individuals and groups [to] compete for moral superiority;”¹⁷⁶ and this social platform can be challenged to change through practices in the Church. Within relevance, there is an examination period of “what groups people belong to, how they see themselves and the world, and what problems they encounter in their quest of belonging.”¹⁷⁷

The third and final criterion is authenticity/credibility related to the Church. In this criterion, the Church’s history, mission, vision, and values are examined to understand the capacity to address issues it can credibly promise to solve or provide. This criterion also intersects with the community of practice presented in the last section.

Revisiting Community of Practice Within the Reimagined Church

The concepts of a community of practice and a culture of justice were previously explained and defined. In this portion, the concepts are adapted through the reimagined church’s justice mandate framework. While some elements of the community of practice

¹⁷⁴ Marius Donnestad, “Cultural Disruption: Rethinking Brand Strategy,” Medium, June 10, 2017, <https://medium.com/@YeahThatMarius/cultural-disruption-rethinking-brand-strategy-74fe6c4ae75c>.

¹⁷⁵ Donnestad, “Cultural Disruption: Rethinking Brand Strategy.”

¹⁷⁶ Donnestad, “Cultural Disruption: Rethinking Brand Strategy.”

¹⁷⁷ Donnestad, “Cultural Disruption: Rethinking Brand Strategy.”

are adapted to accommodate the cultural makeup of the church, the culture of justice element remains in its original form.

Community of Practice. A Community of Practice (CoP) toward justice in the framework of the reimagined church includes first network connections and partnerships between its church community and outside community. Establishing networks and partnerships helps in the church's proximity to the issues within the community, building relationships, and trust. Second, it includes opportunities for ecumenical activities, including discussions, sharing of information, and resources. Third, it provides a practice where the church, its members, and the community create a space to cultivate shared experiences, stories, and ways of addressing justice issues.

In disruption, the third element of CoP can be broken down to ensure this practice includes a practical theology framework of the practice-theory-practice method that is rooted in the *missio Dei* and includes *imago Dei*. Below is a brief overview of the process, including *Current Praxis*, *Context and Culture*, *Christian Texts and Practices*, *Stories*, and *Imagination and Experiments*.

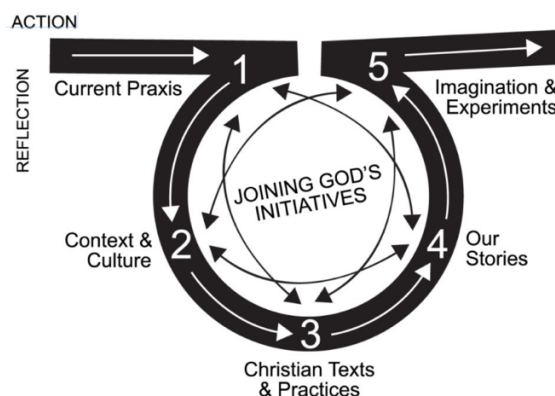


Figure 2—Community of Practice Model

- *Current Praxis* identifies and characterizes a contemporary praxis church life—it is established through observation and where boundaries are made with divergent perspectives.¹⁷⁸
- *Context and Culture* studies the current situation, theories, and applicable considerations of the praxis—it makes an effort to comprehend influences and consequences through cultural resources.¹⁷⁹ For instance, it could include social science and psychology alongside cultural studies for a social justice context.
- *Christian Texts and Practices* analyzes and meditates on scripture, theology, and Christian history about the praxis—it helps the church draft its theological traditions and theological perspectives.¹⁸⁰
- *Stories* allow the church to recollect and discuss its history; it includes its members' personal stories and stories from its community.

Though the CoP is an effective tool for the church, the additional implementation of the practice-theory-practice method provides a more theological framework.

Restoring Tables of Reconciliation in Church and Community

In leading a justice culture, every reimagined church needs to develop tables of reconciliation. The tables of reconciliation transcend economic, racial, and cultural lines to establish common ground or “common good” for the sake of community, connection,

¹⁷⁸ Branson, “Disruptions Meet Practical Theology.”

¹⁷⁹ Branson, “Disruptions Meet Practical Theology.”

¹⁸⁰ Branson, “Disruptions Meet Practical Theology.”

and growth. Though many tables can be created, this will focus on four, adapted from the interview with Johnathan Thomas of Civil Righteousness. The tables are as follows: the Table of Brotherhood, the Mediation Table, the Negotiation Table, and the Table of Innovation.

The Table of Brotherhood is the table of the church—the table of the family of the Church. This table is where Christians gather with the understanding that they may not look, think, or talk alike, or have the same perspective. Still, because they are a part of the family of God, on that basis, they must listen to one another, try to understand one another, and love one another as themselves.¹⁸¹ There is a universal language at this table that is communicated and understood. Though there may be differences of opinion or understanding, the common ground that holds the engagement is in the oneness of the sanctum of brotherhood. It is the table where hard conversations, and sometimes heated fellowship, healing, and restoration, begin.

The Mediation Table is the meeting table between the Church and nonbelievers, civil authorities, and people of different thoughts and beliefs. This table is one of the most critical tables to bridge the Church and its relationship in *communitas*. Examples of this table include but are not limited to community and city forums, town hall meetings, and other discussions that will affect the community. The more effective Mediation Table consists of the church as a facilitator who models self-control, mediates the conversation, and brings disparate parts to find points of agreement.

The Negotiation Table is where the points of agreement are negotiated. This table is where plans and steps are delineated, re-evaluated, and commissioned to move forward

¹⁸¹ Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

to the following Table of Innovation. The clearer the point of the methods are, the easier it will be to initiate at the Table of Innovation.

