

ABSTRACT

How Shame Shapes Church Planting: Exploring Impacts on Gospel Receptivity

Among Emerging Adults

by

Robert Mark Montgomery

The American context is a rapidly moving target in this post-Christian era. It is All church planters and leaders should constantly watch for signs of significant cultural change that will require them to adjust their understanding on how to contextualize the gospel. Denominational leaders and local church pastors are frustrated by the increasing resistance of Americans to the gospel, the infrequency of church attendance, and the ineffectiveness of their outreach programs. Psychologists, sociologists, and theologians are calling our their attention to the emerging impact of shame in their recent writings. Shame dynamics overlapping in individuals, households, and social groups may be significant factors impacting gospel receptivity and attraction to the institutional church.

Narcissism and its conforming culture of shame has been normalized in western civilization. American emerging adults are becoming more shame impacted. The Church needs to be well-informed and equipped to address the dynamics of shame compounded by narcissism. Since attractional, established churches are not highly relational, and are bewildered by low church attendance, a significant recalibration may be needed.

My project is “How Shame Shapes Church Planting.” My purpose statement is “to develop best practices that shape church planting used by leaders in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene by exploring how western shame dynamics impact gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults.” The literature

review accessed seventy-seven resources across many disciplines with a total of 225 works consulted. In the field research mixed-methods design, forty emerging adults completed surveys, eighteen church leaders participated in interviews -, and nine church planters participated in focus groups.

The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society (Jewett) is representative of a growing number of thinkers who are developing a “theology of shame” over the last two decades. This project works toward a robust missiology of shame leading to an ecclesiology of shame, that provides a compelling rationale for incarnational missional approaches to evangelism and networking and mentoring methods of church planting reminiscent of Celtic Mission and Wesley’s evangelical awakening. For contemporary church leaders, the project advocates for a retooling of approaches to engaging and discipling emerging adults, broadening the use of atonement theories to include *Christus Victor*, incorporating a trinitarian and original image of humanness as vision into gospel presentations, and looking at redemption as healing and rehumanizing. Shaping church planting can also employ the four cycles of appreciative inquiry (AI): discover, dream, design, and deploy, along with prayer to God for wisdom as the priesthood of all believers. Shame-safe new congregations that nurture and mentor emerging adults may be characterized by trust, safety, vulnerability, belonging, and affirmation.

How Shame Shapes Church Planting: Exploring Impacts on Gospel Receptivity
Among Emerging Adults

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 1 provides the framework for developing best practices for shaping new church planting by exploring how shame dynamics impact receptivity to the gospel among unchurched emerging adults. - It provides a rationale for the project evolving from personal experience, the experiences of other church planters, sending pastors, and district superintendents, and the literature review. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how I collected and analyzed the results. To add support for this type of project, themes of the literature review and contextual factors were identified. Further discussion of the anticipated project results established the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

Personal Introduction

Prior to my current local church assignment, I had invested ten years of life in ministry, engaging the unchurched in neighborhoods and marketplaces in the greater Lansing area of Michigan as a resident and business owner. The focus of our ministry was emerging adults. God led me to walk my neighborhood with my dachshund as well as our shopping mall, praying for my neighbors and shoppers, and listening to God. I began to play toss games with the neighborhood children and to tell Bible stories in 2008. Children and their parents responded to presentations of the gospel and joined my wife and me for Bible studies. As we discipled converts - and established and registered new church-type missions with the Church of the Nazarene, other Christians joined us for

training in domestic missions and we equipped them to love and witness to their neighbors through hospitality. In the first decade, 17 new congregations were planted in neighborhoods, leisure places, and businesses. Many people we reached, especially the emerging adults, indicated that they would have never “darkened the door of a church building except for weddings and funerals,” and had no interest in being referred to a conventional-type church for membership. We found that embedding new churches within the neighborhood and marketplaces, in homes, parks, restaurants, coffee shops, and businesses through more organic, lightly organized, nimble means was a more hospitable environment for the unchurched to feel comfortable meeting together and become more receptive to the gospel message. While reasons for resistance and avoidance were many and varied, shame-rooted causes surfaced as the single biggest factor for this condition. Now that I have returned to lead as a pastor in a more conventional church setting in rural, southeastern United States, I wonder to what extent shame impacts gospel receptivity as we look to evangelize the unchurched population, especially the generation of emerging adults that are missing in our local churches, and plant new churches throughout the state. As post-modernism hits its zenith as the dominant philosophy of Western civilization and begins its descent into the obscurity of history, I dream of becoming adequately prepared as an equipping leader to offer the gospel of Christ to the unchurched people groups hiding from God in shame and unresponsive to attractional church outreach in methods of presentation through carefully designed church shapes that greatly improve receptivity, especially among emerging adults.

Statement of the Problem

During this experience in domestic missions, we discovered that shame was a significant barrier to receptivity to the gospel, so that attractional methods of outreach to encourage the unchurched to attend brick-and-mortar church services were largely ineffective. Comparing notes with pastors and church planters across the United States and Canada, I found that this was a common problem, but few understood why. In our current context of rural south-central Florida, the youngest three generations are conspicuously absent from church attendance. High percentages from the older generations experience isolation in their neighborhoods, choose traffic patterns of life that steer clear of religious institutions and public worship, and ignore church marketing efforts to reach them. This dynamic contributes to shrinking church attendance, threatens financial sustainability of many congregations, and frustrates church leaders who allocate significant resources and invest thought, time, and energy into attractional methods of outreach. Coming to understand how these dynamics impact emerging adults may provide the key to reaching a significant percentage of the unchurch regardless of generation. In-depth analysis of “successful” outreach methods often reveals that they are more effective attracting attenders from other churches than attracting the unchurched population, leading to competition and suspicion between churches (Dickerson). Therefore, church leaders discover that the churches in a community are competing for the same dwindling population of the church as opposed to reaching the growing population of the unchurched.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop best practices for shaping new church planting for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene by exploring how the trends of shame dynamics in American culture impact the receptivity of the gospel for the unchurched emerging adults.

Research Questions

Three research questions provided the focus for the project's field research:

1. What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture?
2. What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Districts leaders, pastors, and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?
3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current leaders, pastors, and church planters in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame dynamics?

Rationale for the Project

The project is important because shame dynamics and issues are inherent in the human condition as well as springing from personal crises and crop up throughout the Testaments of Scripture especially the Torah and the biblical narrative. The hiding of shame as a barrier to divine fellowship and human community is as old as the fall of

Adam and Eve, the Exiles of Israel and Judah, and the ministry of Jesus, which I addressed in the Biblical Foundation section of the literature review.

The second reason this study is important is that everyone matters to God, whether or not they regularly attend public worship, appear to fit the profile of church-going people or spiritually inclined prospects. Every person regardless of past experiences, size, appearance, family of origin, emotional health and competence, age, race, language, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation has been created in the image of God, for the purpose of God, and has a place in God's plans. Christ died for every person on the planet in every era of history. Everyone matters to God, not just those who are easy to reach or who fit comfortably in church fellowship. To obey the Great Commission of making Christ-like disciples in all nations, Christians cannot conscientiously ignore any segment of the population; instead, they must exercise due diligence in our missional research, identify lost people the Church does not readily recognize, and make best efforts to devise strategies and execute plans to build bridges that Christ can cross. The results of this study have the potential to provide key elements to evangelizing North America in our generation, through the thorough understanding of shame dynamics and how they impact gospel receptivity among emerging adults, and the development of best practices for shaping church planting.

The third reason this study matters is that shame is a sociological (suicide, etc.) as well as civic issue (immigrants as second-class citizens). Shame is pervasive in the economy of the United States. As a cultural phenomenon, shame has become the dominant spiritual dynamic and impacts church attendance and gospel receptivity. While it is beyond the scope of this study, it is also a pastoral issue in reference to discipleship

and personal development from cradle to grave, and therefore indirectly impacts the ability of the local church to be the Church in engaging the culture in search and rescue efforts, in offering healthy hospitality to strangers, in promoting justice and mercy, and embodying a healing fellowship for discipleship and care of everyone within the congregation's influence. Otherwise, good news people can become bad news people by unwittingly functioning as a source of shaming the very ones they are hoping to engage redemptively and heal holistically. Focusing first on the issue of gospel receptivity and its implications for shaping church planting may open the door more widely to solving the complex puzzle of shame dynamics in local churches in general.

A fourth reason acknowledges the sheer mathematics of a congregation's effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Time, effort, human and financial resources are significantly allocated to church growth and planting where such resources are limited. That all inherent factors in the context be considered is critical to determine the magnitude and scope of being an obstacle to receptivity. Frustration and burnout occur in missionaries and church workers when methods fail to hit the mark or reap the desired results. The eternal souls of our population hang in the balance of indefinite time, so developing best practices to reach the unchurch that are impacted by shame is crucial and urgent. Time is of the essence.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, shame is defined as “a feeling of unworthiness in the sight of God or significant others” (McClintock 14). Yet, that simple definition does little to acknowledge the overlapping dynamic of shame in western cultures. Karen A. McClintock notes, “The interplay between our feelings of shame and shame in the

systems in which we participate is quite complex” (40). Such complexity must be understood in terms of a “dynamic” that is operational in all human experience, and especially embedded in cultural constructs, expressed in an individual’s mobility amid roles and relationships, and stimulated and supported by powerful underlying spiritual forces.

American/Western shame dynamics mean all sources of shame that impacts the behavior of individuals and groups in America and other Western Civilization contexts. This is to be distinguished from the shame/honor cultures of Eastern Civilization that are foundational to those relational constructs and cultural characteristics.

Shame itself is defined as a psychological condition where the self-identity of a person or group leads to isolation, exclusion from other groups, and a significant contributor to poor psycho-social health in general. Biblically, shame is the opposite of “glory.” Subjectively, shame includes feelings of unworthiness, depletion of a sense of self, embarrassment from a sudden realization of exposure, and impulses to hide self from public view. Objectively, shame is the actual fallen condition or dehumanization of the body, soul, and spirit of a human being created in the image of God, separated from a life-giving relationship with the Creator, and devoid of his glory. It is therefore possible to experience shame existentially, while not feeling or portraying shame characteristics (e.g. shamelessness as a defense mechanism for shame impacts or aversion, the fear of being shamed in anticipated situations). The degree of existential shame is the distance between the idealized self and the current actual self (McClintock 100), or what Stephen Pattison calls “the unwanted self.” Even infants can feel “ontological” shame, the shame of existence, coping “with the fact that one is small, naked, weak, and powerless” (qtd. in

Jewett 10–11). Therefore, shame is complex and multi-faceted in source and manifestation throughout life cycles; it can be viewed as morally and socially “beneficial” and at the same time, deeply dehumanizing and debilitating; it can be experienced acutely as well as chronically until death.

For the purpose of this study, “church planting” means the establishment of a new healthy local church, which qualifies to become registered as a church-type mission or organized as a local church, regardless of model, structure, or system of church it is.

For the purpose of this study, “receptivity” means the ease of consideration, the degree of acceptance, the willingness to embrace or otherwise respond positively to the introduction of an idea or invitation to join a group.

For the purpose of this study, the “gospel” means the timeless message of good news that God has worked in Christ to redeem the world from sin, destroy the works of the Devil, and call into being a new human race that fulfills the promise to Israel, the Church.

For the purpose of this study, “unchurched” refers to that population in any vicinity which attends any church worship or discipleship event less than once a month on average in the last 12 months.

For the purpose of this study, “emerging adults” refers to persons of either gender ages 18-34 as of the date of Q2 2021.

Delimitations

This study included district superintendents, lead pastors, and young adult ministry directors of existing churches located in the Nazarene Southeastern United States Districts, church planting pastors and trainees, emerging adults (whether churched

or unchurched), and current lay church members of Sebring Church of the Nazarene over age 17. This study excluded ministers who have not been assigned in the last five years, retired pastors, retired evangelists, and administrative church staff.

This study focused specifically on how shame dynamics in American culture impacts gospel receptivity among emerging adults within the general context of shame issues. It did not address best practices of pastoral counselling for shame issues. It did not address receptivity to the gospel among children, adolescents, or adults over the age of 34. This study accessed a representative sampling of available primary and secondary sources from all relevant secular and religious disciplines and theories.

Review of Relevant Literature

This project consulted the biblical foundations (passages and principles to unpack), as well as theological foundations (Trinity, Image of God, The Fall and Depravity of Humankind, Incarnation, Theory of Atonement, Salvation, Missiology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology). The study also includes the contributions of church history, particularly the early church and the Church of the Nazarene denomination. The writings of the most notable researchers (Capps, Heinz Kohut, William Abraham, O. Kernberg, Alexander Lowen, Tom Steffen, Baxter Krueger, Sherry Turkle, Scott Moreau, James Fowler, and Erikson's Stage Theory, etc.) in the field of shame dynamics were consulted along with recent issues of psychological journals on the subject of American shame culture and narcissism.

From these contributors, the project addressed the basic themes of global spiritual dynamics, sources of shame and shaming, narcissistic culture and character, social inclusion/exclusion, psychological and sociological issues, the relationship between guilt

and shame, attractional church culture and outreach methods, organic expressions and systems of church planting and disciple-making.

The topic of this study addressed the implications for church planting strategies and approaches that the current literature has suggested, but to advance in the form of circumspect best practices in relation to dominant shame dynamics.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

This research type is pre-intervention, specifically an “appreciative inquiry” with a mixed-method design, a combination of qualitative and quantitative lenses. My research methods are:

1. Interviews/questionnaires (open-ended): qualitative and quantitative
2. Web-based Surveys: quantitative
3. Focus groups: qualitative

Participants

The immediate participants of this project were the pastors (lead and young adult staff leaders) on the Southeastern United States Districts Church of the Nazarene, because they are the beneficiaries of the first stage of implementing these best practices. The cooperation of the superintendents in each jurisdiction to provide contact information, permission, and reference was pivotal to the success of this project.

The project also reached out to current Nazarene District Superintendents, Church Planters, and Trainees in the southeastern USA region, because the number of church planters on the two Florida Districts is too small, and a broader sampling improves the verifiability of the project. Identity and contact information of this class of participant is

available from the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene, USA/Canada region.

In order to be missionally accurate, the project directly addressed unchurched emerging adults (ages 18-34) in Florida because this generation is the most exposed to western shame dynamics and they deserve to be heard. These participants were self-selected through an emailed survey at Warner University in Lake Wales, Florida.

Instrumentation

1. What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture? For this question, I am using web-based surveys (Emerging Adult Survey-quantitative-EAS).

2. What are the inherent obstacles that Southeastern United States Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture? For this question, I am using interviews and open-ended questionnaires for the Pastor District Superintendent Interviews (quantitative and qualitative, PDSI).

3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the USA/Canada region Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched who are impacted by western shame culture? For this question, I am using interviews (Pastor District Superintendent Interview-quantitative and qualitative-PDSI) and focus groups ((Church Planter Focus Groups-qualitative, CPFPG).

Data Collection

The specific approach of the project for data collection was aligned to its purpose statement and the research questions. The project collected data across a three-month period at the end of second quarter and beginning of third quarter of the year 2021. The conditions of the data collection included web-based surveys of college students and other emerging adults on a Lickert scale of response using SurveyMonkey, phone interviews with pastors and district superintendents, and focus groups of church planters over video conferencing.

Order of Conduction

The Emerging Adult Survey EAS took place during 2Q 2021 on the Internet on Lickert scale aligned to RQ 1 and impact of western shame culture on the unchurched emerging adults. Then Pastor District Superintendent Interviews (PDSI) took place during 2Q 2021 over the phone with pastors and district superintendents about inherent obstacles to gospel receptivity of emerging adults aligned with RQ 2. During 3Q 2021, I facilitated the Church Planter Focus Groups in two groups, one among Florida church planters and the other from among church planters on the eight districts outside Florida, but inside the Southeastern (Trevecca Education Zone) United States in web-conferencing focus groups on best practices that shape church planting aligned with RQ 3.

Data Analysis

The project was a pre-intervention approach to the problem of gospel receptivity among unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame and the probability of addressing it by shaping church planting best practices. Once collected, I analyzed the data

thoroughly and appropriately according to the instrument used. SurveyMonkey software collected and analyzed the quantitative data from the Emerging Adult Survey (EAS). I computed and recorded the correlations and coefficients of variation to document degrees of reliability.

I read the Pastor-District Superintendent Interview (PDSI) field notes and transcripts twice for each interview. Then, I noted comparisons and contrasts per question to detect any significant patterns in responses. I noted alignment in conceptualization, perspectives, and best practices in the hierarchy. Conclusions were compared with the data that corresponded with the EAS quantitative yielded to note any disconnects in perspectives and differences in recommendations. In particular, I compared the quantitative data in both EAS and PDSI to see if emerging adults and practitioners view engagement the same way.

Awareness and best practice qualitative data analysis was particularly critical for the Church Planter Focus Groups (CPFPG) instrument. I read the field notes and transcripts twice for both groups. I compared the responses from the two groups to explore any significant variance between the ethnically diverse group and the more homogenous group. I copied a summary of the analysis on white paper and cut up into themes and posted like the EAS and PDSI posts. Once the sorting and posting were finished, I completed a report on the triangulation of these instruments with the literature review.

Generalizability

To be trustworthy, the project must possess applicability, dependability, and credibility. This project is applicable in at least the following ways. For District

Superintendents, equipping consultants and field strategy coordinators across America and other western contexts, they will know how to strategize and train church planters. Second, pastors of current churches who want to reach the unchurched or plant new churches will gain valuable insight that will save time and resources, and better shape new churches they plant. And finally, lay leaders and evangelists who have been frustrated by unchurched resistance to the gospel will find relief by sharpening their awareness and strategies of engagement.

This project is dependable because of the variety of research methods utilized, the size of the sample, and the triangulation of results. It is credible because all people deal with shame on some level of human experience, not just in eastern honor-shame cultures. The consistency of results across the methods of research and data gathering lend credibility to the project.

Project Overview

This project explores the receptivity of the gospel among emerging adults who are impacted by shame dynamics and develops best practices of engagement, gospel presentation, and church planting. Chapter 2 discusses biblical foundations, theological foundations, church history, spiritual dynamics, and the ideas of the most influential experts and church planting practitioners regarding western shame culture, narcissistic character, and incarnational engagement, gospel language and order, and church planting processes, models, and systems. Chapter 3 outlines the various ways I will investigate my research questions. Chapter 4 analyzes the findings that emerge from such qualitative methods as focus groups, mixed methods of semi-structured interviews, and quantitative

surveys. Chapter 5 outlines the study's major findings with implication for each discovery now and in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The project was an outgrowth of experience and a wide range of reading on various subjects surrounding the themes of theology, discipleship, spiritual formation, evangelism, missiology, and ecclesiology. The problem of shame in Western Civilization has long been identified by modern disciplines of human studies, the body of knowledge and understanding has been advanced and amplified since 1958. The recognition of shame as a significant factor in the culture and church life has also received more attention from theologians and spiritual practitioners, mostly regarding pastoral care (Capps 3). Few have ventured far into the frontiers of the implications of shame for evangelism and church planting, and most of those have been missiologists in the shame-honor cultures primarily of the East. As Neil F. Pembroke has acknowledged, “traditionally, our evangelistic strategy has been to convict people of their sin and guilt in order to lead them to repentance. For a long time now, Christians have been encountering a high degree of resistance to this strategy” (15). The project explored the roots of this resistance to the traditional evangelistic approach in the West.

Before exploring those implications for church planting and the shape of new churches, the project first reviewed the most definitive literature on shame that was available, including the Scripture itself. From this comprehensive understanding, the project asked questions related to the manner and degree to which shame could account for resistance to the most widely accepted approach of gospel presentations. It questioned, in addition, whether shame dynamics in our culture defeated the intention of

attractational approaches of ministry programs common in local churches throughout America. With these questions formulated, available literature was reviewed in an attempt to address these questions. The principles learned from this inquiry of shame dynamics and gospel receptivity among emerging adults served as a basis for significant findings that would lead to developing best practices for shaping the planting of new churches in those contexts.

The literature review is organized corresponding to Wesley's quadrilateral of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (Noble 240), in order to track the major themes of shame dynamics across all disciplines applicable to addressing the problem of gospel resistance among emerging adults, determining the scriptural and doctrinal contributions to ministerial practice and missional impact, and thereby seeking to unlock receptivity. Therefore, from the posture of appreciative inquiry, the literature review contains as headings: Biblical Foundations, Tradition including Theological Foundations and Church History, Reason and the Social Disciplines, and Practical Experience.

Biblical Foundations: The Anatomy of Shame

No research on a human theme like shame would be credible or complete without examining the Scriptures of the Christian canon. The Bible offers an authoritative witness to a narrative of beauty and tragedy that enables the development of an initial anthropological and spiritual understanding of humanity. The testimony of Scripture points to the ancient roots of shame universally experienced objectively as opposed to a more recent subjective experience identified by the development of the social sciences. The word "shame" and its cognates and relative synonyms are surprisingly as prevalent in the Bible (over 430 times) as more recognizable words like "guilt" and "sin." Ignoring

the witness of Scripture to the impact of shame upon our relationship with God distorts and reduces our understanding of the inherent obstacles to the reception of God's message of redemption for those who are impacted by shame. Appreciating how the variety of literature in the Bible recognizes and deals with the dynamics of shame might inform us to the shape of the Church Jesus will build, calling out a people from an ecology of sin and shame to a new identity. While no exhaustive study was attempted in this project, a representative survey of major themes in both testaments will suffice for the purposes of this project.

Genesis: Original Creative Image and Humankind as a Mirror

The problem of shame, like guilt, is deeply rooted in the history of humankind. A careful and thoughtful reading of the Genesis narrative reveals the tragedy that befell our first parents, who succumbed to the wiles of a serpent in the Garden of Eden, a paradise prepared specially for them by Creator God. This ancient tragedy and its lasting effects on humanity thereafter can only be adequately appreciated by noting the height from which Adam and Eve fell. Instead of starting with tragedy, the Bible begins with perfection of humanity created in honor—"very good" in the Creator's view (Gen. 1:31, NIV).

Honorable Humanity

The literature indicates that the starting point in Scripture that the evangelist selects is fundamentally determinative towards arriving at an adequate and biblical missiology of shame. Christopher J. H. Wright notes:

The Bible does not begin at Genesis 3 (or end at Revelation 20). You might think so when you listen to some presentations of the Bible's message and mission. That is to say, the Bible is not just about the solution to our sin problem and how to survive the day of judgment. It begins with

creation and ends with new creation. So our biblical theology of mission needs to take this great beginning and ending seriously. (35)

The Genesis vision of humanity makes the new creation in Christ seem right and natural to fallen humanity who might otherwise feel more at home with lesser creatures.

What differentiated humankind from the rest of the animal kingdom was the vocalized intention of the triune Creator God to create man and woman in “our own image” (Gen. 1:26). The image of God in humanity did not produce a carbon copy of God in all aspects of his divinity and magnificence (i.e., “little gods”). Man and woman mirrored in design and purpose all the attributes of God that made personality and relationship possible, including the faculty of free-will, the possibility of leaving the relationship with God. God facilitated that possibility by the choice of eating from two trees set conveniently within reach in the middle of the Garden: The Tree of Life was permissible and encouraged; the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was forbidden on the penalty of death.

Original Sin, Guilt, and Shame

The first step of independence from God on that fateful day was Eve listening to the serpent. The serpent as a uniquely sentient animal with the ability to vocalize intelligibly and reason with Eve was enough to captivate her curiosity, fix her attention and seriously consider the credibility of his claims even with Adam nearby. In chapter 4 of his book, Philip D. Jamieson suggests that that led to “positing a god beyond what Eve knows” (location 937-44), believing the suggestion that God was not telling them the whole truth about the forbidden tree; instead, that he was withholding something good that would produce divinity reserved only for himself. The new element of doubt about God’s word moved Eve from basic trust in the Creator to mistrust (in Erik Erikson’s level

I terms). Along with doubt came the fear of missing out on some degree of potential good, though forbidden. The ability to choose (self-determination) offered Eve the option to attempt to ensure future personal welfare giving first rise to pride (self-preservation independent of God) (location 697). Eve, who acted independently of Adam by listening to the serpent and accepting the promise of his offer, now encouraged Adam to join in her new independence of judgment (location 955). Humankind fell from the designed image of God, and therefore was no longer holy as God is. The image of God was tainted or marred; they were now different, and they were overly self-conscious of the defect. The original image has been altered by the original sin. The act of disobedience by the pair brings the new experience of guilt and remorse. However, that is not all. There is the new, profound experience of shame.

“Adam, where are you?”—The searching Father God

With a defect in the original image of God in man, Adam and Eve now shared no sameness with God. A new strangeness enters the divine-human relationship, so they hide from him when he comes searching for their fellowship. The introduction of difference, as strange and estranging, impacts Adam and Eve’s relationship with each other, since their sexual parts and overall appearance are different. Their exposure of these parts causes them to want to hide them from each other, so they sew leaves together to cover themselves. “The nakedness of counter reality,” notes Jamieson, is “a life wretched from relationships” (location 968). Shame is the price for this loss of relationship between the Creator and his creation.

God calls to Adam, “where are you?” God the Father is a searching God, a compassionate and merciful heart reaching out even in the time of rejection and failure,

still loving them with an openness to restoring the broken relationship. In Genesis 3:9, God is “attempting to help the lost realize he is lost” (Jamieson location 1067). To cover them graciously and sustainably, God shed the blood of an animal whose hide was used to *hide* their perceived nakedness. This sacrifice set a precedent that would later take center stage in God’s plan of redemption, symbolizing his healing love and a prefiguring of atonement. God’s covering of their nakedness, while not rooting out the problem of their sin, demonstrates the common grace of God to all as well as prefiguring the prevenient role of healing through therapies (location 487-500). Just as with Adam and Eve, therapy is an act of mercy that may be extended to all in the midst of their sin (location 506).

The Curse: Death as Dehumanization and Environmental Change

The original sin brought strangeness and some loss of the holy imprint of God’s image on humanity’s first parents, changing what it means to be human. It also changed their marriage bond and now their place of residence. Introduction of sin, a disposition to live independently of the Life-giver, created a crisis of suitability of habitat. The Garden of Eden with the Tree of Life at its center, sustaining immortality, was no longer a good benefit to the man and woman whose possible progression into patterns of sin would go unchecked and unlimited by the absence of death. Death was, indeed, an inconvertible consequence of reaching for super-human status. The irony of seeking a higher evolution of the human species was a regression from their designed perfection—becoming in essence somewhat “sub-human.”

Behavior outside God’s will moved them outside God’s provision of paradise. Less human than designed and created, the process of the dehumanizing impacts of sin

has been triggered along with a necessary evacuation of their original home. Along with the certainty of physical death, death for those first parents also took the form of environmental hazard and the introduction of pain and hardship in the normal activities of life, including childbirth and work. Sin killed some of the joy of both human functions. What was honorable before sin and the tainting of God's image is now held in pain, blame, and even shame (Jamieson location 1014).

Personal Shame and Isolation: Cain

These mistrust-shame-guilt experiences of the first parents inevitably influenced and impacted their own first children as well as their parenting style. Cain and Abel offered different kinds of sacrifices to God; only Abel's offering was approved; Cain's was rejected perhaps because it was bloodless. Cain's reaction betrayed his own inherited mistrust in the Creator, having missed the mark of holiness due to an ingredient foreign to the divine pattern of offerings. In anger, Cain compounds his plight by murdering his brother, spilling his blood rather than offering blood in the original sacrifice. Jamieson rightly observes in chapter five of his book that "Shame-based reality creates the war of all against all" (Jamieson location 1067). Cain's previous offering was bloodless; now his relationship to his brother became irresponsible (by his own admission) and bloody (human blood, not animal blood).

Just as Adam and Eve's original sin caused evacuation from their home, Cain's sin caused further isolation from his family. In his new shame-guilt-despair-fear experience, Cain remorsefully pleads with God for mercy. God provides a protective mark, which he tattooed on Cain as a redemptive warning to anyone who might take matters into their own hands (out of God's) and would expedite God's judgment of death

on Cain. Separating himself further from his relatives, Cain hides alone in personal shame in the Land of Nod and eventually starts a family of his own, in his own image.

Evil Runs Its Course and God Redemptively Reboots Creation

Oral transmission of a millennium of “pre-historic” human experience was deposited in Noah to share the sad story of what happens when humanity has extensive longevity on a vegetarian diet, absent of moral restraint and divine intervention. Genesis 3-6 traces the descent of the human race into such a state of violence and shameful wickedness (“corrupt” with little resemblance to its original image) that its inevitable destination to self-annihilation was only interrupted by God’s regretful judgment and attempt to salvage what little good was left: one man named Noah. “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God” (Gen. 6:9). He and his family were saved from and by water in God’s redemptive act of rebooting life on planet Earth. His covenant with Noah upon disembarkment was sealed with a multi-colored ribbon in the sky, with the mandate to multiply and fill the Earth (Gen. 9:7). However, that new agreement was quickly soiled with personal and familial shame over the incident of Noah’s drunkenness, nakedness, and Ham’s discovery and report of his exposure. Ashamed, Noah projects his sin upon Ham by cursing his son, Canaan (Gen. 9:24).

Years after the flood, the human race, unified by language and culture, ran progressively towards another ambitious attempt to transcend their humanity to godhood. Symbolic of their objective, the Tower of Babel under Nimrod’s leadership enabled humanity to reach new heights while falling well short of the glory of God in shame. Again, redemptively, God confused their languages to disperse them across the Earth to

fulfill the Noahic mandate. It remained for God to specially reveal himself in relationship with and through a Chaldean man and his descendants: Abram.

Patriarchal Promise and Family Dysfunction

The long story of Abram and Sarai (later renamed Abraham and Sarah) reveals God's redemptive work in and despite sin, guilt, and shame across generations of good intentions tempered by dysfunctional drama. The saga of Sarah's barrenness and the miracle of Isaac's birth provides the backdrop for Abraham's test of faith when God commands him to sacrifice his son of promise, prefiguring the sending of Jesus, God's only Son, the Lamb of God, as a sacrifice for all humanity. Abraham's faith would become the quintessential standard for God's people in relation to God.

From a high view, the story of the patriarchs was characterized by favoritism (children made to feel special and set up for sibling rivalry) along with polygamy, impatience, and deceit, but these failings did not thwart God's plan of election, promise, and fulfillment. "Chiseling" Jacob is transformed by encounters with God and renamed "contending" Israel. Moses' first volume of Genesis ends with the dramatic story of Joseph and his forgiveness of and provision for his brothers in Egypt. God reveals that he can recycle even evil intrigue into redemptive results in personal and familial health and honor.

Exodus: God Delivers His People from the Shame of Slavery

Biblical foundations of God's remedy for sin, and its attendant guilt and shame find rich symbolism of understanding in the story of the slavery and deliverance of the descendants of Israel. God chooses Moses, exiled on the backside of the Sinai desert after running for his life in shame, to return and face Pharaoh, demanding release of his

oppressed people. Moses feels his inadequacy deeply and tests God's patience. In awe of the manifestation of the Holy Other, as uniquely God in the burning bush that is not consumed, Moses is compelled to remove his shoes making him acutely aware that he was standing on holy ground. God reveals himself to Moses as YHWH, "I am what I am," a cohesive, self-evident being. After ten plagues on Egypt, Pharaoh relents long enough for the children of Israel to escape. The story of the Passover, involving unleavened bread and the blood of a lamb on doorposts of each faithful home, becomes another memorable tale in Israel's history, rehearsed regularly in faithful homes for its meaning and application in the future, recognizing what God would yet do through Jesus.

In the wilderness, God settles the exiting nation long enough to prepare it for entrance into the Promised Land. At the mountain of God (Mt. Sinai or Mt. Horeb) in dramatic manifestations, Moses meets with God and receives the covenant law to deliver to the people. That covenant provided structure and discipline for a people learning to live honorably after 400 years of slavery and navigate through the wilderness to the Promised Land. As Deryck Sheriffs interprets succinctly, "Torah is map; living is locomotion" (118). However, a significant setback reveals the true stiff-necked nature of the newly freed slaves. Impatient with Moses' return from the mountain, the mob forces Aaron, Moses' brother, to create an idol to worship. Aaron complies by gathering the gold plundered from Egyptian neighbors on the night of Israel's flight and casts a golden calf, pronouncing it to be the god who delivered them from slavery. The moral impact of this quick turn from the true God to idolatry is remarkable and instructive:

So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. Moses saw that the people were running

wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. (Exodus 32:6, 25 NIV)

Idolatry and Dehumanization

The golden calf in the desert was the first instance of idolatry among God's people. They used their newfound freedom for gratifying the desires of the flesh. Abandoning all restraint to sensuality, they debased themselves and became worse than the nations they were going to drive out. Without the law and the Holy Spirit guiding their actions, people will give themselves to idolatry, and consequently slide further into dehumanizing activities. Despite this painful lesson of fidelity to God, in the wilderness wanderings, Israel becomes a nation, organized as a cohesive community to prepare for possessing the Promised Land. God warns ahead of their entry:

Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same. (Exod. 34:15-16 NIV)

This story of idolatry is representative of how quickly community can deteriorate spiritually and morally, because of the dynamic interplay between the “falling” condition of humanity and the impacts of shame and guilt in community.

Covenantal Community

The Torah set the tradition of community bound together by a special covenant or agreement with God. As long as persons stayed within the circle of God's care as outlined by the terms and regulations of the covenant, they lived safely and securely. Whenever they disobeyed God's Law, they placed themselves outside that circle of care

and bore upon themselves the shame of prescribed consequences that had personal and social consequences.

Cutting of Covenant between Sovereign and Vassal (Abraham)

The character of the covenantal community stems from the Abrahamic covenant established by God centuries before the Exodus. The story of the cutting of the covenant between the sovereign (God) and the vassal (Abraham) is graphic and symbolic. Animals and birds were cut in half and laid opposite each other to form a pathway between the parties to the covenant. The parties would then walk from opposite ends of the path to meet in the middle to culminate the agreement, in essence saying that they would keep their part of the agreement on penalty of suffering the same fate as the halved animals and birds.

Circumcision as Inclusion

The severity of cutting of covenant is mercifully lessened when it is applied individually to “sons of the covenant,” initiated through the rite of circumcision. Baby Hebrew boys experienced circumcision on the eighth day of life through the cutting of the foreskin of their penis. The infants’ cutting symbolized their inclusion in the covenantal community with all its benefits and responsibilities of faithful obedience. Living out circumcision legalistically instead of in the spirit of faith and obedience was poignantly condemned later by the Apostle Paul in his letters to the Romans and Galatians even to the point of recommended emasculation. Dependence upon circumcision rather than faith was, in essence, to be severed from Christ (Gal. 5).

Cutting Off from Community

The Torah contained stipulations for certain offenses of such severity that they warranted a person's exclusion from the covenant community, both as a discipline for and deterrent of sin, and as a protection for the community of persons who might be negatively influenced by the offender. This cutting off through exclusion had the force of applying appropriate shame to the person and reinforcing the reality of the seriousness of the offense (Sheriffs 260–61).

Cultus of Shame and Scapegoating

This leads to the understanding of the redemptive nature of the practice of shaming through exclusion. The cultus formed by the regulations written in the Torah provided for a system of prescribed sacrifices and offerings to address the cost of sinning against God and members of the community. One of the rituals involved scapegoating, paralleling personal exclusion. Not only are sins laid on the scapegoat and sent out into the wilderness outside the camp, but also the consequence of sinning is exclusion from the covenant care circle of God's community to give the offenders space and place to deal constructively with their sin and to seek God's redemptive care.

Aaronic Blessing

In Numbers 6:24-26, Aaron, the first high priest, issues a blessing that has been repeated worldwide down through the centuries of Judaism and Christianity. The turning of the face of God to us removes shame and signifies the grace of God's favor and bestowal of all the benefits of the covenant. This aspect of redemptive and healing power of God through the ministry of his people prefigures the grace-filled ministry of the church for the wounded and broken in the Second Testament throughout the ages. God

works powerfully through facing his people so that they can mirror the expression of favor in his face to see their worth and experience his love in his eyes. Only caring and loving faces of others can bring healing to the wounds of shame (Jamieson location 1642).

Social Shame and Redemption

The social aspects of shame are no clearer in the first testament than in the story of Ruth, the Moabitess widow of a member of the tribe of Judah. Starling characterizes Boaz as a:

...man of standing' (Ruth 2:1)—he reads the law of Moses from a position of wealth and social prestige and uses these resources liberally for the good of others. He has a proper sense of honor and shame, prudently averting the potential scandal that could have arisen from Ruth's nocturnal visit to the threshing floor (Ruth 3:14) and expertly navigating the public transactions at the city gate the following day (Ruth 4:1–12)." (49)

"All in all, it seems, in his motivations, his capacities, and his social position, Boaz is the very model of a virtuous interpreter" (50). He continues:

A law designed to safeguard the loyal love of Israel to YHWH and enact judgment on the cruelties of Moab is hardly to be invoked against a marriage to a woman who has abandoned the gods of Moab and made Israel's God her own, who has demonstrated a gracious fidelity that unmistakably reflects the covenant-making and covenant-keeping kindness of YHWH, and who—together with her widowed mother-in-law—has cast herself, in desperate need, upon the mercy of YHWH and his people. (53)

Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer in the story, becomes a type of Christ, who atones by his statutory position and sacrificial love those who are otherwise disenfranchised like the widowed, the orphaned, the poor, and the oppressed.

Social Shame and Vindication

The story of “David the Fugitive” is one of the most illustrative narratives of social shame and vindication. As a shepherd boy anointed for Israel’s throne, he experienced the highs and lows of triumph and distress. In his journal are some of the most beautiful and compelling poetry revealing the full range of human emotions. Psalms 84:10-11 is among the best examples of the desire for vindication from his enemies and relief from the shame of his circumstances. Sheriffs adds:

“‘Shame’ is another of the psalm’s recurrent motifs (25:1, 2 ,20) which contrasts the state of not-as-it-ought-to-be with being guarded and delivered. The antithesis of being shamed is being vindicated. This vindication applies more widely than a court verdict refuting a false accusation or slander. (15)

David’s petition of exceeds mere acquittal of wrongdoing or legal justification. He wants God to vindicate him in such a way as to fully restore his standing in the community.

David and Bathsheba

One of the most painful yet hopeful stories of David’s reign is the one-night stand with his warrior’s wife, Bathsheba. Caught in an idle moment and voyeuristic opportunity from the overlook of his palace balcony, the king, a “man after God’s own heart,” spies a beauty in her private bath and becomes so filled with lust, he impulsively sends for her and commits adultery. Supported by his royal prerogatives, he schemes to cover his guilt and her shame through the recall of her husband from the battle front, only to find Uriah’s loyalty to the crown and his fellows so unimpeachable that he does not take advantage of *his* prerogatives as a husband on furlough. Frustrated in his repeated efforts to affect the conjugal visit, and accused in conscience, David stealthily arranges for his demise in battle. The prophet Nathan uncovers the cover-up diplomatically through a

fabricated tale that elicits the appropriate response from the king, then thrusts the point of the story home in application to David and his heinous sin. The child of the adultery dies, and mourning envelops David. Psalm 51 is his confession before God which speaks volumes about God's forgiveness of the contrite heart. Bathsheba's shame and disgrace are socially removed through marriage to the king and the later coronation of another son of the pair as succeeding king: Solomon. Bathsheba joins an array of disgraced women in the lineage of the Messiah, redeemed and so honored by God: Tamar, daughter-in-law of Judah, Rahab, Ruth, and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Absalom and David and the Halfway House

The lesser-told story of David and shame is about another woman named Tamar, his beautiful virgin daughter, and Absalom, her brother. Amnon, Absalom's half-brother, was in-love with Tamar and diabolically feigned illness to get her close enough to rape. Absalom avenges her to remove her shame and flees from the royal city in self-exile. Through General Joab's cunning, David summons him home, but causes shame upon him by failing to receive his exiled son fully at the palace--holding him off at his home, essentially a halfway house. This shame motivates Absalom to steal the hearts of the citizens and to stage a *coup d'état*. Though unsuccessful, it costs Absalom his life, which sends David into shameful mourning that ruins the morale of what was left of his military. This dramatic story of shame sets in motion the eventual division of his kingdom within three generations.