The final table is the Table of Innovation. At this table, the plans are transformed into innovative strategies in terms of legislation, creative initiatives in the community, and educational institutions. It also lends innovation in terms of economic development and social structures.¹⁸²

Conclusion

This section identified the possibility of reimagining a church with a culture of justice by reinterpreting disruption's role, be it social or cultural. Social disruption provides an avenue for the Church to reengage its community by providing hope and healing. Through cultural disruption, the reimagined Church can reestablish its role in society and ensure its mission includes the gospel alongside social and cultural innovations. With that being said, other disruptions shared throughout this project carry another set of hindrances. If ignored, these hindrances can prevent the forward momentum of the Church because the understanding of justice is often skewed and highly debated.

No matter what the consensus is in the world concerning social justice, social justice by any means is justice, and sometimes that justice is held in a social context. Justice is biblical. Justice is a commandment given by God from the beginning of creation. Justice is the character of God, and the Church is His image-bearer on the earth. And as stated before, “justice is what love looks like in action. There is no mission

¹⁸² Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

without justice,”¹⁸³ and there is no true justice without God. The hope today is that the Church secures its position as an agent of change with boldness and wisdom as it “engages an increasingly hostile and confused culture with the greatest news the world has ever known—Jesus [who is] the way, the truth, and the life.”¹⁸⁴ May it also embrace with confidence the inheritance that it has. It has been bestowed upon the Church to be those who bear His image and manifest and prove to a broken world that He exists through the love and care shown to one another.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Edge and Morgan, *Partnering with God*, 14.

¹⁸⁴ Ed Stetzer, “Engaging an Ever-Changing Culture With a Never-Changing Gospel,” The Exchange | A Blog by Ed Stetzer, August 1, 2014, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/june/avoiding-church-culture-pendulum-swings-engaging-ever-chang.html>. As of January 2022 this article has been removed.

¹⁸⁵ Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, interview with Shermika Harvey, July 8, 2020.

SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The artifact for this dissertation is a two-part project partitioned into several phases over a span of three years. The project's first component consists of the launch of part one of a three-part installation short film series project called "A Single Shard." The second component consists of a website used to house the short film series, resources, and a study guide to conversations and cultivating productive interactions with the unadulterated perspectives of the church leaders and members of the Church body and the overall community on justice issues. In addition, this dissertation project serves as a framework for a book and podcast scheduled to be created within the next three years. Hence, the project in this dissertation is further broken down into the following phases:

Phase One: Creation of Website and Docuseries (years 1-2)

- Creation of Website
- Short Docuseries Teaser/Trailer
- Episodic Docuseries

Phase Two: Educational Resources/Training Material (years 2-3)

- Curriculum and Podcast
- Book and Conference

Note that since this project spans three years, only the website creation and docuseries teaser/trailer from Phase One of the project comprise the artifact for this dissertation.

The Process

The goal of this two-fold project is to educate and call its audience to action. Using the short film genre 1) provides a platform to effectively engage with complex justice issues through the lens of educators, church leaders, community leaders, and ordinary everyday people; 2) provides a means to educate and enlighten its audience on the hindered concepts of perspectives that contribute to biased thinking toward justice issues; and 3) serves as a tool for churches, church communities, and individual Christians to understand, process, and begin conversations with congregation members and others within the local community of the Church about justice issues.

The website serves as a platform to house the docuseries, blogs, and other resources to maintain connectivity to relevant topics and practical applications. While the blog focuses on addressing justice issues through inductive research, academia, and ethnographic survey, it also serves as a safe place for feedback and engagement between the writer and the audience. The feedback collected from the audience is vital in understanding the impact and need for further exploration of a given topic via a future live podcast. The live podcast will provide a place to inquire about a topic from either the writer of the blog or an expert in the field. However, the podcast implementation will happen within six to nine months after completing this dissertation; as noted earlier, the focus of this artifact is the short film series and the website.

Resources and additional content posted on the website serve to challenge the audience to move toward a resolution in addressing hindered perspectives. Simultaneously, these resources provide pragmatic approaches to actively addressing justice issues within their communities and churches. The resources include books, study

guides, and group training on justice topics for engaging in uncomfortable and challenging conversations. The website also provides training on avoiding cultural biases, being effective with social advocacy within the community, embracing and understanding the stories of others, and more.

Further Research and Development

As mentioned above, the next step for implementing the research acquired through this dissertation is to create a book and a podcast. More in-depth investigative research will be given in the book concerning the shard perspectives within regional subcultures of the United States and the United Kingdom. The reason for selecting these two countries is that they share a history that dates to the foundation of the US and, to this day, some very similar injustices are experienced among ethnoreligious groups. The content of the book may include a collection of stories, experiences, and testimonies of those who engaged in justice advocacy, those who have faced or are facing injustices, and the response of the Church in addressing those issues. Moreover, the book will ultimately provide possible solutions for a way forward. Later research will involve a comprehensive consideration of the sociological, psychological, and theological effects of the shard perspective in the sphere of justice issues.

SECTION 5:

ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

As mentioned in Section 4, the dissertation project will include a multi-faceted media component, including the initial creation and production of an ongoing short docuseries, a website, social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, and a future podcast. Therefore, the specifications outlined in this section focuses on the website and short docuseries, although they will be applicable to the future phases of this project as well.

Goal, Scope, and Content

The project aims to deliver insight into the perception of the Church's silence regarding and avoidance of justice issues through a compelling series of shorts that highlight different perspectives of justice and justice issues people encounter every day. For the first installation of this series, the audience will get a chance to experience the stories of hardship, challenges, and victories of an outreach pastor speaking on the integration of religion, culture, and justice; a DACA recipient traversing the storms of the inconsistent immigration system; a lawyer turned pastor addressing justice issues in a holistic response; a theologian challenging the Church to radically change its position on race and inclusion; as well as a law enforcement officer searching for common ground or a place of safety in the politically and emotionally charged season of 2021. The stories and insights each interviewee conveys will set the stage to facilitate group conversations and give profound revelation on the urgency to address these issues and contribute to a shared vision in carrying out a resolution.