Disgrace of the Emissaries

A more positive instance of the use of a half-way house is the story of the disgraced envoys that returned from their diplomatic mission of conveying sincere sympathies for the passing of the king of Ammon.

Hanun seized David's envoys, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away. When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, "Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back." (2 Sam. 10:4-5)

The king's wise decision gracefully provided for a time of healing for his shamed servants.

Personification of Wisdom and Fools--Familial Shame

Throughout the literary section of the first testament known as wisdom literature, shame has a central place as the consequence of folly and foolish decisions, especially in the context of honoring parents by listening and obeying. Conducting oneself with wisdom not only demonstrates honor for father and mother, but also the fear of the Lord, which as the book of Proverbs repeats frequently, is the beginning of wisdom. In fact, wisdom is personified as a woman walking the streets of the city, calling to the simple and wayward to forsake their ways and follow her to gain insight, understanding, and discretion.

The Shame of the Suffering Servant

The gospel of the first testament is Isaiah, in that it houses some of the most beautiful and specific prophecies pointing to the coming of the Messiah. Particularly in book II of the duo-work, the prophet depicts the Messiah as the "suffering Servant."

While the Jews interpret this figure as the nation of Israel itself, the second testament sees

it through the lens of Christ in his incarnation and death upon the cross. Isaiah 52-53 are graphic portrayals of the shameful exposure and brutal torture Christ would endure as he is numbered with the transgressors, to whom through his wounds comes healing for disgraced humanity. From this and other similar passages, one can piece together the puzzle of the full vista of Christ's atonement.

Animation of Shame by Prophets

The major and minor prophets animate shame in various ways to drive home the point of their calls for the return of God's people into covenant relationship with God. God instructs his mouthpieces to also act out or mime displays that visually attract attention to God's judgment of their sin and rebellion to stimulate repentance. Included are Jeremiah's humiliating career and death-wish (Jer. 20:18) (Sheriffs 237-38) and Hosea and the Unfaithful Spouse, Israel. In order to forgive their sin and recover from shame, his prophet calls for true humility, justice, and mercy which will restore the health and character of the covenantal community.

Exile and the Remnant

Ultimately, the calls from the prophets were not sufficiently heeded and both houses of Israel suffered exile to a foreign land with the attendant shame of dislocation and loss of identity. Ezra's reaction to exile is poignant and expressive of shame. He wails: "I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens" (Ezra 9:3-6). God answers the complaint of prophets with the promise that a remnant will return to their homeland and reestablish the nation under God's rule and will be comforted and repaid by his favor (Isa. 40:1-2).

The Gospel and Good News for the Shamed

A careful reading of the quadriphonic voices of Good News represented by the eyewitnesses Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John reveals an overarching message about the person and work of Jesus and “the way” as well as the “truth” and the “life” that he was and is. That message is embedded in the way he treated all kinds of people, accepting them and loving them, embracing them and spending hours with them in practically every setting; traveling with them and eating with them. Jesus shared life with his disciples and with strangers, unconditionally. This incarnational example was followed by his apostles and Paul, even though adjustments were uncomfortably made with bridging to Gentile peoples in the early days of the Church (Peter in the Book of Acts). His is an example to emulate appropriately in every age, including today.

Jesus Enters the Shame of the Shamed

In the Second Testament, shame (*aischynē*) occurs only about thirty times. The fullness of time brought the incarnation of God through his Son, Jesus. Jesus was not in the habit of preaching against sin *per se*, but against independence from God expressed in lovelessness and self-righteousness. Jesus spoke to the heart and the motive behind behavior instead of judging by appearances and externals. Instead, Jesus entered the shame of the sinner and healed it. By dealing with the heart of humankind, as opposed to focusing only on the acts of sin, God begins to restore people to relationship with him and receiving the participation in his divine nature through his grace and reflecting his love for them back to him in glory and to others in mission (N. Wright 7). Jesus restores their true self in his righteousness, denying the false self that is made so by conformity to the world and its system of values and attitudes that are in enmity towards God. This is

Grace. This is redemption. This is love that heals and covers guilt, sin, and shame. This restores relationship; this restores communication. This restores the original image of God both now progressively and then in the future completely.

Evacuating Heavenly Home

Corresponding to the loss of Eden-, the Second Adam (voluntarily per John Milton, *Paradise Lost*) left his heavenly home to be born to a peasant, unmarried (but engaged) couple from Nazareth (from which nothing good comes—everyone knows) during an inconvenient, though mandatory trip to register and pay taxes to Rome. Unwittingly, this locates him in the exact address to fulfill prophecy, though the accommodations were shameful and unsanitary, a stable for animals. Within two years, the young family would be on the move again to escape a jealous monarch, and so the journey from Bethlehem to Egypt and back to Nazareth to grow-up in the carpenter's trade in the shadow of illegitimacy on the wrong side of the Promised Land, fulfilled another set of prophecies.

Emptying of Equality with God

No one can fully understand the depths of the manner of his first coming until they read the Apostle Paul's hymn of self-emptying in Philippians 2:1-8. However, through the Gospels, readers get glimpses of the holy Son of God acting in contaminating ways in loving the outcast, the sinner, and the poor: He embraces the leper; He "escorts" the prostitute through a loving, but holy engagement; He sits in the dirt with the woman caught in adultery, putting himself in the line of fire of the statutory stoning she deserves, taking the place of the absent accomplice, while calling her accusers to confess their own sin; He gains the reputation of being the friend of sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes,

by joining them in meals of table fellowship and entertainment. “The answer to shame,” writes Jamieson, “is not running, but allowing oneself to be embraced” (location 997). Most of all, Jesus willingly embraces the suffering of contemplating and experiencing death by the hand of the world’s experts at execution on a Roman cross, the very symbol of shame in the broader Roman world (Hall 227).

Shame and Gethsemane

Contemplation of human morality, especially by torture and other violent means, elicits deep distress and foreboding. Those who have experienced fear, emotional stress and depression can appreciate the lonely scene of Gethsemane where Jesus spends excruciating hours of darkness and supplication while his disciples slept. The extent of his travail was marked by the sweating of great drops of blood, the significance of which is explained in Hebrews 12:4 as setting a human record for suffering. Donald Capps builds upon Paul Tillich’s view of Gethsemane as “profound anxiety” by noting the suffering Jesus shares with fallen humanity is the “sense of failure, the dejection of defeat, and the realization that one cannot remedy the failure” (98–99). Therein, Jesus experienced the “depleted self” of human shame.

Exposed on the Cross

His death on the cross was redemptive for all humankind for all time, once for all, fulfilling all the prophecies about him as a suffering Servant, the Lamb of God, numbered with the transgressors, between two criminals suffering the same fate. What is not normally observed about this scene of torture, pain, blood loss and death, is the exposure. Jesus hung there for hours without a stitch of clothing to cover any of his body with a

crowd gawking and gazing at him in disgust and shaming. He was naked; his underclothes a commodity for gambling prizes. Hunter illustrates:

Saint Martin's church encourages the full expression of the Christian imagination and often features indigenous art, much of it postmodern (sometimes extreme), serving Christian themes. Wall hangings are often featured around the sanctuary, with perhaps a cross surrounded with barbed wire at the front. Once the leaders invited, and displayed, a hundred art pieces on the Crucifixion. One featured a slaughtered lamb; another showed the dying man's genitalia—which, of course, reflected what crucifixion actually looked like; full exposure was one source of the public shame of crucifixion. (121)

Exposure, as noted later, is a key component to the way humans experience shame as the fear of embarrassment, of being discovered for who they really are, before they feel ready for such a revelation. From the gallows, an executed criminal is particularly pained by the eyes of onlookers. Any feelings of guilt can be swallowed up by the pain of exposure. Shame motivates hiding to avoid any possibility of exposure. Jesus embraces exposure.

Scorning the Shame of the Cross/Running for Joy Ahead

Of all the apostolic commentary on the crucifixion, the unnamed writer of Hebrews best explains the implications of the atonement for the shamed. Hebrews 12:1-4 reads (*italics mine*):

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, *scorning its shame*, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Here, the writer points to the inspiring example of Jesus as the focal point for his readers whom he encourages to persevere in faith, specifically noting that in his exposure and endurance Jesus heaped shame upon shame itself.

This is the grand reversal of the Son's fall (which is an intentional descent), of the Son's nakedness and shaming that does not merely cover our own shame but heals it. It is the story of the human being, the new Adam, who does not run from the Father but rather embraces his will; who drains the dregs of the cup, and who is sold that we might be redeemed. (Jamieson location 512)

Shame, therefore, is not something to be forgiven but healed by Christ's atonement. Appreciating this healing as a significant benefit of the work of redemption leads us to include shame as an issue to be addressed as we engage the lost and present the claims of Christ as good news in the plan of salvation.

Suffering Outside the City Gate

As noted above in the narrative of The Fall, the first parents responded to exposure by casting blame and suffered the consequences of eviction from their paradisaal home. This memory is addressed in the cultus prescribed at Sinai. The prefiguration of the scapegoat in the Torah prescriptions is fulfilled by Christ in the location of his crucifixion. Hebrews 13:12 makes the application clear: "Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood." He was our scapegoat to take away our sins. The magnitude of that removal is supplied by the Psalter: "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). The work of Jesus on the cross as our scapegoat outside the covenantal protection of community effectively answers to the tendency of the shamed to cast blame and repair the false self, crafted by sin in futility.

Not Ashamed of the Gospel and Racial Reconciliation--Romans 1

Crossing over into the epistles of the apostles, readers are faced squarely with the issues around racial reconciliation and other social pressures upon followers of Jesus Christ. Paul's early text bears mentioning: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Rom. 1:16). Along with justification, redemption, restoration, and new birth, reconciliation is a major benefit provided by the atonement, and indeed the essence of the theological concept of atonement.

Identity in Christ

To fully appreciate how the literature of the Bible (history, poetry, prose, and prophecy) addresses the problem of shame as an alternate identity divorced from the original image of God and relational harmony, the rich treasures of ecclesiology developed in the Second Testament letters to churches should be explored. Both Peter and the writer to the Hebrews impress upon their readers the importance of embracing their identity in Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-10 is the pinnacle of his message of encouragement and testimony of the true grace of God (5:12): followers of Jesus, the Living Stone, are living stones rolling to him to be built into a spiritual house of royal priests. Hebrews 2:11 puts it another way: "Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." So strong is this identification that followers consider persecution an honor for suffering in His Name. For Paul, the people of God are the Unveiled *Ekklesia* when he points to "Christ in You, the Hope of Glory" (Col. 1:27). The Church is the new Israel in Peter, a

New Humanity from the Second Adam in Romans, a New Grace Community of Unity and Economic-Ethnic Justice in Ephesians and James. In Peter's first epistle, I see:

The identity of God's people in Christ is laced with God's character and calling. Even in changing times and persecution, God's scattered people are being pulled together by the gravity of God's grace, rolling as it were, back into God's building project in rooted relationships of holy love. Living loosely like their pagan neighbors will only condemn God's people to share in their dismal destiny and shame. Instead, Christians must trust Christ completely, obeying His enduring Word, aligned in holiness as benefactors of good among their persecutors. God's ministry is concentrated in Christ and distributed to all believers, as courtier priests of His expanding realm. Fully laced living empowers durable priestly occupation of God's people in hostile territories. (Montgomery, *Fully Laced Living* 26-27)

If believers' primary identity, then, is in Christ (not in gender, sexual preference, race, ethnic, patriotism, politics, etc.), they will view all of Scripture and life through Christological lenses, and interpret meaning, purpose, and destiny in life, along with all the attending issues swirling around secondary identities, as humans created in the image of God and as a community of faith and holy love called forth by God in reconciliation and restoration. Identity in Christ provides the biblical foundation for addressing shame dynamics and their impacts on gospel receptivity and determining church planting shapes.

Revelation and a New Name Given; Paradisal Home Returned

John's seven visions in the Book of Revelation offered hope to the persecuted and shamed church of his day as well as today. Jesus gives the redeemed a new name (Rev. 3:12), removing any latent identity of shame, and fully actualizing their new identity of honor as God's people. Once aliens and strangers sojourning through life without permanent roots, the redeemed, the bride of Christ, are received by the Groom with vindication and ushered in honor to the New Jerusalem in the context of a new heaven

and new earth, planted once again in the garden with the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:14). Jesus makes all things new! They are home. Hope and future are foreign emotional conceptions for those whose identity is shame. Faith in Jesus and his work of redemption sweeps the shamed into a new family with a new identity and new future of hope and home. They can appreciate the resources of hope offered to them in their shame-based experiences through Christ as witnessed in Scripture.

This review of the literature of the Bible demonstrates representatively that shame is a universal human experience that must be acknowledged and addressed. It also offers an authoritative foundation for developing a theology of shame to complement an existing theology of guilt as the Church continues to explore obstacles to receptivity to the gospel and how a full understanding of shame might shape church planting.

Tradition: Theological Foundations

The second area of appreciative inquiry corresponds to Wesley's second source of authority in his quadrilateral: tradition. Here, I am including most relevant theological categories to address the concern that what one believes shapes church planting and how and why Christians invite others into the community of faith. It also yields clues about receptivity to these invitations based upon the meeting of anthropology and soteriology in the Christian's understanding in both theory and practice throughout the centuries. Application of one's theology is steered by their selectivity of specific nuances in their systems of belief. History of the Church enables contemporary church leaders to observe how theologians and church leaders in those periods applied theological understanding to their contexts, so that they have a treasure trove to discover, appreciate, and bring forward as resources upon which to draw to exegete their contemporary contexts and

more wisely “do for our generation what they did for theirs” in both missiological and ecclesiological ways.

Review of Social History in Light of Tradition

The interest the problem of shame has garnered in the last seventy years among theologians speaks to the rising concern for the pastoral care of persons impacted by shame from all sources. To put this in historical context, the dominant paradigm of theology and human experience tends to shift through the ages. Edward P. Wimberly, Methodist scholar traces (7–8) Paul Tillich's social history (1952) of dominant ways people experience anxiety in the West from Medieval times to the present. Before the Middle Ages, the fear of physical death captivated the concern of the populace. Tillich points to the thrust of the Church's moral teachings in the Middle Ages (works righteousness) as instilling a deep sense of guilt and fear of Hell/purgatory. In the Reformation and Enlightenment periods, while guilt and moral condemnation were still present, their dominance were gradually overtaken by anxieties over spiritual non-being, meaninglessness, and emptiness. Such concerns continued to spread into the 1950s (Tillich 59–63). Wimberly notes that in the three decades that followed, with the rise of the civil rights movement, another shift occurred in the social fabric of the West: “oppression, loss of status and love” became dominant. Wimberly characterizes this form of anxiety using the concept of relational refugee (8). He sees shame as the dominant factor shaping the post-modern West.

Candidates for the triggering factor of this shift from guilt-anxiety to shame-based dominance include the Great Depression, the Holocaust, and World War II. In 1965, a

key leader in the resistance to Nazi fascism, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote on the problem of sin, shame, estrangement, and yearning for union (20). Jamieson says:

“Through the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, we will come to understand that the Bible connects sin to guilt *within* the context of shame. Allowing shame to become the interpretive key, we begin to gain a greater understanding of both human brokenness and God’s remarkable answer to it. (location 214)

A generation later, James Fowler recognized in 1996 that: “In this period on the threshold of a new millennium, shame has re-emerged as an emotion we must learn to recognize and address” (12). Paradigm shifts, as noted above, are common in history; the Church’s readiness to address those shifts tends to lag behind those shifts.

The question posed by the project has important implications that extend beyond theological relevance to the recalibration of evangelism and shaping of new and existing churches. Jamieson queries:

What if it is our shame rather than our guilt that most needs to be addressed? What if our essential problem is not so much what we do or don’t do, but who we are, or who we think that we are? In other words, what if our essential problem is not our failure to behave, but instead our failure to recognize the truth of who God is and who we are in relationship to that God? (148)

Because of such a compelling hypothesis, the project limited its focus on the inherent obstacles that the Church faces when attempting to engage emerging adults who may or may not be impacted by shame from some source. The lynchpin of that engagement discerns the specific points of resistance and degree of receptivity to the gospel as traditionally presented, and explores how those obstacles might be addressed theologically and practically.

The approach of the project theologically began with the very nature of theology as a credible discipline or useful construct. Questions of this nature are natural for those

faced with cross-cultural challenges. Missionary to primitive tribes in the Philippines, Tom A. Steffen has written extensively and thoughtfully and offers similar compelling questions:

“Who says theology has to be ideas and concepts? Who has decided that theology has to be doctrines, axioms, propositions? ... God is not concept; God is story. God is not idea; God is presence. God is not hypothesis; God is experience. God is not principle; God is life. ... For in the beginning were stories, not texts. ... Story is the matrix of theology.” (*Worldview-Based Storying* location 2601)

His suggestion that theology is best understood in terms of living narrative in general coincides with Peter’s characterization of the “living, enduring Word of God” that “stands forever” (1 Pet. 1:23-25). From this awareness, the project took a fresh look at the theological foundations of shame and consider the possibility of its use as an “interpretative key”.

The Trinity and Image of God

The project saw a biblical understanding of the triune nature of God as foundational for understanding the human experience of shame, since humankind was created “in the image of God.” In the Biblical Foundations section above, the project captured the intimate capacity of God’s highest creation to reflect many of his attributes that make personality, self-determination, and relationships possible. In relationship with the holy God revealed in Scripture, humanity can understand its originally designed identity and purpose. Therefore, a person’s view of God is critical to self-understanding.

It is also critical to church planting and the shape it takes, a triune shape that answers to the deepest needs of humanity. In my paper, “Welcome to the Wedding Rehearsal: An Original Theology of Church Planting,” I refer to a relational theology based on the Trinity. Yahweh, the self-evident, eternal God (Elohim) is introduced to us

as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons exist in one divine essence in the Dance of Holy Intimacy and Self-giving Love. God the Father designs and initiates, God the Son receives, speaks, and executes, and God the Holy Spirit broods and delivers creative good and holy love throughout all and in all (Simpson 18). On the sixth day of his creation, during a particularly joyful step in the Trinitarian dance, God the Father announced to God the Son and the Holy Spirit, “let us make mankind in our own image, in our likeness” (Gen. 1:26 NIV). Up to this point in the “narrative of everything,” nothing reflected the essence of God himself. Humankind will be unique in its design of body, soul, and spirit, reflective of the glory and corresponding to the three-in-one nature of God, but not an exact duplicate of the divine essence (Nee 13–14). Witness Lee advances his mentor, Watchman Nee’s biblical theology of the self with the concept of the economy of God, whereby God distributes himself to humanity through his Son, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit’s engagement with the spirit within the person first, then throughout his soul, heart (overlapping the soul and spirit) and body. (Lee 5, 168). This pattern of divine movement as distribution from Holy Spirit to the human spirit will be especially relevant in regard to shame as a dominant dynamic and an inherent obstacle to gospel receptivity.

This is where the “dance” of relationships is so important for the Church to learn and exercise. The relationship of Persons in the Trinity is a “dance” activity. H. Ray Dunning traces this development in John Wesley’s theology and points to the doctrine of *perichoresis* where “the three Persons of the Godhead are in no sense independent but in fact coinhere in each other” (232). W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor provide the context for this revealed Personhood. “Both creation and the

covenant,” he writes, “point to a personal God. In creation, God is contrasted with the created order as self-conscious reason, and as free, wise, and moral will. In the covenant, likewise, there is a Person-to-people relationship established.” (65) As Mildred Bangs Wynkoop argues, the concept of personal relationship with God and others “intersect(s) and interrelate(s)” with concepts of holiness, dynamic, and love (28).

If, indeed, we have a personal God who is in relationship within Himself and with humankind, we might expect that his economy or way of working with His creation to be based necessarily on relationship. It follows that any system which causes a deficit of relationship clouds the reflection of His image and thwarts His work within it..(Montgomery, “Welcome to the Wedding Rehearsal” 8–9)

The shape of church planting, therefore, must correspond to the essential relational nature of the Triune God in order to reflect his image, just as the constitution of human beings reflect it.

Without such shaping, churches lose their vital relational dynamic that enables them to evangelize vibrantly. In an interview with John Comstock, director of Discipleship Equipping at the Nazarene Global Ministry Center, I learned the consequence of such disassociation for the shamed. Comstock writes: “I believe Baxter Kruger nails it when he points to the fact that our shame creates a mythological God that does not exist. The whole healing process of shame is coming to an awareness of that mythological God and allowing God to be God as revealed in and through Jesus Christ.” A person’s emotional experience as well as formative instruction can skew their view of God. Jamieson points to facing the shame-filled face of Jesus heals shame and restores the *imago Dei* (location 1483-90).

The Fall and Depravity of Humankind

From the biblical narrative of the Fall, one does not have enough details to fully explore every facet of its impact or recurring dynamic. What can be deduced comes from thoughtful consideration of the categories of belief and ideational concepts as well as through contrast and comparison. In the tradition of the Church, rich resources of thought can be discovered about how far-gone humankind has come from the original image because of original sin. A full consideration of human depravity is beyond the scope of this project, but the project acknowledges the range of high optimism of free-will (Pelagius) to high pessimism of total depravity (John Calvin and Theodore Beza).

John Wesley is representative of the Arminian middle ground of that range along with a high optimism of the possibilities of God's grace. Ken Collins summarizes Wesley's theology of the Fall (natural, political, and moral) where he taught that while righteousness and holiness were lost, some "natural" aspects of the image of God were conserved. For instance, understanding, will, and liberty were marred by the fall but not obliterated, resulting in confusion and error. What Wesley would consider "political image" (dominion, stewardship of creation) were *corrupted and perverted*, resulting in governance undermined by grief, anger, hatred, shame, and fear. What was *totally* lost in the Fall was the "moral image" (original holiness and love, incorruptible picture of God, free will). Consequently, "liberty fell away, life of God extinguished, glory departed, lost true holiness, but prevenient grace insures that no one is left in this fully depraved state and grace enables a response back toward God" (K. Collins epub chapter 1 "Grace, Creation, and the Fall of Humanity"). While human fall from the image of God is pervasive, from Wesley shame can be located under the political aspect undermining

governance specifically. Guilt, on the other hand, though a new sensation for humans, is more directly tied to behavior.

This distinction between shame and guilt is important to explore further, because of its implications to evangelism and church planting. People are receptive to God's message based upon his grace acting upon their inner states of being. James W. Fowler, a student of William James who wrote *Varieties of Religious Experience*, draws this helpful distinction:

While guilt is about something one does, shame is about something one is. While guilt brings the judgment of an inner voice for something one has done, shame involves the sense of being seen and exposed as defective or flawed....Though shame has been more invisible in Western societies in this century, especially in the United States, it pervades our personal and collective lives in ways that underlie a great deal of the self-destructive and violent patterns of our society. Moreover, shame plays a central role in the high rates of depression and of substance use and abuse among us. (12)

Therefore, if evangelism focuses primarily upon behavior to excite guilt and attract response, it falls short of addressing the core of a person's identity and inner life steeped in shame, missing its mark in the political image of God in humanity from which sinful behavior springs.

The shame-bound person tends to be more concerned that they are not "the church-going" kind, because they take on the identity of shame, feeling unworthy to enter God's house and/or don a mask that hides their actual self from exposure. Building upon the cumulative work of Kohut and Erikson, Fowler notes:

Shame plays an indispensable role in the formation of conscience, and therefore in ethical sensibility and judgment. But the same neurophysiological affect systems that make us sensitive to the threat of ostracism or loss of relations can also make us over-conforming. In the deep unconscious need to live up to the 'programs of worth' in our families or communities of origin, we can lose access to the truth of our

own hearts and desires, our own experiences and callings. We can give our energies over to the creation and maintenance of “false selves.” (12–13)

This dedication to “false selves” has profound implications for receptivity of the gospel as will be explored later. Simply, shame-impacted people may feel like hypocrites in church settings, broken, fractured, fallen from favor.

Jamieson highlights this dynamic of the fall in the division of selves by contrasting *imago Dei* and *sicut Deus* in the early Genesis narrative.

Sicut Deus [like God] is shame-based living. That is, it is the human proclivity to look away from the other and toward the self for the project of identification. We are curved back on ourselves and at the deepest level, we have attempted to become the creators of our own identity. (location 1466).

Self “curved back on” itself is a common picture of the ongoing condition of “original sin.” Shame, writes Jamieson, is:

“the consequential response of *imago Dei* humanity trying to live as *sicut Deus* humanity. We have been created in such a way that all of our attempts at an independent individualism will leave us feeling weak and alienated. Shame’s ambiguity is known in our inconsistent and seemingly contradictory feelings. (location 985-91)

This confusion is also part of our fallenness and dysfunctional attempts to self-redeem.

Shame is experienced both objectively, on a universal scale and durable timeline, as well as subjectively on a personal scale and springing instance. “Shame is not the act of sin rather it is the subjective amplification of the objective fact of the potential for separation or destruction of relation involved in the sinful act” (Fowler 136). If so, then one should understand shame as a consequence of sin in a different way than the other attendant emotion caused by sin—that being guilt. To be sure, as Fowler writes, shame is not hard to spot:

The hiding, the covering, the confusion, the blaming--all these features bear the shape marks of shame. There is an experience that includes at least the following consequences of coming to shameful self-awareness: 1) painful self-consciousness; 2) the experience of self and others as separate and as "strangers;" 3) alienation from a former non-reflective bond of interpersonal harmony; 4) a disturbing sense of their otherness and estrangement from God; 5) darkened shadows across the world, suggesting dangers and restrictive abundance; and 6) introverted self-consciousness, coupled with a sense of personal stain or fault, in relation to now more distant and remote authority. (135)

In this full-orbed light, shame takes on a multi-faceted impact that may be coupled with guilt as an experience of separation from God. Succinctly as noted earlier with Bonhoeffer, guilt is experienced in the context of shame.

On the other hand, guilt which occupies large swaths of concern throughout Scripture as well as in theologians like Augustine (*City of God* and *Confessions*) may also transcend its own silo of definition. A global anthropological view is provided by Eugene Nida:

Guilt is a bundle of feelings that may include shame, anxiety, self-loathing, a sense of doom, a sense of failure and the fear of rejection, among other things....False guilt...in tragic form...is, for example, the guilt of a child that feels responsible for its parents' divorce, for the death of a sibling, or for the sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult. False guilt involves all the feelings that accompany real guilt but lacks the substantiation. It is a state of self-accusation. There is no acquittal from false guilt because there is no trial that scrutinizes evidence objectively and offers an independent verdict. (42)

Therefore, a simplistic theological view of either shame or guilt is hazardous, if a thorough-going theology of shame is desired. Human depravity includes these emotional experiences that have spiritual roots in the human soul, but even they should not be seen in isolation from God's own consideration.

Augustine, with Luther in tow later, constructed a rather dark theology based upon God's wrath against sin. Other theologians would take a more positive view of God's wrath:

C.S. Lewis reasons that if this God is truly loving, he will also get angry. He must oppose sin and anything that hurts his beloved. A person may say, 'I believe in a God of love, not a God of wrath against sin.' But Lewis reasons that if we have a truly loving God, we will have to believe in a God of wrath against sin. (Keller 126)

Lewis and Timothy Keller's view navigates the narrow channel between two disastrous extremes: a vengeful God without love for the sinner and a loving God that is not holy or revered. God's wrath against sin proves the integrity of his love for his creation.

A theological view of sin, guilt, and shame, and of a holy God of love who seeks to restore relationship is as consequential as it is important as witnessed by shifts in perception over the years, as noted earlier. This bears a fresh reminder of the purpose of the project to appreciate what may have been overlooked or tacitly dismissed, but now deserves embracing:

Former generations in Western society believed it was most important for someone to be a good person. Today in the West, our values have shifted, and our cultural narrative tells us it is most important to be a free person. The biblical theme of idolatry challenges contemporary people precisely at that point. It shows them that, paradoxically, if they don't serve God, they are not, and can never be, as free as they aspire to be. (Keller 127)

With each shift in cultural philosophies and folk theology, a new aspect of theology comes to bear, if the theologian can promptly discern it.

To counter this cultural narrative, theologians have an ancient tool for explaining complex theological concepts in their arsenal. It is the same one the Master, Jesus, used:

parable. Utilizing the tool of parable, Keller describes four familiar fields of experience he refers to as *grammars* of communication:

People who are fighting oppression or even enslavement and long for freedom will be helped by the first two grammars (the battlefield and the marketplace). People seeking relief for guilt and a sense of shame will be especially moved by the last two — the temple and the law court. People who feel alienated, rootless, and rejected will find the exile grammar intensely engaging. (130)

The grammar thought leaders use influences receptivity to the propositional concept they hope to teach, but that grammar must correspond to the inner states of the recipient from which attitudes and behavior spring in order to hit its mark consistently.

This truth is also reflective in the culture of the post-modern era. Keller offers a poignant example:

We live in the first era of history that considers happy endings to be works of inferior art. Modern critics insist that life is not like that—rather, it is full of brokenness, paradox, irony, and frustration. Steven Spielberg was denied Oscars until he stopped making movies with happy endings and directed *Schindler's List*. Yet people continue to flock to movies and read books that have fairytale endings. There are deep human longings that modern realistic fiction can never satisfy: to escape death and live forever; to hold communion with other personal beings like elves or aliens or angels; to find love that perfectly heals and from which we never part. Most of all, we want to see and, if possible, participate in the final triumph over evil in the world. People turn to fairy tales because they depict these desires coming true. (131)

Therefore, understanding cultural messages and media help the discerning theologian to understand how to engage persons who would benefit from beliefs in revealed truths of Christianity based upon dreams, aspirations, and orientation.

Theory of Atonement

Moving down the order of systematic theology, what is true about understanding the human predicament in light of a biblical view of God in terms that can be understood

and embraced becomes pivotal when considering what is perhaps the most controversial subject of all in Christendom: the doctrine of the atonement.

The Church Universal throughout history has sought to explain and systematize faith in God and how he works in salvation and the Church into a coherent, and often comprehensive, whole by developing a theology. For most of that time since, Western Christianity has developed a theology of guilt, but not a theology of shame. Helen Block Lewis accounts for this misfortune as guilt theologies are male-oriented and developed by men; while shame theologies are female dominated because, for women, feelings of shame are more prevalent (153–54). Thomas F. Torrance, on the other hand, points to what he calls the Latin Heresy. The Latin Heresy posited Christ’s identification with the human condition as necessarily incomplete—short of shame (213–40). Since at least Leo the Great (400–461), the Western church has taught “that the Son of God, assumed neutral human nature, that is, human nature unaffected by sin and guilt, and therefore not under the divine judgement. This meant that, in the atonement, Christ could be thought of only as assuming our actual sin, but not our original sin, and then only by way of some external or moral forensic transaction” (203).

To counter this Latin Heresy, a more accurate theology of the incarnation is necessary; otherwise, the atonement is incomplete in addressing all aspects of the human predicament. Referencing Randy Maddox in his work, *Responsible Grace* (97), Naomi H. Annandale steps forward with Irenaeus’ (of Lyons) “Recapitulation” Theory:

Jesus saves by virtue of his entire existence. One of the church's earliest thoughts on the meaning of the Messiah was the notion that Jesus reclaimed human life by joining divinity and humanity, living through the effects of sin and into a life that reflected God's image to the world, suffering the world's punishment for his challenge, and overcoming

agonizing defeat. Thus he recapitulates human life and conquers the evil and death that steal it. (382)

This earliest of the atonement theories is expressed by a variety of terms: Irenaeus' (130-202 AD) recapitulation, ransom, fish-hook, and Christus Victor (qtd. in Jamieson location 867). Later, Peter Abelard (1079-1142) articulated the "Moral Example" Theory (qtd. in Jamieson 873). About the same time, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) was introducing his "Penal Substitution" Theory (qtd. in Jamieson location 888). As mentioned above, while surveying these theories, students of theology should keep in mind the importance of a thorough-going doctrine of the Trinity. "The greatest mistakes in theories of atonement occur when the triune nature of God is forgotten" (Jamieson location 1229). God is acting in Christ to reconcile the world to himself.

The project sought to better equip pastors as theologians in residence and church planters to communicate in winsome and effective ways. I mentioned above the device of parable in Christ's earthly teaching and how Keller refers to such teaching devices as "grammars" when presenting atonement concepts in gospel presentations. He explains:

It is commonly said that the Bible contains several different 'models' of atonement. I prefer to call these different "languages" or "grammars" by which the saving work of Christ on the cross is presented. 1. The language of the battlefield. Christ fought against the powers of sin and death for us. He defeated the powers of evil for us. 2. The language of the marketplace. Christ paid the ransom price, the purchase price, to buy us out of our indebtedness. He frees us from enslavement. 3. The language of exile. Christ was exiled and cast out of the community so we who deserve to be banished could be brought in. He brings us home. 4. The language of the temple. Christ is the sacrifice that purifies us and makes us acceptable to draw near to the holy God. He makes us clean and beautiful. 5. The language of the law court. Christ stands before the judge and takes the punishment we deserve. He removes our guilt and makes us righteous. (131)

With all these parables or metaphors illustrating different views of the atonement, witnessing Christians can apply them to the emotional experiences of humans they engage with the gospel.

To this end, I now bring forward what I have explained about the Fall of Humans and the twin consequences of sin lodging in experience. The emotions of guilt and shame intersect at different points in God's economy, as Witness Lee applied Watchman Nee's theology of "self" above. In his effort to discern the spiritual dynamics operating within various cultures, Steffen delineated four value frames of the gospel in Appendix F of his definitive work on orality. These frames include Guilt/Innocence, Shame/Honor, Fear/Power and Pollution/Purity (*Worldview-Based Storying* location 6848). What is particularly interesting about his rubric of essential elements is the contrast between the value frame of "guilt/innocence" (upon which many current evangelism plans are mainly based) and that of "shame/honor." In the area of language, guilt-innocence, Steffen lists, moral law; for shame-honor, moral *code*. The names of God that resonate for guilt-innocence cultures are "Just One" and "Righteous Judge;" for shame-honor ones, they are "King", "Jealous-lover," and "Patron." Interfacing the elements of divine-human issues, guilt-innocence values, God's issue is that his justice has been challenged, and for humans, it is that they broke God's law. For the same element set, shame-honor values that God has lost face, while the human being has dishonored the Patron. Therefore, sin for guilt-innocence frame is broken law, while it is a broken relationship for the shame/honor frame.

Proceeding down Steffen's chart highlights the significance of the different impacts of these contrasting dynamics. The "results" of sin is separation from a Holy God

for the guilt-innocence gospel frame, which is bad enough, costing future punishment. However, for the shame-honor value, sin impacts the very core of a person's daily being: estrangement, humiliation, and identity loss, costing abandonment. In the "arena" where this is played out, those dominated by guilt-innocence dynamics, the impact begins when the self eventually becomes public if unresolved, where society becomes the big player. That is flipped for those who experience shame more than guilt; they feel society is first the bigger player and the area for them is public, with the impact eventually falling upon the self in private. Therefore, the focus of the guilt-innocent gospel frame is internal behavior, as opposed to the shame-honor frame focusing on public action first. The emotions experienced predominately are also diametric in scope. The emotion of regret prompts the guilt-innocence subject to seek restitution; the emotion of unworthiness keeps the shamed person in broken relationship unless a cultural path back to honor is prescribed.

Outcomes, as identified by Steffen, could not be more different between these two spiritual dynamics. Regret motivates the guilty to confess, correct, fix, or apologize. Guilt is the emotion of conviction. It says, "I made a mistake", and when it hits me, I can usually make a course correction (McClintock 20). "Shame is not a course correcting emotion. While Guilt says 'I made a mistake,' Shame says, 'I am a mistake.' Shame takes a behavior and slaps it onto my core personhood. I become my mistakes" (22). Unworthiness traps the shamed into negative behaviors: beat self, hide, retaliate, or suicide. "With shame, we use any bad behavior as proof of unworthiness. We engage in our own character assassination" (23). To what kind of intervention do they respond best? For the guilt-dominated person, it is a substitute. For the shame-pained, it is a mediator.

Here, the theory of atonement is determinative. Substitutionary atonement brings to the guilty forgiveness, pardon, and the call for future obedience. Mediatorial atonement offers the shamed loyalty, inclusion, and reaffirmation (Steffen, *Worldview-Based Storying* location 6848).

In support of Steffen's rubric detailing aspects of gospel values and frames,

Roland Muller writes in *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door*:

When man broke God's law, he was in a position of guilt. When man broke God's relationship, he was in a position of shame. When man broke God's trust, he was in a position of fear... Salvation has to do with saving us from God's judgment, restoring our relationship with God, and rebuilding trust and putting power back into the hands of God. (qtd. in Steffen, *Worldview-Based Storying* location 2877).

Steffen applies these concepts to his construct of the four values of the Gospel:

Jesus' role in the gospel will be perceived differently depending on which value system(s) the listener/viewer follows. For innocence/guilt, Jesus becomes the substitute. For honor/shame, Jesus becomes the mediator. For power/fear, Jesus becomes the liberator. For purity/pollution, Jesus becomes the purifier. Worldview influences how one interprets stories, including Bible stories. We not only read Bible stories, and are read by them, we also read our values into them. (*Worldview-Based Storying* location 3729)

Acknowledging the breadth of human personal and cultural experience and worldviews,

C. Wright argues for a big tent of atonement views that can be used for a missiology of shame:

The cross and resurrection of Jesus bring us to the central point of the whole line of redemption in history. Here is God's answer to every dimension of sin and evil in the cosmos and all their destructive effects. The gospel presents us with an accomplished victory that will ultimately be universally visible and vindicated. If we have been as radical as we ought in our analysis of the effects of the fall, then we must be equally radical and comprehensive here in our understanding of all the ways in which the cross and resurrection reverse and ultimately destroy those effects. The cross must be central to every dimension of the mission of

God's people—from personal evangelism among individual friends to ecological care for creation, and everything in between. (39–40)

His words set the stage for an evangelical star among theologians, John Wesley.

Wesley, Atonement, and Grace (Prevenient, Saving, Therapeutic)

From this missionary perspective of atonement, the project attempts to take a more holistic application of atonement theory to the task of evangelism and church planting. Before leaving the rich traditions of theology, the contribution of John Wesley, father of the Evangelical Movement, is worth considering in this discussion of atonement. In a landmark article in 1961, Outler began to argue that Wesley should be reevaluated as a major theologian (5–14). He was prepared to grant that Wesley was not a speculative systematic theologian. In the academic sense, but a 'folk theologian' with the ability to 'simplify, synthesize, and communicate the essential teachings of the Christian gospel to laity' (Maddox 16)

For Wesley, as for the Reformers, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith was closely linked to the atonement. While all aspects of the atonement are there in Wesley, including the cross as the demonstration of God's love and liberation from the powers of evil, it is the Anselmic view of the cross which is most closely linked with justification, pardon for our guilt and sin. But this was not a merely external, legal transaction. For Wesley, our reconciliation was "in Christ," and he insisted that his preachers should preach Christ "in all his offices," as Prophet, Priest, and King. We never outgrow our need for Christ as our Priest, who died for us once-for-all, but who also now intercedes for us. He is also the Prophet who not only reveals God's will for our lives, but who exemplifies that in his own earthly life. And He is the King whose law of love has a present validity for the Christian. Wesley refused to polarize grace and law as sometimes

occurs in the Lutheran tradition, and like Calvin, emphasized the positive role of the law in the life of the Christian (Noble 244–45).