Audience

Though the artifact for this dissertation creation is underscored with biblical and theological influences, the intent is to reach individuals not only in the Church but also those in the public sector since the shard perspective affects the relationship between the two. For that reason, the intended audience of this project includes but is not limited to leaders in the church, faith-based organizations, non-government organizations, and community members. The diverse content provided through interviews and stories filmed for this project act as an essential tool for disrupting the shard perspective. The project serves to enlighten, educate, and inspire people to grow in their understanding, challenge their perspective, and move toward increased involvement in justice work to effect cultural and societal change.

Project Budget/Fundraising Strategy

The website and first production installment costs equaled approximately \$1,500 including website domain, website hosting fees, and film recording space. Additionally, talent interviews, videography, editing assistance, and some travel expenses were gifted for this project. Estimated future costs include continued website hosting fees and additional charges for the podcast, resource material creation, publication, and film production cost (included in detail within Docuseries Treatment/Proposal).

Initial Cost	
Item	Cost
Website	\$50
Studio	\$250
Travel	\$900
Camera	\$300
Total Cost	\$1,500

Future Cost	
Item	Cost
Website Hosting Fees	\$336
Vimeo	\$240
Podcast	\$108
Resource Creation/ Online Publishing	\$1,500
Total Cost	\$2,184

Promotion

The promotion of this artifact will be done through a seeding strategy—a digital marketing campaign with a carefully selected target audience to maximize the effectiveness of the campaign. Usually, the seeding strategy begins with a video trailer posted on the landing page of websites two weeks before the release of the docuseries episode. However, the video trailer for this artifact will be uploaded to the URL on the docuseries website a week before the first episode release. During the project, it will also be promoted via niche social media networks. The week before the official release of the episode, the trailer will also be posted on YouTube and Vimeo. The reasoning behind this strategy is to ensure the audience engages with the website and uses it as a resource and not only for entertainment purposes.

Action Plan

The branded website and social media networks for Facebook and Instagram are completed and published. The website and blog content are located at

www.asingleshard.com and the links for the social media networks and podcast are as the following:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/asingleshard

Instagram: www.instagram.com/a_singleshard

Podcast: asingleshard.podbean.com

The details and examples of the online digital format of the completed artifact are further delineated in Appendix B: B.1-Artifact.

Docuseries Proposal/Treatment—Artifact Specifications

Traditionally, a book proposal would have been introduced in this section. Since this is a short film-based project, an adapted version of the Sundance Film Festival Documentary Proposal Checklist is introduced here instead. It contains the following main elements needed for the proposal of a short docuseries:

- Narrative synopsis of the docuseries
- Director's connection to the story
- Film project timeline
- Future budget
- Current sample/rough draft

For the purpose of this doctoral project, the audience has been included in the *Audience* section above and other elements such as key creative personnel, artistic approach, creative control, and future funding strategy are omitted.

A Single Shard (documentary series) focuses on the perceptions shared among communities concerning the Church and justice. In some areas of the world, the Church

is seen as an active advocate addressing justice issues. In others, the Church remains silent on these issues or even speaks against involving themselves in such matters. These differences of perspectives have created varied perceptions of the Church's response to injustices which hinders it from advancing in cultural and social change.

Tagline

It's all a matter of perspective. The choice to see through a single shard or imagine the story through a shared lens is up to you.

Logline

A Single Shard is a docuseries that highlights how one's perspective of justice may differ because of culture, race, location, or religion. Still, the single shard becomes a collective masterpiece through a shared perspective of hope and a shared responsibility of action.

Topic Summary

The United States has struggled to find its footing in addressing the complex nature of justice in its society. Still, it is clear from the influx of books, literature, documentaries, studies, protests, and policies surrounding the topic of justice that there is a grave need to move forward together for the betterment of society. In examining this topic through the experiences of those who lead, live in, and serve the community, the shard perspective many individuals carry can be altered. It is not enough to read about or discuss injustices from afar; change only happens when individuals are close enough to personally understand the strain of injustice by walking alongside those experiencing it.

Narrative Synopsis

A doctoral student goes on a journey to understand the complexity and dynamics of the Church and justice. Through personal reflection, interviews with researchers, church leaders, law enforcement leaders, NGOs, and those afflicted by injustice, the student discovers an underlying hidden bias, the “shard perspective,” that inadvertently contributes to a negative perception of the Church relationship with justice issues. The student then attempts to counter these perspectives by exposing how justice issues are encountered, expressed, and addressed.

In *A Single Shard* short docuseries, the audience embarks on a story that spans over three years and four continents, with the initial stage set in Cape Town, South Africa. The story begins with the student in the position of a spectator watching and listening intently to dialogue among South Africans and Americans about injustices faced in their countries. A simple question led to an intense moment and a stark realization of the differences in perspectives of injustice faced by African Americans and POC in America. Unfortunately, this moment would haunt this student for years to come, even resurfacing at the start of her own doctoral journey. Reflecting on that moment, surprisingly though it surrounded racial injustice, that was not the issue of the student’s discontent; it was the nature of understanding and seeing through the lenses of others that were an enigma. Therefore, she pushes forward to gain knowledge through books and conversations, constantly being misunderstood for her reasons for research on justice and the church. Often enough, in conversations with leaders concerning the debates surrounding the Church and social justice, the response was, “The debate has been going on for decades.” But why? Why are justice issues up for debate?