Wesley’s view of atonement as a healing provision should supplement the usual substitutionary theories used primarily in gospel presentation. Shame cannot be forgiven; it needs healing. Referencing Wesley’s sermon, “Original Sin”, Theodore Runyon notes:

While Wesley placed strong emphasis on human sinfulness and its dire consequences, he put an equally strong emphasis on the abundance of God's grace and its power to heal human nature. The effect of sin is powerful, extensive, and omnipresent; the root to restoration is through a converting faith in a God of grace; and God's desire is for the healing and restoration of humanity's corrupted nature. (Runyon 20–21)(qtd. in Annandale 376).

Wesley’s concern for the whole person drove this theology to be holistic. Annandale acknowledges his approach synthetically:

Wesley blends East and West. He assumed the Western notion of a fall from perfect grace but also emphasized the East's therapeutic concerns and the possibility of growth and development within the human spirit. What guided *all* of Wesley's theology is what [Randy] Maddox (with Eastern theologians) calls a “third state, the gracious and gradual restoration of humanity to God-likeness. (qtd. in Annandale 377)

Other sermons by Wesley show the development of his eclectic view of atonement, as Annandale demonstrates:

“In ‘The Lord Our Righteousness,’ Wesley worries about those who use Christ's righteousness as a ‘cover’ for their own unrighteousness; in ‘The Witness of Our Spirit’ he reminds the early Methodists that the empowering grace of God follows pardoning grace, which allows us to move toward the renewal of self and the recovery of the divine image. The mature Wesley, therefore, was emphatic in his understanding that pardon is merely a springboard for renewal, which is the true aim of the Christian faith. Both pardon and renewal happen through the abundant grace of God, which simply waits for our acceptance” (qtd. in Annandale 378).

This abundant grace healing the core of the human being is clearly echoed in later thinkers.

As Kathryn Tanner points out, Jesus saves us not by paying some unpayable debt but by lifting us out of a debt economy. We can count on God's forgiveness; but it is not the whole point. The point is that as God's image comes alive in each of us, we become not God but fully human.(Tanner 88) (qtd. in Annandale 384).

Therefore, the saving activity of God transforms our shame into a new identity (Jamieson location 900-16).

Revisiting all three major theories of atonement through the lens of an adequate understanding of guilt and shame enables church leaders to appreciate the treasure we have always possessed, but often overlooked. The Ransom Theory (or Christus Victor), the Moral Influence Theory, and the range of Penal Substitutionary Theories each describe facets of the whole picture of God's provision for salvation. In the sinless Christ, God has experienced fully the depths of humanity's sin predicament. Jesus' incarnation, suffering of living a human life, human rejection of his ministry, a voluntary, bloody, sacrificial death by a shameful execution (Heb. 12:1-5), and the victory of his resurrection and ascension brought humanity into the Godhead with all its injury and pain, and thereby simultaneously won the victory over sin and death, and provisionally forgiving sin (removing guilt), purifying the human heart of the sin condition, and healing shame. As Prophet, Priest, and King, Jesus serves as both mediator (bringing us to the Father) and champion (defeating Satan and sin, and healing our shame). Therefore, Wesley offers us a full utilization of atonement theories for addressing full salvation, regardless of spiritual dynamic impacting populations.

Once again, the project sought to address the problem of resistance to the gospel through an appreciative inquiry of biblical and theological foundations at a time in the contemporary context of the West that is embroiled in the maelstrom of cultural crosscurrents which threaten to toss the universal Church off its course, and perhaps capsize it on the waves of modernity and pseudo-Christian movements. Taking inventory of the canon of Scripture and the rich theological ammunition and treasure in the ship's hold of Christian tradition can help the Church recover from obscurity galleys of guns to train upon the deck of shame dynamics. Wesley brings these "guns" to bear on the target. To wit, Jamieson warns of maintaining a narrow view of atonement in confronting the lost with the claims of Christ:

A focus on guilt is also a focus on what we do and have done. And to paraphrase an old adage: to the Christian with a doctrine of penal substitution theory, everything looks like guilt! But it does little to help a person struggling with shame and therefore reinforces our basic problem—falsely believing that we are adequate to restore our relationship with God. Shame-filled people simply do not have the emotional or spiritual strength to deal adequately with their guilt. Until we can come to understand our shame in the light of God's triumph over it, we will make little progress with owning our guilt for our individual sins. (Jamieson location 1636-42)

This is best illustrated in the adoption of a short-handed view of the atonement (859), penal substitution as the primary basis for developing evangelism strategies in the mission of God through the Church. This narrowed view of atonement focuses on guilt as the motivating trigger for the relief of God's forgiveness for sinners to come to repentance and rebirth in eternal life, avoiding Hell and winning Heaven.

To be sure, in much of the history of theology, the problem of shame is largely ignored, except to use as a two-stage use of "law" as an admonition against sinning and in judgment to help sinners to confess their sins (Jamieson location 721). This evangelism

strategy has proven faulty, especially in the modern and post-modern eras of Western Civilization. The exception to this omission is the doctrine of holiness as reintroduced by John Wesley which sheds new light on the atonement's cure for the sin condition and attendant shame.

With this full understanding of the atonement, thought leaders may develop a theology of shame that will lead to a more complete presentation of the gospel and a more effective evangelism plan for today's generation. The project focused on the challenging generation segment of emerging adults, by exploring their obstacles to gospel receptivity due to shame dynamics that might shape future church planting.

Resurrection as Vindication

The First Testament theme of vindication hits its mark in the Second Testament. In the crucifixion, Christ is our Victor over sin and shame (Jamieson location 1433-45). Shame is destroyed by Jesus embracing our shame (1531). The resurrection of Jesus is God's vindication of his claims as Messiah and entering our suffering and shame (1525). We put on Christ's glory 1811).

Church History and Tradition

With the above Biblical and Theology foundations examined, the problem of shame in Western Civilization in this era finds enough continuity throughout human history since the Fall. It might be helpful to survey the history of the Church for traditions and experiences that appeared effective in engaging those impacted by shame dynamics to learn from their experience and approaches in order to shape church planting in the future. Church tradition and history have provided several examples where a more scripturally and theologically balanced and informed strategy of evangelism was effective

in engaging previously unreceptive or barbarian populations: the Primitive Church, The Celtic Mission, and The Wesleyan Evangelical Awakening.

The Primitive Church

The historical accounts of the early church through the fourth century yield much valuable information about the engagement of Christians with their pagan neighbors in witness, the resultant suffering of persecution for their faith, and relating compassionately. Most of this engagement was among the slavery class of the population and the honor/shame-based military (Hall 220), with emphases on webs of relationships (Sittser 57), urban movement and mobility (61), ministry to women (57–58), widows and orphans to offer stability in a chaotic world (61–62), and ministry during social crises like the plague (63). During these early centuries, the people movement of Jesus, *The Way*, gained credibility so that upwards of 50 percent of the population of the Roman Empire were baptized believers in Christ. The Church triumphed by continuing to live organically by following the Way Jesus treated people and making disciples relationally and authentically (Stark).

The Celtic Mission

A second notable example of engaging shame-based populations occurred on the northern edge of the Roman Empire a century later. St. Patrick led a missionary team back to the land of his youthful captivity in Ireland in the fifth century to win the barbarian people groups, called the Celts, who enslaved and mistreated him until he escaped back to England. The principal missiological question was whether to seek to civilize them first (The Roman Way) or Christianize them first (what came to be called The Celtic Way). “Their achievement should have settled an old issue; they demonstrated

that Christianization encourages, advances, and even restores civilization” (Hunter 29). “So the British leaders were offended and angered that Patrick was spending priority time not with church people but with pagans, sinners, and barbarians” (11). As the saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Pastors of modern churches reportedly often hear the same refrain as they successfully reach the lost in the community.

The major difference in approach in the Celtic way was their definition of the church. “That ‘new kind of church’ essentially added, to the settlement or parish church, a second dominant form of Christian community; and influences from this second form reshaped the first. I call this second form the ‘monastic community’” (Hunter 14). Hunter explains the defining characteristic of Patrick’s ecclesiology. “First, the monastic communities produced a less individualistic and more community-oriented approach to the Christian life” (18). This openness to the community brought the gospel to everyday life for the Celts. “When Christianity ignores or does not help people cope with these middle issues, we often observe split-level Christianity in which people go to church so they can go to heaven but they also visit the shaman or the astrologer for help with what they are facing next week” (20). “The Celtic Christian movement multiplied mission-sending monastic communities, which developed and deployed teams into settlements to multiply churches and to start people in the life of full devotion to the triune God” (24). “Patrick found a way of swimming down to the depths of the Irish psyche and warming and transforming Irish imagination—making it more humane and more noble while keeping it Irish” (64, Referring to Thomas Cahill citation 35). In this way, Patrick and his

followers won the Celtic barbarians peacefully and changed the spiritual landscape of the British Isles for centuries.

The Radical Wesley

The best example of the Church addressing shame in the modern era is in the eighteenth century during the Evangelical Awakening. Snyder supports that remarkable assertion:

The Wesleyan Revival witnessed perhaps the most thorough-going transformation of a society by the gospel in history—a fact particularly important for the modern church since the Wesleyan Revival occurred during the period of upheaval that accompanied the Industrial Revolution in England. (*The Problem of Wineskins* location 2511)

Both the message of John Wesley and the “method” of disciple-making and church extension were pivotal in his success and the movement’s sustainability.

The message of John Wesley was a clear departure from his Moravian associates, especially on the matter of human cooperation with the Holy Spirit in salvation and sanctification (Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* 47). Snyder identifies the principal elements of John Wesley’s message first as “a clear proclamation of the fact of personal salvation through Jesus Christ...by faith” (Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins* location 2526). He preached in the language of the people he hoped to reach. "It is said that Wesley would often preach newly prepared sermons to his maid, a simple, uneducated girl, and have her stop him whenever she did not understand his words" (Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins* location 2424). Second, he made a constant emphasis on the Spirit-filled life. Finally, he advocated “an active and involved social consciousness” (Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins* location 2526). Snyder notes that “there was no question where Wesley stood

on poverty and riches, sea piracy, smuggling, the slave trade, and other crucial issues of his day” (Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* 38).

However, Wesley’s ecclesiology is what facilitated the logistics of his movement. The history of the Church has seen the ebb and flow of emphasis on small groups as the delivery vehicle for discipleship and disciple-making. Wesley stands out in his intentional utilization and structure as both reflective of scriptural formation as well as serving a more pragmatic function (Jamieson location 1828-59). The primary cell of Methodism was the “band,” a group of same-gendered persons numbering no more than 5-8 for the purpose of confessing sins to one another as a substitute for the “auricular confession to a priest.” (Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* 38) Snyder explains that “such confession and mutual support in the context of close community produced a deeper level of healing than confession to an individual priest, by itself, could ever do” (38). This cathartic dynamic is invaluable for the deep healing needed for persons impacted by borderline and neurotic psychological issues as well as those who suffer less severe bouts of emotional distress or maladjustment. These smaller bands of confession and healing brought the wealth of their spiritual life to the larger groups of classes composed of both men and women.

Moving up the ladder of ascent in his structure of disciple-making, the “class” was considered by Wesley as the platform for discipline (Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* 37–38). A number of classes in the same parish or other geographical area joined in a “society” which had long taken root in Britain from an innovation transplanted from Germany and its Pietism. Wesley viewed these societies as little churches within the Church of England, an idea derived from his association with Count Zinzendorf and the Moravian movement (128). Snyder quotes Lovelace seeing the Moravian community at

Herrnhut as “the most thoroughgoing and fruitful application of the principle of community in church history” and believes Moravianism “suggest a paradigm for the transformation of the whole church” (qtd. in Snyder 126).

Lay leadership was key in the formation and maintenance of these multiplying groups in Wesley’s triad structure.

The system which emerged gave lie to the argument that you can’t build a church on poor and uneducated folk. Not only did Wesley reach the masses; he made leaders of thousands of them. Within a few years of 1738, the Methodist system of society, classes, and bands, traveling preachers, simple preaching houses, and quarterly love feasts had been set up and was functioning well under Wesley’s watchful eye. (Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* 53)

Wesley wisely justified his wide utilization of lay preachers by appealing to the Holy Spirit’s prerogative of breaking through the mold of normal ecclesiastical ordination and “creating an ‘extraordinary’ pattern of ministry in a fashion outside but somewhat parallel to normal ecclesiastical structures” (Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* 155). Snyder critiques Wesley’s justification as pragmatic so as to avoid unnecessary controversy, but points out that he had ample scriptural support for basing it upon the priesthood of all believers and the operation of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts (155). His warning applies equally today where “clergymen, like all professionals, very quickly take on the mentality of a closed club and have sensitive antennae for picking up any threat to their clerical status and privileges” (156). Nevertheless, he recommends embracing this view of the New Testament and find ways to put it into practice without threatening ordained ministers by “concentrating on their proper calling as enablers and equippers and on the particular gifts God has granted them” (157). Embracing this biblical view also can relieve modern clergy from assuming too many roles by releasing ministry to equipped laypeople.

Wesley's legacy of church structure lived on into the nineteenth century in America. By 1891, "weekday meetings for the promotion of holiness" patterned after Phoebe Palmer's famous "Tuesday Meetings" numbered more than 350" (Synan 42). Unfortunately, it died off in the twentieth century, but its resurgence has been found in neo-organic movements and the small group ministries of institutional-type churches.

To recap, the Bible and Tradition provide us with valuable truth to appropriate in engaging this generation with the hope of a desirable future secured by the Person and Work of Christ Jesus that will be well-received. Church planting might be shaped differently in light of this sacred narrative and recovering overlooked elements of doctrine articulated in the past by thoughtful leaders. Concisely, Scripture tells the story of the Triune God, Creator of the universe and humankind on Earth, and the injury of the fall from the glory of God where Adam and Eve traded a trustful and resourceful relationship with the Creator in whose image they were created for an independent existence based upon a false view of God and themselves for the misguided goal of becoming "like God." Without God's resources, humankind suffered acute and chronic self-awareness (a new conscience) of the gap between a false, ideal self and their actual self, leading to the ever-deepening experience of shame. Their loss of relationship with the Triune God changed their human relationships from honor to objectification/commodification (objects to be used or consumed, competed with, or blamed). The "perichoretic coactivity" of the Trinity expresses:

The perfect love that exists among the three divine persons never objectifies the other; it never overwhelms or minimizes the complete subjectivity of the other. Sin changes all that for human beings. Shame objectifies, turning the self into an object. In the process the key human self-potential is lost by basing one's identity in the perception of the other. (Jamieson location 979)

This subhuman sin condition, they passed on to their children and descendants. Scripture traces God's plan to call out a covenant people Israel, involving them to redeem humankind and reconcile them to himself and each other, removing the sin condition and addressing the resultant guilt and shame. Ultimately, he executes this plan as the Triune God through the incarnation of his Son, Jesus as a human being, His death, resurrection, and ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit afterwards upon the community of faith, the redeemed new humanity, a New Israel, His Church.

Reason and the Social Sciences

Biblical and theological foundations have informed the project with a strong understanding of God's revealed truth about the human condition before and after the Fall and his plan of redemption and culmination. From there, the project moved to the tools of human reason and the social sciences of the Enlightenment, modern and post-modern eras, following Wesley's quadrilateral of authorities.

Recent Scholarship by Secular Psychologists

My initial interest in the subject of shame was piqued while reading Robin Stockitt, who introduced the idea of developing a theology of shame. However, its implications for evangelism were not clear until the journal article by Neil F. Pembroke of the University of Edinburgh crossed my desk. I am indebted to him for providing a golden vein into the primary sources relevant to this project. Pembroke begins his probing article citing Capps' contribution to the subject. In what Capps has described as the narcissistic culture, shame is a major source of emotional distress:

Indeed, people are more likely today to experience a sense of "wrongness" in terms of shame rather than guilt. It is argued that our evangelistic theory needs to take cognizance of this. An attempt is made to sketch the outlines

of a shame-based evangelistic theology. In doing this, the concepts of exposure, acceptance and fulfillment are employed. (qtd. in Pembroke 15)

Another alerting voice is Wolfhart Pannenburg who echoes Capps' concern that conventional evangelistic strategies are missing the mark:

In modern time a Christianity which takes its bearings from the problem of guilt has increasingly come up against lack of understanding and mistrust among people who do not feel themselves to be sinners and who consequently believe that they do not need the message of forgiveness either. (Pannenberg 163)

Pembroke cites A. P. Morrison in pinpointing the fear of exposure and social rejection inside the dynamics of shame that represent a formidable obstacle to receptivity:

When our inferiority, our inadequacy, is exposed before others, we feel shame. While we desperately try to hide our shameful selves from others, it is only when we risk revealing ourselves that we can potentially experience the restoring power of acceptance and affirmation. Just as forgiveness is what brings release for the guilty person, acceptance can repair the narcissistic injury in the shame-inflicted person. (Morrison 354)

These select Christian thinkers, addressing shame as a factor in gospel resistance, represent an integrated understanding between biblical-theological foundations and the language and conceptual developments within the social sciences.

The early twentieth century pioneer in psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud created the foundation for the "psychology of self," which Kohut advanced as separate from the psychology of conflict (xv). For Freud, the basic structure of a person's mental life consisted of the "super-ego" (conscience, morality, values impressed by parents and other authority figures of influence) and the "id" (innate impulses and processes), both mediated by the "ego" (critical thinking and willfulness, the "I") (2). Based upon Helen Merrell Lynd, Kohut, and Erik Erikson's work (Erikson), Capps contrasts the "tragic self"

with the “cohesive self” and sees positive mirroring as the heart of the gospel. Capps traces this development:

In contrast to Freud, who emphasizes the guilt feelings that result from unacceptable desires felt toward parental objects, Kohut stresses the shameful feelings that result from poorer parental mirroring of ideals and ambitions. Kohut calls Freud's Oedipal personality the guilty self, and refers to the pre-Oedipal, narcissistic personality as the tragic self. The tragic self knows very little guilt, but is well acquainted with feelings of deep shame, which are immobilizing and debilitating. (33)

While Freud seemed fixated on the sexual origins of psychopathologies (The Oedipus Complex), citing case studies Kohut focused also on the emotional dynamics within familial relationships, especially in the concept of “mirroring” between mother and infant outlined in his chapter, “The Bipolar Self” (Kohut 171–219). This concept can be related powerfully to the notion of the Image of God, its restoration in humans, and the therapeutic or redemptive healing of shame-laden persons engaged by the Church.

Otto Kernberg clinically defines the narcissistic personality structure based upon Kohut’s work (Kernberg 227–28), but disagrees with many of Kohut's viewpoints. He believes "one cannot divorce the study of normal and pathological narcissism from the vicissitudes of both libidinal and aggressive drive derivatives, and from the development of structural derivatives of internalized object relations" (271). This aggression, as later seen in regard to gospel receptivity, is a characteristic defense mechanism. “In my view Kohut’s approach neglects the intimate relationships between narcissistic and object-related conflicts and the crucial nature of conflicts around aggression in the psychopathology of patients with narcissistic personality” (285–86). This causal linkage between shame, narcissism and automated reactions is important to the exploration of gospel receptivity in emerging adults.

The tools available to science and philosophy offer an enhanced ability to make observations, ask more questions, and organize findings based upon what can be understood of the human condition so far. However, even with those aids, the challenge of science is like dumping a box of jigsaw puzzle pieces on the card table and attempting to put the puzzle together without the aid of the finished picture. In developing an anthropology, Karl Barth likened dependence upon science and reason to solving a puzzle without a key to unlock it (Jamieson location 259-541). For him, human nature can only be understood in terms of what he referred to as the “real man” (Barth 132–202). “Real man” is only revealed in Jesus Christ. Since Chalcedon, Christians have systematically confessed Jesus Christ as truly human. He alone shows us what it means to be authentically human. However, by beginning with Christ, many of the insights of the social sciences can be properly appropriated (Jamieson location 185).

Link between Shame and Narcissism

The project has so far spoken about the program in biblical and theological terms related to “shame” and “grace.” In the social sciences, categories of psychological maladjustment have been progressively defined as clinical and case studies warrant. Based upon those observations of human experience, a new term surfaced using a name from Greek mythology, Narcissus. “The narcissistic personality,” explains Pembroke, “is dominated by shame. Whereas at one time emotional distress may have been primarily associated with guilt, today it is more likely to be experienced in terms of shame” (18). If shame is experience more now than ever before, church leaders might predict that it will present an increasing degree of impact as they engage people with the gospel.