Then 2020 graced the world with a pandemic of two kinds, the COVID-19 pandemic and a pandemic of social and political unrest. She wondered, where is the Church? She saw churches in the United States pressured to make an uncomfortable stance against racial injustice while others spoke openly against taking a stance. But as quickly as some churches took a stand, they also retreated to do church as usual when the storms quieted. Intrigued and appalled, she searched out church leaders, community leaders, and those afflicted by injustice.

Starting in San Francisco, with journeys to South Africa, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Florida, she discovers that the shard perspective rears its head in all parts of the world; the question is, will we choose to embrace or reject it?

Heading out to conduct a participatory mode of documentary style short series, she traveled across the coasts to interview her first set of leaders, local Outreach Pastor of Christian Life Center, Shawn O'Neill; Campus Pastor of Christian Life Center -Sunrise and former lawyer, Dr. Alex Umole; and law enforcement officer, Pablo Diaz. After interviewing the first set of leaders, she went back home to California to meet with theologian and author of *Embracing the Other*, Rev. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, and DACA recipient, Angela Hernandez. The issues of social and biblical justice, race relations, immigration, homeless, foster care, and more help set the informative and urgent tone needed to establish the straightforward interpretation of the shard perspective, which is the preface of the docuseries.

Connection to the Story

Growing up in South Florida, families within the Greater Fort Lauderdale and surrounding communities found strength, support, and community in the local church.

The Church on a local and national front was the cornerstone of the society, thus governing the community's social, spiritual, and political environment and uniting nations to bring about change. As a community social advocate and minister of the gospel, I experienced firsthand the impactful representation of the local church within its community concerning justice issues. Ten years in different ministry capacities across the country revealed an altered view of the Church's position of influence and care for those it is called to within its community. Many churches moved from an outward focus on community engagement and care to an inward focus on programs and numbers in the pews.

Consequently, other churches became selective in their reach, focusing solely on missions abroad, homeless ministry, and foster care, avoiding any issues of race relations, immigration, and human trafficking, among other justice issues within the United States. As a result, such matters were often left in the balance, and communities of those facing injustices had to stand alone, often without a God-centered voice and cultural influence. The imbalance and limited action toward justice issues left me wondering if a reimagined church could return to be the cultural and social influencer I once knew.

As a leader among a community of people with varied academic thoughts, cultural influences, racial backgrounds, and theological foundations, it is essential to understand the complexity and complications of justice issues within the domain of the community served and finding commonality of contemplation to address and challenge those issues on a personal, communal, biblical and theological level.

Director Statement

I have always loved the art of storytelling through film because if a story is communicated well, it can inspire change. In essence, that is the reason behind the film, to “not only entertain but to educate and inspire change” in the process of entertaining. For most of my personal justice work, this statement has always been true for projects I have led or created, be it works of the arts, music, theatre, or film. The common thread has been to utilize these forms of performing arts to address issues of injustice. Therefore, when deciding on a project to communicate and articulate the issues of perspectives surrounding injustice, it was my first choice to use media and film. As an episodic docuseries piece, it enables its audience to intake information that may be hard to digest in small portions so they have time to reflect and rethink their perspective before beginning the next segment.

It was essential to make sure the audience avoids the stage of psychic numbing while watching the docuseries. Therefore, balancing the rawness of interviews with visuals and stories of hope was an important, if challenging, goal to accomplish in this project. Shifting between tones of pathos, aspiration, inspiration, and anxiousness will keep the docuseries visceral and eye-opening. In the end, I hope the audiences find this docuseries inviting and challenging at the same time; that it is not something they only watch for entertainment but that they watch to understand how perspectives can be skewed and what can be done to change that perspective.

Project Stage and Timeline

The project is currently in its post-production stage. All interviews and footage are processed, edited, and combined in one larger project for editing purposes. Upon

editing, the videos will be divided into three segments for the docuseries episodic release.

The timeline notated below is set to be completed by the end of December.

Research	6 months	(Jan – June 2021)
Prep	2 months	(May – June 2021)
Shoot	4 months	(July – Oct 2021)
Wrap	4 weeks	(Oct – Nov 2021)
Post	6 weeks	(December 2021 – January 2022)

Though the timeline had to be adjusted due to COVID restrictions on location spots, travel, and the ability to access interviewees, the project was completed at an acceptable time. The docuseries content will be released as a web series on www.asinglehard.com, Vimeo.com, and YouTube. In the future, the series will be repurposed and content expanded to a full documentary for festival consideration.

Future Budget

Producer/Director: Mimi Harvey	Research	3	weeks
Executive Producer	Prep	2	weeks
Locations: Los Angeles, Georgia	Shoot	2	weeks (over two months)
Budget Date: 1/1/2022	Wrap	1	weeks
	Post	4	weeks (over two months)
	Total	12	weeks

Accounting Code	<u>ABOVE THE LINE</u>	Monthly Budget	Months	TOTAL BUDGET
1000	Pre-Production and Development	\$625.00	3	\$1,875.00
2000	Producing Staff			\$0.00
3000	Rights, Music & Talent	\$800.00	1	\$800.00

	TOTAL ABOVE THE LINE (A)	\$1,425.00		\$2,675.00
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Accounting Code	<u>BELOW THE LINE</u>	Monthly Budget		TOTAL BUDGET
4000	Crew & Personnel	\$825.00	1	\$825.00
5000	Production Expenses	\$5,000.00	1	\$5,000.00
6000	Travel and related expenses	\$1,500.00	2	\$3,000.00
7000	Post-production	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
8000	Insurance	\$300.00	1	\$300.00
9000	Office & Administration costs	\$100.00	3	\$300.00
10000	Other Required Items	\$400.00	1	\$400.00
	TOTAL BELOW THE LINE (B)	\$9,125.00		\$10,825.00

	SUBTOTAL (ATL + BTL)	\$10,550.00		\$13,500.00
	CONTINGENCY	\$1,500.00		\$1,500.00
	GRAND TOTAL	\$12,050		\$15,000

Prior Work

Though the short film series “A Single Shard” is the first attempt at a film project, prior works within social awareness through performing arts include *Hidden*, a stage play. *Hidden* was performed before an audience of over 1,300 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 2014. After its debut, *Hidden* transformed into HTMovement, a movement that aims to educate one community at a time about the epidemic of human trafficking

within the United States. HTMovement continues today with training and education, using the theater as its platform. <http://www.htmovement.org/>

Current Sample/Rough Cut

A Single Shard docuseries, in its first iteration, has five interviews ranging from 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on the topic. The total footage recorded is approximately three hours, in addition to videos previously recorded over the span of three years. In the rough cut of this docuseries, audiences will find an abridged version of the interviews interlaced with videos highlighting their stories. These added videos are used to enhance the audience's understanding of the topic related to them, their church community, and their local community.

As stated earlier, the first full episode will be available on January 11, 2022. First, a completed teaser/trailer explaining the project's premise is available on the website the week of January 10. The teaser/trailer presents the director of the docuseries and visually introduces some of the various justice issues affecting the global and local community. It also serves as a reflection piece on why the researcher chose to undertake the project and the inspiration behind the story.

Post-Graduate Considerations

The website to house the docuseries, blogs, and resources is completed and the teaser/trailer is scheduled to be uploaded. The remaining items slated for Phase 1, including two additional blogs and the first episode of *A Single Shard*, will be launched on February 7, 2022. The remaining episodes will be released monthly thereafter. In preparation for Phase 2, research has been conducted and online distribution connections

have been established for the curriculum. In addition, the planning of future conferences will be implemented in the early part of 2023.

SECTION 6:

POSTSCRIPT

The artifact, *A Single Shard*, is only the beginning of an extensive project to gather insight and experiences and remove preconceived thought patterns learned through enculturation. *A Single Shard* provides pertinent intellectual material regarding controversial topics to assist a leader in any organization in creating a culture of connectivity and justice. The method of engaging stories and issues of justice through the lenses of leaders and community members allows for the content of this artifact to be uniquely and conveniently positioned for ease of communicating the urgency of creating cultures of justice between the Church and its community.

During the initial implementation of this artifact, many leaders asked, “How do we get past seeing our own shard, our perspective?” Hopefully, this dissertation has provided practical applications to begin changing those perspectives and moving forward toward effective change within the Church and its community. And though this research offers practical applications to initiate the conversation and reevaluate how individuals perceive justice through individualized experiences, culture, religion, etc., further research is needed—for example, conducting an inductive study on how a leader’s perspective of justice affects those who follow that leader. Furthermore, the research resources add a component of understanding the effect of the leader’s perspective of justice as it is translated, communicated, and understood among adherents. In addition, how are those perspectives passed down through those adherents to others within the community—be it church or the community where they reside? This is only the beginning of this journey to understand the work of justice manifested in this world.

Hopefully, there will be a day when common ground is established. The Church moves as one united body for the betterment of man in society and the glory and furthering of kingdom work in a broken world.

APPENDIX A:

A. 1 – SURVEY & QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

Social Advocacy and the Church Survey- General Public

1. Select your age range
 - ☐ 18-24
 - ☐ 25-34
 - ☐ 35-44
 - ☐ 45-54
 - ☐ 55-64
 - ☐ 65+
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your religious affiliation, and if you are from the US, in what region do you reside? If from another country, please state it here as well.
4. Which of the following best describes your understanding of the term "social justice"? (Check all that apply)
 - ☐ Human rights activism
 - ☐ Racial Issues
 - ☐ Charity and compassion
 - ☐ Demonstrations and protests
 - ☐ Reconciliation and restoration
 - ☐ Gender Rights
 - ☐ Political propaganda
 - ☐ Social Gospel
 - ☐ Equality, dignity, and fairness
 - ☐ Socialism/Communism
 - ☐ Wealth redistribution
 - ☐ Fair and just social benefits distribution
5. What's your overall opinion regarding the church's response to social issues?
 - ☐ Very positive
 - ☐ Positive
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Negative
 - ☐ Very negative
6. When social injustices happen on a local, national, or global scale, should pastors advocate for change from the pulpit?
 - ☐ Never

- Occasionally
 - Undecided
 - Often
 - Very often
7. At what level of involvement should the church place social advocacy as a part of its mission? (Check all that apply)
- Community education
 - Policy and systems on a state level
 - Policy and systems on a local government level
 - Partner with other advocacy organizations and churches
 - The church should not engage in any social justice advocacy
 - Leave all policies, systems, and community education for the government to create and enforce
8. What social issues does your church advocate for, if any?
9. If none, why has your church not been involved in the role of social advocacy? (Check all that apply)
- Limited time and resources
 - It is not biblical
 - It is not the main component of the mission of the church
 - Not enough training and skills in this area
 - Plan to get involved at a later time
 - Concerned for physical safety of congregants and ministers
 - Other (please specify)
10. In light of the numerous social injustices facing the United States in this century, which would you consider the most important to address today? (Ranking from most important to least important at this time)
- Immigration
 - Racial equality
 - Human trafficking
 - Income equality
 - Women's rights
 - Children rights
 - Pro-life/Pro-choice
 - Gun laws
 - Healthcare reform
 - Wealth redistribution
 - Social benefits
 - Homelessness/poverty

Social Advocacy and the Church Questionnaire - 2019

Section 1 – General

1. Name of Organization
2. Position in Church/Organization
3. What best describes your understanding of the term “social advocacy”?
4. From your perspective, does social advocacy include both social justice and biblical justice?
5. Do you see justice and biblical justice as separate components, or are they considered the same? Please explain.