To be sure, Alexander Lowen distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate shame experienced by the individual in society and by the culture itself. For the individual, Lowen defines narcissism as an exaggerated investment in one's image at the expense of self (ix). Culturally, narcissism expresses itself around a general loss of human values, and a lack of concern for three spheres: the environment, quality of life, and fellow human beings (ix). Narcissists are "egoists focused on their own interests, but lacking the true values of self, including self-expression, self-possession, dignity and integrity" (ix). In terms of depression, such a person experiences, because of over-emphasis on image, an emptiness, deep frustration, and a lack of fulfillment. Their lack of feelings of anxiety and guilt enforces their growing lack of humanness (x).

Retreating into the virtual world where avatars reflect a grandiose, false image they nurture and define, the narcissist covers the shame that underlies their awareness and retreat from reality. While living in the borderland beyond neurosis, the narcissist can become vulnerable to falling into psychotic traps of unreality. In the meantime, the ultimate casualty in a culture populated by a growing number of people suffering from narcissistic injury is what it means to be human (Lowen xi). If then, narcissism is the psychological condition produced by unresolved shame, the path towards mental and spiritual health may lead to a reversal of the tendency to over-invest in the desired external image (a false self, the ego) creating pride, arrogance, and personal and social disintegration to investing adequately in the "true self" creating integrity and movement toward reality. In time, energy spent in the ego runs out, Lowen warns, and if there is a lack of virtue and energy stored up in the true self, a personal fall is immanent. In short, the greater the gap in reality between the true self and the external image, the greater the

shame and humiliation. “While the feeling of shame implicates the presence of other people; guilt can arise and persist without others” (Takahashi et al.). Therefore, shame is necessarily social at its core.

Erikson builds on Sigmund Freud’s constructs of psychosexual understandings of human development with application to *psychosocial* understandings, by identifying stages of psychological development and diffusion. Erikson names his second stage, *Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt*. Intriguingly, this precedes his third stage of *Initiative versus Guilt* (Erikson chart), Humans who get stuck in that second stage of development (*Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt*) may have difficulty moving on to the third stage where responsibility and guilt are fully developed.

Helen Block Lewis is often cited as a pioneer in making the important distinction between shame and guilt. Building on her work, June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing precisely denote the difference: “Shame is an extremely painful and ugly feeling that has a negative impact on interpersonal behavior. Guilt on the other hand may not be that bad after all” (3). Jamieson notes that “those two definitions reveal that shame is far more debilitating to human functioning than is guilt. In their research, Tangney and Dearing discovered that, because guilt is related to particular acts, the painful emotion of guilt can actually lead to specific actions that are attempts to salve the guilt. In contrast, shame does not move people toward constructive action” (Jamieson location 749-55).

Jamieson continues:

Unlike the feeling of guilt, which arises from a conflict between the self and external authorities (in Freudian terms, the ego and superego), shame involves an internal conflict within the self (the ego and ego ideal). Guilt fears punishment; shame fears the loss of love. (location 767)

The key concern for shame is not morality, but adequacy. Jamieson concludes:

To feel guilty assumes a level of power to change one's behavior and thus oneself. Feelings of shame are normally accompanied by a deep sense of powerlessness. Thus, the most natural response seems to be hiding, which is what any reasonable creature would do in the presence of a far stronger enemy. It is impossible to run from shame because the shamed person takes the true source of shame (which is internal) with them. In this way, shame has a compounding quality: the sense of powerlessness causes the shamed person to feel even more ashamed. In fearing the perception of others, shame fears a loss of status within the group. (Jamieson location 773-802)

Retreating further into self-absorption, the shamed person's shame is compounded by the narcissistic tendencies of over-investment, further disabling their ability to change.

Disconnect Between Church's Theology of Guilt and Experience

Capps brings Biblical and Theological foundations, and social sciences to bear upon congregational experience:

Christian theology has well-developed theologies of guilt, while the majority of his constituency is struggling with the debilitating, the moralizing, and even dehumanizing effects of shame. So far, the church has dealt with this issue in rather superficial ways, usually by engaging in moralistic condemnation of the narcissistic personality of our times. (35).

To test and validate his hypothesis, Capps conducted a 1988 and 1989-90 two-part study of clergy and lay people in which he discovered:

Christian laity and clergy are suffering, in deep and pervasive ways, from the narcissistic syndrome of our times, and that their sense of disease, unholiness, and unhappiness is on a continuum with clinical narcissism. This study also reveals that Christian and laity and clergy have conceptions of sin that are generally congruent with a theology of guilt, whereas their actual experience of sinfulness of a deep inner sense of wrongness is more reflective of the psychodynamics of shame. (40-41)

Not only is the link between shame and a culture of narcissism often lost on the Church, local congregations and their leaders struggle with shame on an experiential level while misinterpreting it as guilt and self-centeredness.

This understanding reveals that the Church's admonition against self-centeredness is misguided. Capps further cautions:

We grasp at admonitions from well-intentioned Christians against self-centeredness, for they confirm that it was wrong for us to seek recognition and adulation. What was a display of healthy narcissism is defined as an expression of self-centeredness, and the Christian faith is used to legitimate the denunciation of our desire to be mirrored. This is tragic, for mirroring is at the very heart of the Christian gospel. Quite simply but profoundly, it is the form and means by which the depleted self experiences divine grace the benediction of God: may the Lord's face shine upon you, and give you peace, now and forever more. (64)

Misdiagnosis of shame experiences of members as shamelessness, selfishness or guilt may lead them and their leaders to heap shame upon shame and worsen the health of the congregation individually and corporately. Instead, members are experiencing a depleted self that is best addressed by divine worship, a mirroring of God's face of favor.

Earlier in the project, Tillich's perspective enriched the understanding of the dynamic of shame in relation to church and society. Capps picks up the disconnect with grace here:

Without rejecting the validity of Tillich's analysis of guilt and anxiety, a theology of shame will inevitably place greater emphasis on self-failures than misuses of human freedom. It will not use the language of anxiety, but of depletion, and we'll talk, as Kohut does, about our nameless shame, our guiltless despair, our sense of mortification for having failed to live lives of significance and meaning. For Tillich, the challenge is to live courageously, to use one's freedom in full awareness that, and using it, one will also misuse it. For a theology of shame, the challenge is to live with failure. (98)

For local congregations in holiness denominations, like the Church of the Nazarene, Capps' encouragement to deal with failure gracefully and not legalistically can mean the difference between healthy or toxic community and redemptive or retributive justice.

Grace in community requires courage to deal with the heart of people instead of settling for appearances or insisting on outward conformity.

Looking deeper into his field research reveals how Capps focuses on the eight deadly sins, and concludes by contrasting the dominant sins of pride and apathy:

Perhaps one could say that as theologies of guilt focus on the sin of pride, here viewed as the inflated sense of self that leads to the misuse of human freedom, a theology of shame centers on the sin of apathy, and explores the matter in which the Christian tradition has supported, but also frustrated, the work of self-repair. (99-100)

Correlating the sin of apathy with shame and the sin of pride with guilt may lead to profound implications for nurturing gospel receptivity among emerging adults inside and outside the Church. If apathy is dominantly operational in the unchurched, using a theology of guilt will be ineffective in attracting interest.

Church leaders who come to understand the dynamics of shame as compounded by narcissism may become more aware of its operative powers at work in their congregations and target community. Such growth of awareness is the subject of John Stott's prayer and prophetic commentary:

May God open our eyes to see the chaos, slavery, and death 'the ways of this world' and its nefarious power have wreaked among us. Human beings are dehumanized by political oppression and bureaucratic tyranny, by a secular outlook that repudiates God, by an amoral ethic that rejects all absolutes, by conspicuous consumption and acquisitiveness that turns money and material possessions into idols, by poverty and hunger, by workaholic and unemployment, by racism and other forms of systemic injustice. (Stott 73)

Today, the Church in the West can ill-afford a myopic view of the human condition and its pervasive impact on society that excludes or minimizes shame. The project brought shame dynamic impacts to light.

Shame in the Religious/Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults

The project focused strategically on adults ages 18-34 to explore gospel receptivity and the role shame dynamics play in openness to the claims of Christ. Alongside Capp's congregational study revealing the dominance of shame in member's experience, I accessed and now note the valuable field research of Beth Severson surveying local American churches who effectively reach emerging adults in this post-modern era. She acknowledges this age group as highly resistant to the gospel:

Much research from the past decade or so shows that North American congregations are losing many more young adults than they're gaining—at least among the youngest emerging adults: eighteen- to twenty-three-year-olds. When we look at individuals' religious trajectories during their young-adult years, we see that many more of them experience a decline in religious faith and practice (63 percent) than growth (8 percent). (Severson location 248)

Her interest in the minority of churches which consistently reach the youngest emerging adults led her to study the developmental characteristics of this age group:

And we can't read much on young-adult identity without running into Jeffrey Arnett's description of early adulthood. A professor of psychology at Clark University, Arnett coined the term 'emerging adulthood' to refer to a unique and distinct developmental life phase between adolescence and mature adulthood, roughly from age eighteen to twenty-nine. (9)

Neither of the newest emerging generations attend church much. Only two-fifths (41 percent) of Generation Z attend weekly religious services, while only 27 percent of millennials attend weekly services once or more per month (11).

Interestingly, while perilous to overtly stereotype this generation, the literature revealed that the chief characteristic of their religious or spiritual lives is one of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) (Smith and Denton), and second, the use of the defense mechanism of denial of remorse (Smith and Snell). In two separate studies,

Christian Smith partnered with two other authors in 2009, Melina Lundquist Denton and Patricia Snell, to study the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults 18-24, their major influences upon them, and how their faith changes from adolescence to adulthood. Jamieson described the essence of MTD with the statement: “We like our God to be a healer, but only at a distance” (Jamieson Location 295). To create such distance, emerging adults (often unconsciously) use defense mechanisms, like denying that they have regrets about their pasts even when they actually do, in order to protect a sense of personal self, who I am, identity. Putting on a good face is sacred to them (Smith and Snell 41–42). Shame, therefore, causes young adults to hide or sublimate any recognition of past wrong in their lives with no perceived need to confess it and seek forgiveness. This dynamic causes them to avoid confrontation, judgement, or condemnation that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23 KJV), and recognize their need of a Savior.

Similarities and Differences of other World Honor and Shame Cultures

The project was careful to differentiate between shame experienced as a personal feeling or a tool of social conformity in the West and the fundamental social structure embedded in the fabric of the Honor/Shame culture of the East. Failing to identify helpful similarities and avoid important distinctions inevitably would distort the veracity of the project’s findings. Consider the matter of universality of both shame and guilt in culture.

From the secularist, post-modern view:

Humans are herd animals. We want to fit in, to bond with others, and to earn the respect and approval of our peers. Such inclinations are essential to our survival. For most of our evolutionary history, our ancestors lived in tribes. Becoming separated from the tribe—or worse, being cast out—was a death sentence. Those who collaborated and bonded with others enjoyed

increased safety, mating opportunities, and access to resources. (Clear 115)

As the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne wrote, ‘The customs and practices of life in society sweep us along’” (qtd. in Clear 115). Anthropologist Eugene Nida helps missionaries with definitive and foundational understanding of social constructs of various cultures to save them time and avoid critical and often presumptive mistakes when they enter the field. He sees shame as universal and guilt as culture-specific:

We assume that anyone who has violated social sanctioned customs will have a sense of guilt, but this is not true in many parts of the world. Such a man may be afraid of apprehension or feel shame at having been seen, but a genuine sense of guilt is by no means as widespread in the world as we would imagine. (42)

Nida’s observations may also apply to post-Christian America where morality is relative and the presence of guilt unpredictable, while shame is becoming more and more ubiquitous.

To get a handle on the differences between Eastern and Western shame, the project accessed, with permission, the class lectures of Scott Moreau of Wheaton College on Eastern Shame/Honor culture. (Moreau)

Honor (or face) is a claim to positive worth along with the social acknowledgement of that worth: the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes (self-respect), plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her in-group (esteem). People honor their in-group by doing and saying what the in-group members expect (they fulfill their in-group obligations). Honor serves as a type of social rating which entitles a person to interact in specified ways with equals, superiors and subordinates, according to the honor rules of the society. It is parallel in some respects to credit ratings in the US. Honor ties the in-group together; it creates and maintains unity. (Moreau)

Honor is a powerful social motivator for conformity to the culture’s expectations or affinity group’s values.

Gaining honor occurs in two ways in Eastern honor/shame cultures: ascription and acquisitions. Honor is *ascribed* by 1) a person is born with a certain amount of honor as a result of family status or may also be given honor as a gift/grant by a more powerful person. Honor can be *achieved* by a person (and that person's in-group) who then can gain honor or lose it (shame) through accomplishments and/or public challenges by the individual or the in-group (Moreau).¹ In the East, the rise in honor and the fall in shame is clearly defined and prescribed by enduring social rules and familial structures.

An international study of neurological/biological analysis confirms many of the assertions the project has made about the universality of shame. This study found that shame manifests itself similarly across cultures, whereas guilt is based more on specific social standards. In a prior study from Matsumoto et al. (1988) on different emotions in American and Japanese people, it was found that emotions, such as joy, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, shame and guilt are equal across individual and collective cultures, even though their intensity may differ cross-culturally. (Michl et al. 155) Therefore the intensity of feelings of shame differ from culture to culture and determines dominance that relate to challenges to receptivity of the gospel, so our engagement in America would be different than in Japan. While intensity relates to dominance, complexity relates to rate and approach of engagement and decision-making. Michl's group concludes:

This study provides evidence that the activation reflecting the processing of shame is more complex than feeling guilt. One reason for this could be that shame is not so much based on general social standards but rather on culturally independent social settings. Nevertheless, shame may indeed fluctuate according to individual standards, and the specificity of particular social situation. For example, it can be difficult to imagine the

¹ Moreau adapted his presentation from Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey in *The Social World of Luke-Acts* (1991:45) and David M. May, "Drawn from Nature or Common Life": Social and Cultural Reading Strategies for the Parables." *Review and Expositor* 94 (1997).

reactions of other people to a specific shame situation, thus people may have problems in visualizing the possible thoughts and behavioral reactions of others. The imagination of guilt, on the other hand, may be based less on predicting others' reactions, and more on the culture-specific normative moral knowledge of right and wrong. (Michl et al. 155)

Because of this unpredictability, engagement with the shame-dominant person should be slower and more authentically relational.

Perhaps the most important difference is that the Eastern Honor/Shame Culture has a prescribed path to regaining honor and dispensing with shame, whereas Western civilization does not. Ruth Benedict in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* compares shame-oriented cultures with Western civilizations, descriptions of shame and prescriptions on how it is to be faced or remedied (qtd. in Fowler 12). Shame is a universal human experience both objectively, because of personal acts of sin, and subjectively, as self-absorption (self-turned-in-on-itself, a downcast head, loss of/avoiding/hiding face) in a fallen world, in terms of feeling shame and being motivated by self-preservation (Jamieson location 709-14). Guilt is a universal human experience objectively because of personal acts of sin, but is not a universal subjective experience, meaning that it is not always felt or acknowledged because of culture or the more painful and deep experience of shame.

Scripture and the social sciences give testimony of these universal conditions. While the social sciences are useful in observing and understanding much of the dynamics of the subjective experience of guilt and shame, they underestimate the depth of the sin condition in human experience and overestimate the reach and efficacy of therapies to address this condition (Jamieson location 284, 523). Kohut's "mirroring" concept comes closest to the biblical message of the healing of shame. Sin in essence is

actually the quest for identity separate from our relationship to God and neighbor.

However, undertaking that quest leads back to the unknown god of contemporary therapy who ultimately is the projection of both human fears and desires (Jamieson location 386).

This universal human experience predates eastern shame/honor cultures and their western counterpart, the primitive shame dynamic steeped in the cultural tea of narcissism.

A Culture of Narcissism

In the postmodern/post-Christian era, the universal shame experience has been compounded by the narcissistic culture of the West, as documented by Christopher Lasch. Parallel to the clinician's observation of the rise of borderline disorders and narcissism in the 1940s and 1950s, Lasch convincingly demonstrates how American culture has imprinted narcissistic values on society in general. This general condition has been promoted by the following influences: the cult of consumption, media's proliferation of images, therapeutic ideologies, the rationalization of the inner life, changes in family life, the fascination with celebrities with narcissistic personalities, by bureaucracies of public education, industry and government (especially welfare), the degradation of sport, fear of competition, degradation of play, intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, and deterioration of relations between men and women (32–33, 231–32). The contemporary climate is therapeutic and not religious, argues Lasch. People today hunger not for personal salvation, let alone for the restoration of an earlier golden age, but for the feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health, and psychic security (7). “For the narcissist, the world is a mirror, whereas the rugged individualist saw it as an empty wilderness to be shaped to his own design” (10). The turning point of the normalization of narcissism in the West occurred in 2010, when the

review committee recommended that *narcissistic personality disorder* be dropped from the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (better known as DSM-5) published in 2013 (Dingfelder). In effect, this dealt a death blow to investment in research and specialized treatment for the previously long recognized disorder, and shifted the emphasis from a problem to be corrected to a characteristic of the population suffering from a wide range of maladjustments to be accepted, even found in “normal” citizens (Parker-Pope). The universal condition of shame is indeed compounded by the culture of narcissism in the post-modern experience of the West.

Practical Experience

John Wesley’s fourth source of authority was perhaps his unsung signature: experience. As Wimberly so eloquently documents, Wesley carefully solicited biographies, autobiographies, letters, and personal testimony to illustrate and test many of his theological ideas to promote validity and confidence (Wimberly 14). In the spirit of appreciative inquiry and the example of Wesley, the project sought to collect the personal experiences of leaders in the post-modern age, in order to develop an effective praxis as represented in the literature. To be sure, the universal shame experience of humanity itself is an obstacle, which the way of Jesus with people overcame (Zacchaeus, the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, the Woman Caught in Adultery, Friend of Sinners and Prostitutes, etc.). While modern evangelism tends to first deal with guilt from sins, Jesus dealt first with the broken relationship and attendant shame. The project searched for modern examples where this engagement is lived out.

The Praxis of 21st Century Missiology in the Narcissistic West

A pivot question of the project was “What are the obstacles to receptivity to the gospel among shame-impacted people?” While the Church continues to operate exclusively from a theology of guilt in its evangelism strategies and a mission of attraction, the present generation (particularly emerging adults) increasingly resists such efforts through patterns of avoidance, intellectual and social shaming, and other mechanisms of self-preservation and defense. Shame is more deeply felt and hides objective guilt in its pain. People impacted by shame dynamics avoid situations where they might feel shame, though that is as predictable as lightning strikes (Capps 83). This unpredictable nature of shame itself makes collecting testimonies of shame more perilous and difficult to obtain.

Added to that inherent difficulty is the legacy of “friendly fire” (or not so friendly) from the Church itself. Jamieson describes the subtle shift in emphasis:

“Beyond the church’s role in creating false guilt may lay [lie] a far greater problem: participation in the shaming of people. If false guilt (What you did was wrong!) has caused some to walk away from the church, shaming (You are a bad person!) has done far greater damage. It can be argued that the cultural moral shift that the West has undergone in the last century has had far more to do with the categories of shame than of guilt” (location 703).

The proverbial “gatekeeper” of the local church dressing down first-time visitors or the old curmudgeon charter member craning his neck to stare at the young, tattooed couple that slips in late to the church service are more than nightmares for the outreach pastor as well as the would-be seeker. Such stories of unthoughtful behavior among church faithful are the stuff of which James Emery White writes.