Section 2 – Impact of Societal Perspective

A survey was conducted to review the societal perspective of the Church and social advocacy with the general population and several church leaders in late November. In the section of this survey, we will be asking several of those questions in order to better analyze social advocacy in the scope of worldview.

6. Do you feel more churches should be involved in addressing social issues? Please explain.
7. We asked about biblical and social justice earlier. Do you feel social advocacy should be an essential component of the church’s mission? Please explain.
8. At what level of involvement should the church place on social advocacy as a part of its mission? (Check all that apply)
 - Community education
 - Policy and systems on a state level
 - Policy and systems on a local level

- Partner with other advocacy organizations and churches
9. What is your overall opinion on how the Church is viewed in regard to social injustices in the United States?
- Very positive
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Very Negative

Section 3 – Agent of Change

In this section, we would like to hear more about the impact your church/organization is making or has made in the area of social advocacy within your sphere of influence (church and community locally and nationally)

10. What are some of the social issues in which your church/organization advocates?
11. What is your church's/organizations approach to addressing these issues?
12. Describe the hardest situation you or your church/organization has faced in addressing these issues. How did you or your church/organization handle that situation?
13. Describe one of the most significant milestones your church/organization has achieved in addressing these issues.
14. How much time do you allocate to training, education, and preparation of execution toward social advocacy?
15. Do you partner with other organizations to help combat these issues?
16. Are those organizations religious or non-religious?
- Religious
 - Non-religious
 - Both
17. Do these partnerships assist in the impactful outcome of social advocacy for your focused social issues? Please explain.

Section 4 – Helpers to One Another

In this section, we would like for you to share some insights and wisdom for those who would like to be an agent of change.

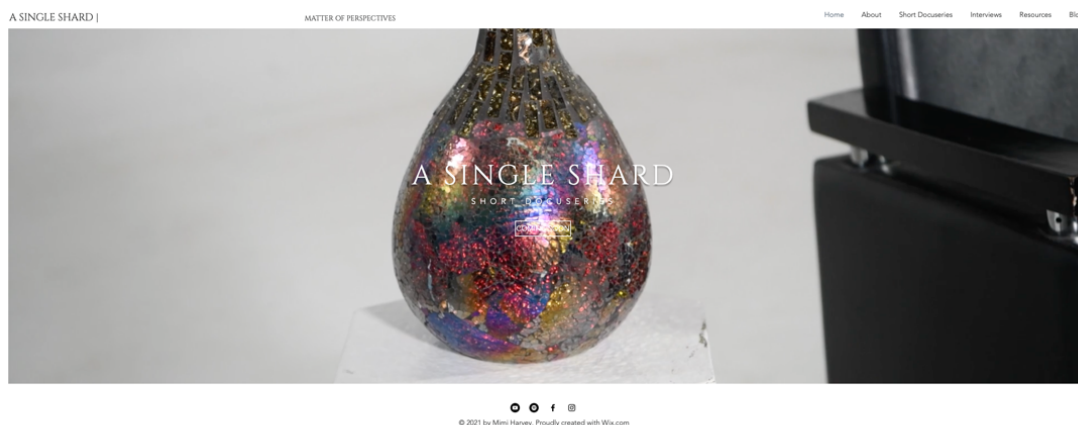
18. In a recent study, churches have shared there is a need for their presence to be more profound in the area of social advocacy; however, they have also shared the struggle in pursuing this is a limitation of education and resources. How does your church/organization address these issues?
19. The study shows the perception of the Church as it relates to social injustice is viewed to have a neutral to negative impact; what are some ways you believe we can change the narrative?
20. Please provide your name and contact information if you would also like to participate in the interview process. Your name and contact will be separated from the response you just provided to maintain confidentiality.