A popular criticism is to blame a recalcitrant generation for empty church pews due to perceptions of its spiritual apathy, moral decadence, and shamelessness in a negative sense. Contemporary American society is not truly shameless. Instead, Americans experience guilt and shame from sin but, in pride, attempt to cover the guilt and shame and hide them in a rejection of God's law and authority and morality. To say that sinners are shameless sets up the church to duplicate the error (the “yeast” of Matt. 16:6) of the Pharisees which compels them to heap shame on the sinner and to judge them hypocritically for their sin, while ignoring our own pride and arrogance and taking the place of God's judgment. The knotty misunderstanding is not easily unraveled:

The person with narcissism has, at his or her core, a shamed self, rather than a prideful self. The person who has a narcissistic personality disorder has pulled a mask of righteousness over a core belief that the interior self is unworthy. This person has too much shame, masked by too much pride. (McClintock 39)

Psychologist and clergy consultant, Karen A. McClintock offers this observation of the Western Church experience (italics mine):

I believe congregations are in decline because they have become shame bound. Shame is so debilitating that many of our congregations are now critically ill. *Shame blocks our ability to evangelize effectively, and embrace diversity, and heal individual members.* Pervasive shame limits congregation healing after experiences of ineffective and abusive leadership. (62)

Therefore, a missiology of shame for the twenty-first century in the West would not be complete without addressing the disabling “shame-bound” condition within local congregations that keeps them evangelistically sterile, including shame comparison, perfectionism, congregational and family secrets and shame injuries involving sexual abuse.

Succinctly, an adequate theology of both guilt and shame, based upon a long-hand concept of full-orbed atonement, leads us to a more robust missiology of shame. Plenty of good contemporary examples abound, demonstrating an engagement with this pagan generation, reminiscent of the Celtic Mission and the Early Wesleyan Movement, that acknowledges the needs of shame-impacted people along with their defense mechanisms (Seversen). While talking about guilt can be cathartic, talking about one's shame makes shame worse for the speaker (Capps 81) and contagious for the hearer (Jamieson location 1218). While shame can be healed by the sanctifying and comforting work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life (by crisis and process), the community of faith is needed in the process of engagement prior to profession of faith and in mutual ministry later through the priesthood of all believers.

Wesley's bands are one example in history of the success of this approach. Confession of sin, accountability, and ministry in trustful relationships, and worship as a community contribute to the Holy Spirit's work in healing feelings of shame in impacted people. Worship releases the church to relax: it makes her aware that God is the primary agent in evangelism; it breaks the temptation to manipulate for worthy ends; and it sets her free to mediate the presence of God in his rule (Abraham 169). Small nurturing church groups of difference types, sizes, and constituency offer engagements of healing shame. McClintock offers many compelling examples:

Faith communities, by utilizing the structural connection connectedness, can reduce social stigma for families facing mental and physical illness and provide them with acceptance and support. Healthy congregations offer restorative relationships for those who have lost peers at work, suffered broken friendships, and endured strained family ties. By making healing connections, laity and clergy can reduce the number and duration of mental health symptoms that accompany illness and seclusion. For individuals with chronic illnesses and their caregivers, home visits are

more than perfunctory appointments on the clergy person's calendar. They provide mental and physical health lifelines. (119–20)

Appreciative inquiry as a spiritual discipline for local churches offers the facility to discover these stories of healing shame-impacted people in small groups and worship and dream about what that might look like in their own communities of faith as they join God on mission to reach emerging adults and other generations.

The Praxis of 21st Century Ecclesiology in the Narcissistic West

Informed by an adequate understanding of the dynamics of shame compounded in Western Civilization by pervasive narcissism, and how such dynamics have a negative impact on gospel receptivity among emerging adults, future church planting may be shaped in such a way as to provide relational connections between Christians and pre-Christians in neutral settings where the shame-impacted are comfortable (like half-way houses). On the other hand, in these third spaces, bona fide churches, not steppingstones to the church, can be developed like the Fresh Expressions movement in the Church of England (T. Collins). Open-ended conversations over coffee or meals gradually explore their hopes, dreams and aspirations and thoughts about reality and the narratives about Jesus and his Way with people are exchanged (St. Albans). New people are invited to belong before believing, while the decision process is allowed ample time to develop slowly as they discover and appreciate the rich truths of Scripture. Acceptance, love, positive mirroring, safety and trust shape the beginning and development of these new communities of faith.

Contextualization: Lost, Hiding, and Treading in the Blue Waters

In the literature, “red waters” of our communities refers to people who are churchgoers and are relatively easy to reach, and constitute a dwindling 30 percent of America;

“blue waters” refers to those who have a minimal frame of reference about the church experience. “In a post-Christian society, evangelists can no longer assume that the meta narrative of scripture is still known, much less understood” (Steffen, “Evangelism Lessons Learned Abroad” 111). Therefore, church leaders across America range from the frustrated to the apathetic or discouraged (Snyder location 265). Others say that they just need to do more of what they are doing. However, the project offered another explanation to the lack of receptivity to need-based, programmed outreach to attract seekers to visit the church campus: they are hiding in shame.

Donald L. Nathanson identifies four basic reactions to internal shame (believing the lie that a person is not enough). These shame-based defenses are avoidance, withdrawal, attacking others, and attacking self. They essentially limit grace-based living; particularly, avoidance behaviors have implications that impact receptivity to gospel presentations and any attraction-based outreach programs of the local church. These include: 1) avoiding any potential embarrassment, 2) becoming shy when uncomfortable about expectations, 3) having difficulty making close friends, 4) hyper-vigilance about potentially shaming situations, 5) avoiding place and situations that might humiliate, 6) going into “my False-Self” to pretend, 7) use analyzing to avoid vulnerability, 8) controlling the behavior of others, 9) perfectionism, and 10) grandiosity about who I am and what I have done (Nathanson).

Gershen Kaufman lists six primary defense mechanisms used by shame-impacted persons: 1) rage, a hostility toward people who shame them or bitterness toward life in general, 2) contempt, a harsh judgmental attitude including fault-finding and an air of condescension, 3) striving for power to take control of situations to avoid embarrassment,

4) striving for perfection or a competitive spirit to win at all cost regardless of how unimportant the contest, 5) transference of blame or scapegoating, and 6) internal withdrawal, mostly manifesting itself today in virtual fantasy facilitated by modern technology and social media (79–97). These two lists of reactions to perceived attempts to shame by Christians seeking to influence emerging adults give church leaders contextual clues that inform engagement approaches and shape church planting methods. Understanding and discern defense mechanisms and the desires for self-preservation underlying them helps Christians to manage their own feelings of rejection and to love the unreached emerging adult regardless of response to the gospel. This realization highlights the need for reexamining local contexts and translating the gospel in a way that it can be more readily received by “blue water” people in the depths of the sea of this narcissistic culture.

The Need for Reexamining American Contextualization of the Gospel

Much of what can be learn from Roland Hearn, Baxter Kruger, and Neil Pembroke in regard to the pastoral care of shame-impacted persons in the church can be applied to reaching shame-impacted persons outside the church. An adequate theology of shame shapes church planting as well. The work of Sherry Turkle in the social impacts of technology (24–25) and the missionary experience of Tom Steffen can be helpful in appropriating the use of narrative, images, rituals, and conversation to reach this generation with the gospel.

Pembroke suggests a shame-based approach to evangelism using a construct forwarded by Walker. “Walker...in his theology of evangelism argues that points of contact are established with secular persons through (a) the desire for self-transcendence,

(b) the desire for meaning and direction; (c) the desire for an enjoyable and challenging life, and (d) the desire for a full and mature life” (qtd. in Pembroke 16). However, Pembroke is careful to offer a balanced view: “there is no suggestion that the guilt-repentance-forgiveness paradigm should simply be discarded. This is, after all, the dominant biblical paradigm.” (Pembroke 16) He continues by referencing the work done by Abraham and Arias when defining biblical evangelism in its fullest sense as “a set of activities aimed at initiating a person into the kingdom of God” (16; cf.: Abraham; Arias). Viewed as such a continuum of process and progress, he suggests that the evangelist begins where the recipient is in the experience of shame. “But in the end,” he emphasizes, “there needs also to be repentance, and an understanding that in and through Christ one is forgiven and put right with God, and a beginning in a life of worship, witness and service” (16).

The pivotal key to reaching the shame-laden people is a long-term, trusting relationship. Pembroke recognizes:

“A call to repentance may only be heard after significant change has taken place in a person. It may require a relationship with Christians, with the Scriptures, with God before a person can get in touch with his or her [sic] guilt and need for forgiveness. (Pembroke 16)

Therefore, to improve gospel receptivity among emerging adults impacted by shame, the engagement of the Church should be reshaped by 1) minimizing exposure, 2) maximizing acceptance, and 3) offering fulfillment which may lead to a healing of shame

Developing best practices that inform the ecclesial shape of new churches and perhaps even transform existing churches who target emerging adults was the end-purpose of this project. The approach of this project has been pre-intervention or an appreciative inquiry. The shape of church planting in the future may also take the

approach of appreciative inquiry (the five principles of AI). The younger generations are not the problem, and the Church is not something that can be fixed. Church leaders can discover something of value in the Church hidden, as it were, in plain sight and dream of a desired future according to the will of God

Instead of high-powered monologue persuasion of yesteryear (Abraham 57), swift transactional spiritual tactics, or attempting to “fix” emerging adults who have no church affiliation and less interest in Christianity, a respectful inquiry into belief systems may be better received than even need-based attractional programs to draw new people to church campuses as a strategy of first contact. In the third space and context of new trust-earned relationships, authentic displays of Christian love, mercy, and compassion, and serving community with emergency assistance and long-term development including creation care may go farther in building trust with unreached emerging adults. People impacted by shame come to embrace the Christian faith gradually as radiant, face-to-face encounters with Jesus’ people in community heal their brokenness and open their hearts to the reconciling Father and his family of celebration.

Presentations of the gospel need to be more narrative than propositional for the shame-impacted, starting with creation and the image of God in humanity. No apologetic effort to dislodge the inquirer from the theory of evolution should be made at first. On the other hand, I have already noted how difficult it is to put together a jigsaw puzzle without a picture. Inquirers will emotionally choose the Bible narrative and later find intellectual justification for their decision.

Shaping church planting can also employ the four cycles of appreciative inquiry (AI) as well: discover, dream, design, and deploy, along with prayer to God for wisdom

as the priesthood of all believers (Eph. 4; 1 Pet. 2). The basic assumption of AI in connection to church planting would be that the Church is a “mystery to be embraced.” They appreciate and value the best of “what is”; they envision “what might be”; and then they dialogue on “what should be.” St. Patrick and John Wesley would be proud, maybe even put a smile on the face of Jesus. Elsewhere, I have issued this challenge:

It is time for a radical recalibration of the Western Church in scriptural holiness and the priesthood of all believers in ministry and mission. In post-Christian America, the Church can no longer afford the monopolization of church leadership by professionals, concentrating ministry in the clergy. Instead, leaders must include expositional teaching about ecclesiology (especially 1 Peter) in their public ministry and activate the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, in practice, not just in theory. This means distributing ministry through worship and mission through teaching laity the privileges and responsibilities of their priestly office. This retooling and reformation impact the shape of new churches that we must plant to reach new people groups and replace older institutional churches which fail to recalibrate in time and must close their doors. Sensitivity to the shame that is being inflicted upon Christianity in the West is causing a withdrawal of formerly faithful Christians into private sentimental individualism, moral compromise, and loss of identity as God’s people. Unbelievers are hiding behind anonymity and technology, highly resistant to the Gospel and the Church’s programs due to bad press, intellectual shaming of Christianity as prudish and unscientific, and the shame they feel as perpetrators or victims of the deeds of darkness, the pain of which drowns out true guilt and God’s call. Local churches of the future will find Peter’s counsel invaluable in reaching the growing percentage of our population that religious institutionalism cannot even see. With ministry distributed to the non-professional priesthood of believers, equipped by repurposed clergy, local churches can infiltrate neighborhoods, workplaces, marketplaces and leisure haunts with the Light of the Christ by forming direct rooted relationships of holy love and humility, and being benefactors of much good in their communities. Sustainable, effective churches of the future will be reminiscent of the loving, accepting engagement of the Celtic mission with organic disciple-making structured in the spirit of The Master’s Plan and Wesley’s method. (Montgomery, *Fully Laced Living* 26–27)

This call for a fresh contextualization of the gospel in shame-impacted America leads to the discovery of more effective and humanizing ways to engaged unreached emerging adults and present the gospel to them.

Shame, Gospel Receptivity, Evangelism Methods and Presentations

The project considered the praxis of missiology as the “switch station” on the tracks toward the depot of developing best practices that shape church planting and the destination of reaching emerging adults. The literature review draws to a close with what practitioners identify about effective practices of engaging emerging adults impacted by shame dynamics with the gospel as well as how that shapes church planting. Unlocking gospel receptivity for shame-impacted or shame-averse young adults requires a ring of eight keys.

1. Begin with the front of the Book.

Gospel presentations to the shame-impacted best begin with the Triune God, creation in the image of God, instead of the fall of man, in order for that person to feel that there is a higher, attractive design that is their telos or destiny, and therefore it will not be perceived as foreign or fake. Starting with the New Testament for post-modern Westerners without a biblical frame of reference is confusing and lends to suspicion. “Guard the identity of each member of the Trinity by covering the sweep of scripture” (Steffen, “Evangelism Lessons Learned Abroad ” 113). “Avoid starting evangelism in the New testament” (Steffen, “Evangelism Lessons Learned Abroad ” 114). Unreached emerging adults need the context of the whole story of the Bible about God’s saving acts and offer.

2. **Tell the Story rather than seek to persuade with logical propositions.**

What has been true of oral cultures in the Third World is now true of the narcissistic West: story is king. “Perceive the gospel as a story rather than a set of propositions” (Steffen, “Evangelism Lessons Learned Abroad” 122). St. Patrick in the Celtic Mission discovered this secret. “Christianity gave them outlets for expressing their constructive emotions through indigenous oratory, storytelling, poetry, music, dance, drama, and so on in God’s service” (Hunter 64). When shame impacts are indicated in a person who needs to find their way back to God, story and parable tend to touch the heart that needs healing before the person can constructively receive the message of forgiveness and removal of guilt. To include Wesley’s view of atonement as a healing provision supplementing the usual substitutionary theories used primarily in gospel presentation, appropriate some or all the rich imagery of Tim Keller’s “grammar” of the atonement (Keller 130–31) to paint a full compelling picture of what Jesus has done for us. Shame cannot be forgiven; it needs healing. In particular, the “Death-wish” is an atoning attempt by a human who hopes to rid himself of the “false self” he has taken on. The Gospel offers death to the false self and rebirth to the true self in Christ. The appeal to the shame-filled person is that they can discover their true, authentic self only in Christ, because only he can restore the original image of God in that person. Telling the story of how God heals the self of humans in Christ is worth telling to the emerging adults of this generation.

To prepare to tell that story of divine healing, an integrated understanding of psychology and theology of shame can provide graphic touchpoints that appeal to the emerging adult’s desire for restoration and fulfillment using the Bible stories of the first

and second Adam. William T. Kirwan describes the impact of the fall upon Adam's personality as dividing the true self made in God's image into a "needing self" (belonging, self-esteem, and strength needs) and a "rejected self" (experiencing shame). "As God's redemptive work in Christ restores human identity, it will necessarily heal the divided self as well" (111). Here is how God heals. For one, "God's adoption of us as His children, the love of Christ, and the eternal life He offers fill all the deficiencies of the needing self." For the rejected self, "Christ Himself took on our feelings of rejection...on the cross Jesus took on Himself punishment, rejection, and shame....We can now be free from punishment...rejection...shame, free from all the results of the fall..." (113-14). The process of sanctification, love casting out all fear, and spiritual disciplines are key in appropriating this shame-healing grace of God: compassion toward ourselves, conviction, and confession (114-15).

Fowler shares Tom Steffen's conviction about the use of stories, symbols, and rituals, and beliefs. "Our ways of symbolizing the center or centers of transcending worth and power in our lives most often involve symbols, stories, rituals, and beliefs that we share with others and that make us members of communities of faith" (Fowler 21). For Fowler, the minimum number of stories for a sinner to understand and come into Christ is his birth, death, and resurrection, the story of Zacchaeus, the story of The Prodigal Son, and the story of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. These things are important for people to experience the narrative of shame and guilt relating to sin. The most important scripture is Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 through 7 where Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith and he scores a shame on the cross (143-44).

3. Cultivate trusting relationships over time rather than attempt cold call confrontation.

The shame-impacted person will resist attractional and less personal engagements with the church, due to trust issues from incomplete work done at the trust-mistrust level of development. They may be coaxed out of hiding by an interpersonal engagement with a Christian who will invite them to belong before they believe, and walk with them as they explore what is truth in a series of charitable dialogs and open-ended (not leading) questions until they discover that they do believe. “Evangelistic cunning and canning” transactional encounters by a would-be evangelist may feel inauthentic to most shame-impact people. Here, notes Abraham, D. James Kennedy and the Church growth movement have been uneasy allies. Kennedy’s aggressive personal confrontation and the Church growth movement work in a relationship with people who already attend church (Abraham 73). With “blue waters” spreading and beckoning the church’s attention, Abraham confronts the overemphasis of the Church growth movement on pragmatism:

Unless we are very careful with such delicate matters as friendship and love [evangelism] will be turned into one more utilitarian means or tool to increase the statistics of church membership. Before we know what is happening, sacred human relationships will have lost their integrity of the distinctive character of Christian love will have been eroded by an evangelistic orientation that construes them not as ends in themselves but as means to an end. (77)

Such careful cultivation of relationships with the goal of gospel presentation influences the speed of conversion.

4. Advocate a greater emphasis on slow conversion rather than, or in addition to, early crisis moments of decision.

Emerging adults impacted by shame dynamics in the West require more time to consider the implications of the gospel in their lives. Building trust in the messenger is

just as important as trust in the message, and that takes time and often multiple engagements. Conversion, more often than not, will be slow. “Allow adequate time for decision making” in the evangelism process (Steffen, “Evangelism Lessons Learned Abroad” 127). “Think of decision making as a process, point and process ” (127). “Look for evidence of faith through reordered beliefs and behaviors ” (128). “Analyze your postmodern evangelism model for comprehensiveness and effectiveness” (128).

Due to the Church’s sense of urgency causing an expedient rush to reach the world for Christ, Craig Ott and Gene Wilson challenge the conventional wisdom of missions in prioritizing people groups perceived as most receptive to the gospel:

But usually all things are not equal. For example, one must ask how the receptivity of a locality is determined. A people may initially respond very positively to the Jesus film or an evangelistic “blitz” but then be uninterested in more serious, long-term discipleship and spiritual change. On the other hand, a group that is initially resistant, or takes more time to consider the claims of the gospel, might eventually make a deeper commitment to Christ and become a stronger church, able to reproduce. (Ott and Wilson 145)

This variegated experience with gospel receptivity speaks to the need for the fruit of the Spirit which is patience in evangelism.

5. Emphasize and practice community-based evangelism rather than a solo soul-winner sharing the gospel.

The Church has witnessed “The Death of the Salesman,” to be sure. A return to The Master Plan (Coleman) and The Way of Jesus with his Twelve traveling companions, and the practice of Acts 2 of breaking bread house-to-house is highly advisable. All of these examples illustrate the kind of community-based evangelism Abraham recommends:

For the early Christians it would have been unthinkable to have evangelism without community and community without evangelism. Thus, instruction in the faith initiation into the community would have been entirely normal and natural for those who are contacted with the message of the gospel. It is precisely these elements that we cannot take for granted in the modern western world. Since the middle of the 19th century evangelism has, for the most part, been cut loose from local Christian communities. Given the quest for autonomy, given the cult of individualism that's everywhere around us, given the drastic changes in communication, and given the deep anticipate there is to community and tradition, it is well known possible to link evangelism in an organic way with a life in the body of Christ. To continue to construct evangelism as verbal proclamation is to ignore the radically change sociological and ecclesiastical situation in which we have to work and to cling to the wrong kind of verbal continuity with the past. (Abraham 57)

Crusade evangelism, of which Billy Graham's association is best known, may be one manifestation of reliance upon an individual celebrity voice. Undoubtedly, such successes in mass evangelism set a high standard that was difficult to duplicate and sustain in subsequent decades of cultural change and may have moved the Church in the West away from the importance of personal relationships in evangelism.