APPENDIX B

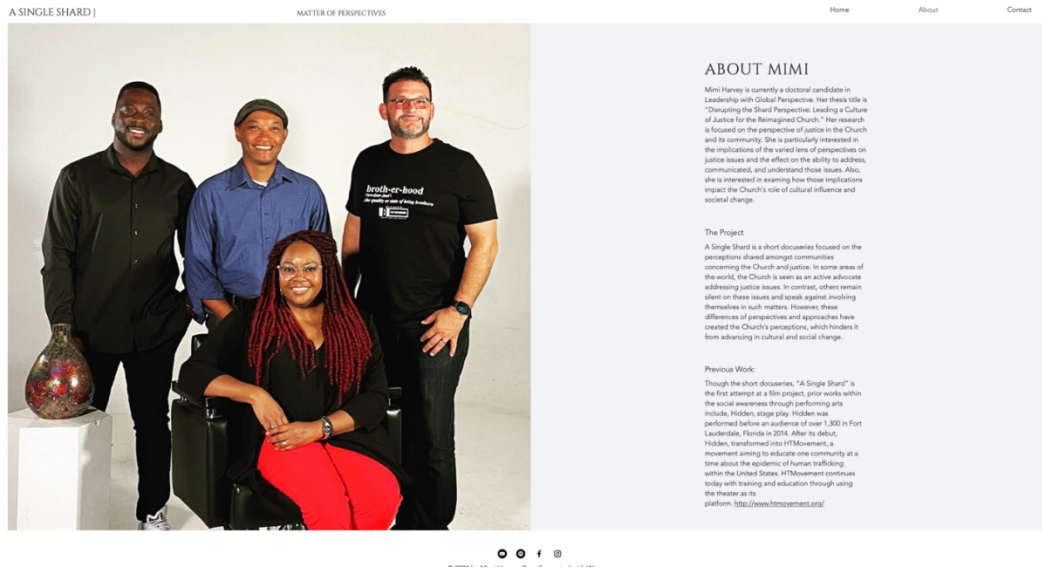
B.1 - ARTIFACT

The artifact for this dissertation incorporates the first installment of a docuseries and website with blogs located at www.asinglehard.com. As represented in Section 4, the website includes accessibility to blogs, the docuseries, abridged interviews, and resources for its audience. In addition, this platform allows for feedback on and interaction with hot topics, which serves as a foundational element for a future podcast series.

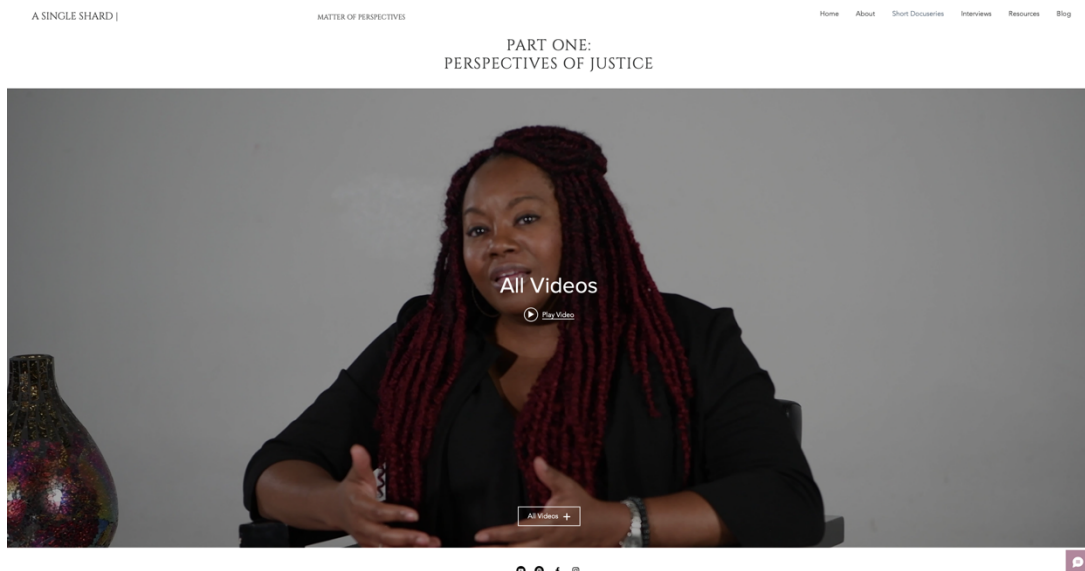
The website includes the following pages: Home, About, Short Docuseries, Interviews, Resources, and Blogs (illustrated below). The Home page contains a brief introduction of the project's premise and a link to access the installments of the docuseries.



The About page provides information about the author/director's educational background and research about the project, a summary of the project, and prior works done by the author/director.

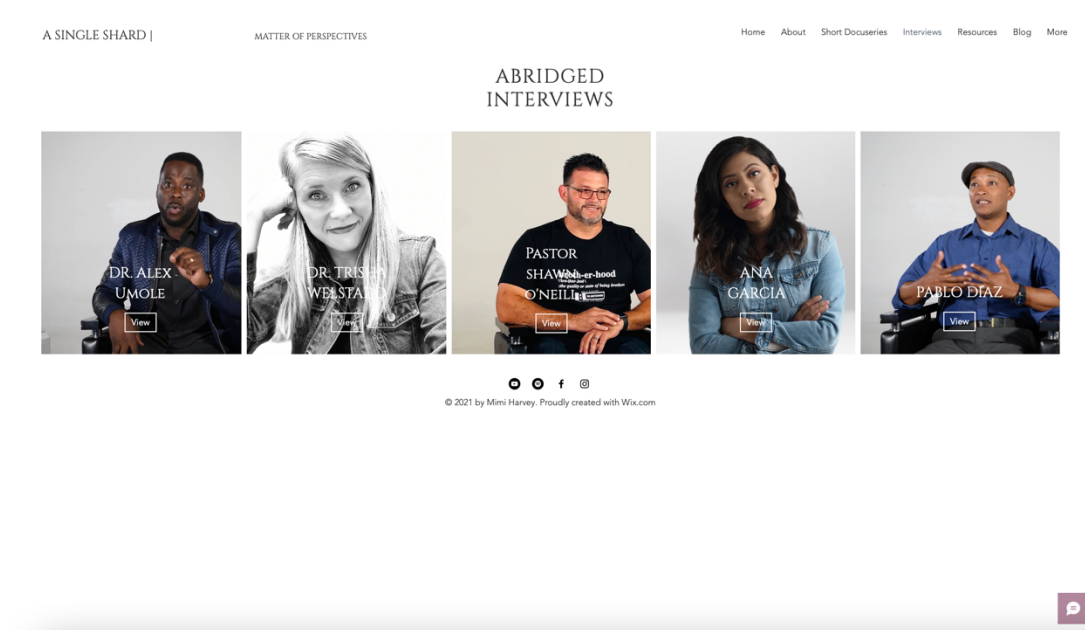


The Docuseries page houses the teaser footage or promo trailer for the project with the director's story behind the creation of the projection. Also, it provides insight into the mission and vision of the project and the hopeful outcome and impact intended



for its audience. Finally, in addition to the promo trailer, it houses the final cut of the series installations.


The Interview page includes a collection of abridged interviews from theologians, pastors, government officials, NGO leaders, community leaders, and community members.



The Blog and Resource pages provide reflections on leadership, justice issues, cultural engagement, theological, psychological, and sociological theories of justice and resources, books, and training to effectively broaden one's perspective of justice.

MY BLOG

All Posts




Mini Harvey

Aug 7 · 5 min

TELL THEM THAT IT'S HUMAN NATURE

Here's to another week with Steven Pinker. Nonetheless, this is an election to a more academic approach to desperately search the pages...

0 views · 0 comments



Mini Harvey

Aug 7 · 4 min

TIME IS NOW VOICES OF THE GENERATION

For the Cause "Never" be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people...

B. 2 – FILMED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Premise:

A Single Shard is a short documentary focused on the perceptions shared among communities concerning the Church and justice. In some areas of the world, the Church is seen as an active advocate addressing justice issues. In contrast, others remain silent on these issues and speak against involving themselves in such matters. These differences of perspectives and approaches have created the Church's perceptions, which hinders it from advancing in cultural and social change.

Focused Justice Issues: The justice issues for this research are based on the quartet of the vulnerable outlined in scripture and translated to present-day issues—the widow (single parenthood), the orphan (foster care children), the foreigner (immigrant, migrant worker, Dreamers), and the poor (impoverished/homeless).

Topics to Be Covered in Project: The topics based on survey results included Immigration, Racial Equality, Economic Equity -Homeless/Poverty, Single Parenthood

I. Interview Questions: Pastors/Community Leaders/NGO Organization Leaders:

Social Responsibility and the Church: Caring for the Community

1. Your Name and Name of Church/Organization
2. What is your role?
3. From your perspective, does social responsibility include both social justice and biblical justice?

Impact of Societal Perspective:

A survey was conducted to review the societal perspective of the Church and advocacy with the general population and several church leaders in November 2019. In this part, I will be asking several of those questions better to understand your view of social advocacy in a larger worldview.

1. Do you feel more churches should be involved in addressing these issues? Please explain.
2. We asked about biblical and social justice earlier. Do you feel social service/programs should be an essential component of the Church's mission? Please explain.

3. At what level of involvement should the church place on social responsibility as a part of its mission?
4. What is your overall opinion on how the Church is viewed regarding injustices in the United States?
5. Do you feel the difference in opinions and approaches to justice issues hinders the witness of the Church and its effects of evangelism to the world? If yes, please explain.

Agent of Change

Now we would like to hear more about the impact your Church or organization is making in social service or outreach programs within your sphere of influence (Church and community locally and nationally).

1. Describe one of the most significant milestones your church/organization has achieved in addressing these issues.
2. What is your church's/organization's approach to addressing these issues?
3. Describe the most challenging situation you or your church/organization have faced in addressing these issues. How did you or your church/organization handle that situation?
4. Describe one of the most significant milestones your church/organization has achieved in addressing these issues.
5. What would you share if you can share one thing with the Church and the community concerning their positions or perspective on justice issues and how we can accomplish change together?

II. Interview Questions: General Public

1. Would you please state your name and what region of the world you were born in? Do you still reside in that same region?
2. What is your understanding of social justice?
3. What are some social justice issues you see within your community?
4. What's your overall opinion regarding the Church's response to social justice issues? Please explain.
5. When social justice issues happen on a local, national, or global scale, do you feel pastors advocate for change from the pulpit?
6. Have you or someone in your family fallen victim to social justice issues?
7. Have you ever heard of those issues discussed negatively by Christians? Or even within your church community?
8. Do you see your church or churches within your community speaking hope and taking action to change those injustices?
9. If you could relay a message to church leaders concerning justice issues, what would that message be?

10. In light of the numerous social injustices facing the United States in this century, which would you consider the most important to address today?
11. Do you think if the Church actively participated or responded quickly, we could help make positive changes in our communities quicker?

III. Interview Questions: General Law Enforcement/Community Leader

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself... and what you do for a living?
2. Why did you choose this field?
3. Can you tell me about a time where you felt conflicted or torn?
4. How do you prepare yourself or create boundaries and balance in those times?
5. Growing up or even presently, did you or someone in your family or your community ever fall victim to any social justice issues?
6. Did you see a response from the Church or the community?
7. Have you ever heard of those issues discussed negatively by Christians? Or even within your church community?
8. Do you think when social justice issues happen on a local, national, or global scale, pastors speak into it from the pulpit?
9. Do you think there needs to be a stronger partnership between community leaders, law enforcement, and the Church?
10. If you could share one thing to the community, the Church, and the world at large about justice, our views and approaches, and responsibilities, what would that be? Or what is one thing in your heart you want to leave with us about this topic?

IV. Interview Questions: Educators/Researchers/Authors

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself... and what you do for a career?
2. What is your overall opinion on how the Church is viewed regarding injustices in the United States?
3. From your perspective, does social responsibility include both social justice and biblical justice?
4. Do you feel the difference in opinions and approaches to justice issues hinders the witness of the Church and its effects of evangelism to the world? If yes, please explain.
5. Tell me about your project/research/book, and how do you hope it will impact our society?
6. Describe the moment you realized you had to write this book or do this project.
7. Describe the most challenging situation you have faced in addressing these issues doing your project/research/book.
8. How can your research/project/book help understand social justice or bridge the cultural and sometimes political divide?

9. How could we better understand the complexity of this topic, and how could we make efforts to help orchestrate change.
10. What would you share if you can share one thing with the Church and the community concerning their positions or perspective on justice issues and how we can accomplish change together?

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