Since then, a return to interpersonal evangelism and small group disciple-making of the Wesleyan awakening has been gaining momentum. Wimberly has also observed how this development answers the need of addressing shame:

There is no doubt that the Wesleyan heritage of the practice of conversation must be a central element in responding to the presence of psychological shame. . . . The dominant fear of being unloved and thus worthless confirms human beings' lack of identity, and the only way human beings are affirmed is in relationship with others, and with God. It is group conversation that provides this element, (68)

Snyder concurs with the effectiveness of this community element in evangelism, especially in cities:

A small group of eight to twelve people meeting together informally in homes is the most effective structure for the communication of the gospel in modern secular urban society. Such groups are better suited to the

mission of the church in today's urban world than are traditional church services, institutional church programs, or the mass communication media. (Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins* location 1983)

Therefore, for the shame-dominated, post-modern West, small groups like the organic gatherings of the early Church and Wesley's classes are still the best platforms for evangelism and disciple-making.

6. Band Together Same Gender organically.

To discover the irreducible structure for healthy church planting, the practice of Jesus is illuminating. Jesus had his three: Peter, James, and John. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them" (Matt. 18:20 NIV). This is the basic building block of the Church Jesus exemplified and died for. Wesley's bands followed Christ's model. Two refinements of Wesley's band structure address the needs of shame-impacted people seeking Christ. First, in small bands of the same gender, confession may be communicated best as a way of getting free of the shame prevalently felt than of trying to convince someone of guilt they may not yet be experiencing subjectively. Second, accountability might be reframed to be less about a checklist review of performance and more about a friendship that walks with you toward a new way of living.

Banding together in same gender groups provides a healthy, easily replicated strategy for planting churches based upon disciple-making: new disciples making new disciples; new churches planting new churches. As the founder and leader of one of the few modern multiplying church movements in America, Ralph Moore advocates this concept of organic micro-church movement:

We simply need to change our strategy and our tactics. Our goal must be to dominate our culture with love and grace. Our tactics must shift from bigger is better to equipping our disciples to plant churches among people

they know. Given the current political disarray we should probably think of planting micro-churches rather than megachurches. We'll need to fly under the cultural radar in years to come. (location 226)

Such bands, men with men, women with women, offer limited exposure and maximum safety for the shame-impacted emerging adult in the West.

7. Seek face-to-face engagements rather than settling for virtual contact over social media and the Internet.

Obsession with virtual communication technology in the West is transforming human interaction and may be changing what it means to be human. The full impact is untold and controversial. In the rush to fully leverage social media, the Church needs to count the cost of losing the value of face-to-face interaction in disciple-making.

Prioritizing immediate presence does not negate the value of virtual initial contacts or ongoing disciple-making engagements, as Nicky Gumbel's Alpha is so effectively utilizing (<https://alpha.org>). Snyder provides a good reason for this emphasis on face-to-face: "The mass media reach millions superficially but few profoundly" (Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins*, location 2016). Sherry Turkle researched the impact of virtual meetings on friendships for MIT; her insights are important for disciple-making and evangelism:

Real people, with their unpredictable ways, can seem difficult to contend with after one has spent a stretch in simulation. From the early days, I saw that computers offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship and then, as the programs got really good, the illusion of friendship without the demands of intimacy because, face to face, people ask for things that computers never do. With people, things go best if you pay close attention and know how to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Real people demand responses to what they are feeling. And not just any response. (7)

While intimacy is sacrificed in virtual platforms of engagement, Jamieson offers an equally theological reason for face-to-face relationships:

Having discovered the answer to shame in Christ, we are able to trust the eyes of the other. Our identity is not granted to us by even those who are closest to us. Our identity and therefore our ultimate value is given to us in Christ. Such a new identity grants the grace necessary for true love. It gives the ability to not fear any other judgment, because they can never be final. This restored identity of *imago Dei* allows us to enjoy otherness as otherness, to delight in the difference. The curse is reversed in Jesus Christ. (location 2014-20)

Thus, to heal shame and provide intimacy, immediate human interaction is required to provide the needed mirroring to restore God's image in others.

8. Recover the art of conversation in relaxed settings of shared life, discovering truth together, addressing questions, doubts, and fears.

The experience of Ralph Moore of Calvary Chapel discovered this effective value of relaxed conversation in third places: "The coffee house supplemented their actions becoming a harvest center. It was important that unbelieving persons come by invitation rather than by advertisement, as the Sonshine Inn was designed to complement evangelism, not perform it" (location 62). Jamieson notes the importance of safe places, hospitality, and acceptance in engaging shame-impacted outsiders (location 1683). Capps channeled the famous American author, Emerson, in this vein:

Emerson is arguing therefore that expressive individualists like himself did not declare war on churches—the communities of memory—but rather found that churches were inhospitable to those whose most urgent and pressing spiritual need was to regain self-hood, to discover or rediscover grounds for self-trust. (qtd. in Capps 114)

Hospitality to the stranger (Heb. 13:2) is key to engaging and evangelizing emerging adults in the West.

Christian hospitality offers honor to the shame-impacted guest. One of the most effective evangelism/disciple-making organizations of this generation is dialogue/small-group based, Nicky Gumbel's Alpha:

The seeker discovers that she or he is an honored 'guest' of a church that practices the ministry of hospitality. The seeker's experience, each session, begins with fellowship around a meal, followed by a welcome, a time of celebrative worship, a talk, refreshments, and then a conversation time in a small group of eight to twelve people. Alpha's leaders observe that through the Alpha experience seekers are partly socialized into Christian belief, and the small-group experience is indispensable in this socialization process. (Hunter 121–22)

Such socialization in Christian fellowship allows unreached emerging adults to “belong before they believe, a difficult objective to achieve on virtual platforms.

Turkle studied young adult students and their relationships with technology and human interaction. “Research supports what literature and philosophy have told us for a long time. The development of empathy needs face to face conversation. And it needs eye contact” (170). Turkle is emphatic: “Face to face conversation leads to greater self-esteem and an improved ability to deal with others. Again, conversation cures.... It's time to put technology in its place and reclaim conversation” (24–25). Shame is addressed in evangelism by reclaiming immediate presence and direct eye-contact in conversation in relaxed settings of shared life, discovering truth together, addressing questions, doubts, and fears.

Shame and Church Planting Shapes, Methods, and Models

Based upon a shame-based evangelism engagement with emerging adults as outlined above, the final area addressed in the literature was how that shapes the planting

of churches in a narcissistic culture where a growing percentage of the unchurched are impacted by shame. To begin, it would be helpful to define again what is meant by something “shaping church planting.” For that issue, recent history reveals a healthy tension. Watchman Nee helped found the Little Flock movement in China prior to the Cultural Revolution that swept the country, deporting Christian missionaries, imprisoning indigenous pastors, banning Bibles, and leaving the foreign-dependent institutional church in disarray. From the 2 million Christians in China in 1950, today the Chinese church reportedly exceeds 200 million, pointing back to the wisdom of leaders like Nee shaping the kind of church that would not only survive tyranny and the removal of religious freedom, but thrive and multiply under it. Nee’s student, Witness Lee, extended his concept of the tripartite man that Nee explained in his three volumes, *The Spiritual Man*, by arguing for the economy of Triune God in distributing himself to humans through their triune beings. The Holy Spirit engages a person through his spirit first and then soul, in the overlap of the heart. This economy of God has direct implication for the shaping of the Church. Lee is critical of the focus on church models: “These last few years people have been talking so much about the New Testament church, but the New Testament church is not a church of a certain pattern but one of life and experiences of Christ” (Lee 178). Instead, he contends: “The mingling of God himself with us becomes the very material for the building of the body of Christ” (184). “The church is not a matter of a pattern, but the real experience of Christ as our life and everything; therefore, the only way for the church to be built up among us is to experience Christ in the spirit” (186). Jesus is the Builder of his Church founded on the Rock of profession in his messiahship as Lord of all.

The shape of new churches in different contexts is not determined in a church board room with a developing strategic plan nor in the bright ideas of innovative leaders. Jesus is the new wine; new wineskins are selected by him. Snyder writes: “the church is to know the mind of Christ, the renewed image of God. In a technological age, this is revolutionary” (location 2016).

Five Marks of a Shame-Free Church

At this writing, Roland Hearn serves as the superintendent for two Australian districts in the Church of the Nazarene and speaks widely on his personal struggles with shame and the impact the problem of shame is having in the West. He advocates for a church shape that addresses shame in a healthy, redemptive way, and he outlines five marks of a shame-free church. He defines a “shame-free church” as follows:

A church that recognizes the power and distortion of sin in one another’s lives. A church that has dedicated itself to living out holiness toward each other is a church that lives with the five keys ever present. Discipleship is about creating a space where we can become more like Christ by loving each other more effectively into the understanding of who we are in Christ. (Hearn 29:28)

As mentioned above, Steffen identifies that the shame/honor frame recognizes “moral code” rather than moral law. For Hearn, the moral “code” for the shame-free church is found in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Hearn 31:38). Appropriating a Wesley view of atonement, Hearn conceives of a “healing church” marked with five characteristics that position it to provide an environment for shame-laden persons to experience freedom from the power of sin: 1) trust, 2) safety, 3) vulnerability, 4) belonging, and 5) affirmation. New churches shaped in this way offer a stable engagement with the shamed

that allows the Holy Spirit to work in the individual's life through the ministry of the church.

1. Trust.

Trust requires an unshakeable commitment to honest struggle," he says. "The creation of trust is not about perfect performance but about transparent process. Trust exists not in our confidence that another will not hurt us, but in the person as God sees their worth and potential. (Hearn 20:08) This mark of trust would resonate with a person who, in Erikson's view of psychosocial development, still has work to do in the first stage "trust vs. mistrust," where the mirroring of God who sees the person in the way a mother sees the infant adoringly and consistently provides it loving nurture will resonate (Capps 67–69). George Eliot referred to what the mother gives a child with her gaze as "the meeting of eyes of love." Research supports what literature and philosophy have told us for a long time. The development of empathy needs face to face conversation. It needs eye contact (Turkle 170). Here Hearn cites the trustworthy aspect of nurturing love in 1 Corinthians 13:7 (Hearn 22:09).

2. Safety

Nothing impacts the shape of a shame-free church like safety. If the venue and relational dynamics actively do not appear and produce a safe environment, the shamed will not stick around for long. "A safe environment," says Hearn, "involves the commitment to providing a space where one will not be intentionally hurt or shamed. It is an empathetic environment. It is not one in which there is no possibility of being hurt, but one where pain is understood and shared" (Hearn 22:40). Here, honesty and empathy are valued at a premium and practiced as a normal function of church culture. The natural

impulse of apology and empathy reverses the shame experience, while withholding these practices produces and reinforces experiences of shame.

3. Vulnerability

Although trust and safety are challenges for any church steeped in toxic pseudo-holiness culture, “the most terrifying attribute of the healing community,” warns Hearn, “is that it is a place of vulnerability. It is a place where those engaged in the ministry of healing are the ones that live unguarded lives. There must be a willingness to live at the place where we can be hurt if there is going to be true healing.” This is where the average Christian in the West balks and the ambitious church heads for the hills of aloofness and lip-service at the first setback experience with “people who are not like us.” Speaking to churches in the holiness tradition, this Nazarene leader explains “there is no place for the so-called ‘finished product’ in this environment. The days of speaking about sanctification as if the one speaking has arrived must be gone. While we maintain the ever-present possibility of being entirely sanctified, it is in the context of being constantly sanctified, transformed and healed” (Hearn 26:16). Vulnerability is a big ask in the culture of an existing church already full of emotional baggage with a tradition of maintaining secrets, avoiding conflict, and unpleasant conversations. When a small group, like the women’s class in Sebring Nazarene, or a new church plant starts with such an expressed code of vulnerability and openness, a high level of trust and safety permeates the group and deep ministry is most often experienced.

4. Belonging

Reminiscent of the Celtic Mission’s value of “belonging before believing” is Hearn’s fourth mark of a healing church which can be shame-free. “For most people,

‘belonging comes before believing’” (Hunter 44). “Celtic model for reaching people: (1) establish community with people or bring them into the fellowship of your community of faith; (2) within fellowship, engage in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship; and (3) in time, as they discover that they now believe, invite them to commit” (Hunter 42). “We must offer the gift of belonging before we can offer the grace of transformation.” It is little wonder that the shamed avoid or withdraw from most churches, since the *modus operandi* is opposite in “The Roman Way” culture of our most recent church traditions in the West. Hearn continues: “We cannot point to people’s inadequacies and suggest some type of transformation is needed prior to acceptance. Acceptance comes first. To belong is the beginning of honor” (Hearn 27:18). The front-door greeter “dress-down” of a typical Western church sends many first-time visitors to church home with the feeling of being prejudged and rejected. Ralph Moore identifies this characteristic as one of the important lessons the Hope Chapel movement learned: “to accept each other” (location 71).

5. Affirmation

A healing church will have gatekeepers who offer the invitation to belong by embodying the fifth mark of healing church: affirmation. John Finney “ contends that the Celtic way is more effective with postmodern Western populations than the Roman way (and its more recent version—the traditional evangelical way). His data show that more people come to faith gradually (the Celtic model) than suddenly (the Roman model)” (qtd. in Hunter 44).

Perhaps, the most common question addressed to visiting speakers or candidating pastors in holiness churches is “do you preach against sin?” The intent of such a question

cannot always be discerned until the opportunity to observe the function of the church's fellowship and their acceptance of visitors from the community becomes available. The words used are so important. Hearn states that "the rhetoric of the healing community is of one another's worth. Every opportunity to point to the reality of worth must be taken if we are to be a healing community." He suggests several ways by which affirmation can be practiced: 1) by listening, 2) by acknowledging both struggle and success, and 3) by allowing free choice. This denominational leader is prophetic: "We affirm through ministry being an expression of giftedness not institutional requirements. We affirm by recognizing personality differences and experiential predispositions" (Hearn 28:39). This recognition squares with Erikson's understanding of assessing the point a person is in the journey of life and the role of leaders to come alongside them to facilitate their successful progress through psychosocial stages to maturity and mental and relational health. Nowhere is that more important in this narcissistic culture than in the identity of a person's true self as a reflection of the original image of God.

"Bright Spot" Churches Engaging Emerging Adults

From Hearn the project learned the five characteristics that shape a shame-free church. Next, I looked for studies documented in the literature about churches who 1) bear those five marks, *and* 2) are effectively reaching emerging adult populations to make the critical and sorely needed connection between shame dynamics and emerging adults in developing best practices that shape church planting. Beth Donigan Seversen shares the results of an insightful study of what she calls "bright spot" churches in North America who have discovered how to reach unchurched emerging adults, by interviewing new Christians from this age group and their pastors. She "found that churches reaching

and keeping unchurched emerging adults have attitudes and practices in common.

Churches seeing faith develop among unchurched young adults share similar social and cultural patterns—patterns other churches can adopt and learn” (Seversen 3). Sharon

Daloz Parks discovered, through work with college students and extensive research, that:

The emerging adult most thrives when there is access to a mentoring network of belonging centered in the strength of worthy meanings that impart some degree of distance from the conventions of his past and from the larger society with which he must still negotiate terms of entry. (location 2741)

What Seversen found concurs with this finding:

Emerging adults’ journeys to faith progress along pathways of compelling Christian community, service that makes a difference, and mentoring and leadership development that provides care and accountability. They encounter the gospel in churches’ main services, small group settings, and one-on-one meetings with pastors or leaders in coffee shops, pubs, and other third space venues. (3)

Mentoring environments are communities of imagination and practice. Practices are ways of life—things that people do with and for each other to make and keep life human.

Among the many, that might be identified as significant in the emerging adult years, are three in particular that all mentoring environments might strategically recover to serve the formation of emerging adult meaning-making: the practices of hearth, table, and commons (Parks location 4253). A practice of the commons sets at the heart’s core an imagination of we and weaves a way of life that conveys meaning and orients purpose and commitment (location 4311). The purpose of mentoring environments is to provide a place within which emerging adults may discover themselves becoming more at home in the universe (location 4323).

Church leaders and laypeople who join God on mission and hope to engage emerging adults with the gospel may find such mentoring environments and relationship a valuable key to receptivity.

Mentoring communities play their essential role by offering the gifts of recognition, support, challenge, and inspiration and incorporating certain features that distinctively honor and animate the potential of emerging adult lives. These include a network of belonging, big-enough questions, encounters with otherness, vital habits of mind, worthy dreams, and access to images (content) and practices. (Parks location 3842)

“Most significantly,” concludes Seversen, “churches contribute to emerging adults’ preconversion process through the following nine initiatives...:

1. initiating, inviting, including, involving, and investing in emerging adults—immediately
2. encouraging emerging adults to engage in Christian community and behave like Christians before they believe and commit
3. incorporating and retaining emerging adults before or during the evangelization process
4. engaging in evangelism inside the church
5. promoting retention activities, such as service projects within and outside the church
6. blending evangelism and retention strategies
7. joining young adults in mutual risk-taking
8. serving as moral communities in which like-minded friends support, legitimate, and help maintain faith
9. orienting emerging adults in a collective Christian identity that provides meaning, belonging, expectancy, and reaching aspirations, and that helps them navigate the tension of remaining both culturally distinct and culturally engaged.” (Seversen 4)

The literature review of the project provided a wealth of interdisciplinary research on the subject of shame, shame dynamics, emerging adulthood, receptivity, and community that can be recombined to develop best practices that shape church planting in the future, particularly for reaching emerging adults. Effective new churches in the future may need to become shame-free networks of mentoring communities, going out of

their way patiently engaging emerging adults in their winding journey to full adulthood and inviting them to the dance of the triune God with his church.

Research Design Literature

The next step for the project was to design field research that would test the discoveries of the literature review about the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults and the implications for best practices in planting new churches. The literature did not specifically address the project's purpose, linking shame dynamics, gospel receptivity, and church planting. Therefore, the project needed field research designed uniquely to discover and verify these relationships, so I could recombine the pieces of literature insights into the development of best practices that shape church planting.

Since no other study in the literature was available on the project's purpose and our church does not currently operate a ministry to reach emerging adults, the project design was pre-intervention. More specifically, the project utilized a modified form of the popular "appreciative inquiry" approach, as described by Tim Sensing. "Simply, change follows the questions you ask" (169). The collaboration in some form of emerging adults, with those who hope to influence them more humanely and effectively, was a compelling goal for this research. "AI's most powerful tool is the appreciative interview that seeks to 'uncover what gives life to an organization department, or community when at its best'" (170). Efforts to "fix" the church or discern inherent obstacles related to younger generations often fall flat or turn negative, focusing on the institution at its worst. The project hoped to use the "constructionist principle" of appreciative inquiry where "words

create worlds.” Sensing elaborates: “Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state. It is socially constructed, through language and conversations” (Sensing 169).

To verify appropriateness of application of these discoveries to unreached emerging adults, the project needed to explore whether emerging adults themselves were impacted by shame. To avoid harm to human subjects, I realized I would not be able to talk personally with emerging adults about shame without creating or amplifying shame within them. I chose to utilize a web-based survey where emerging adults could self-select through informed consent and remain anonymous. “The purpose of a survey is to describe characteristics or understandings of a large group of people” (Sensing 115). To further minimize harm, the most shame-sensitive questions were posed indirectly: what would their peers say in response to the question.

Verification of the impact of shame upon emerging adults in relation to efforts of churches and their leaders to influence them spiritually was important, as well as gauging how they felt about church participation and the church’s overt and covert messages directed at them. The survey included questions about sources of shame and the presence of defense mechanisms along with opportunities for them to recommend best practices for churches seeking to reach their peers. To measure consensus and divergence of opinion efficiently, a quantitative design was adopted for the emerging adults survey.

The project sought to triangulate the literature review discoveries and what emerging adults themselves said with the perspectives of leaders who seek to influence them spiritually. I wanted to receive input from two groups of leaders: 1) leaders used to working with emerging adults, and 2) leaders who were planting or had recently planted churches. For the first group, I wanted to quantitatively measure the problem or challenge

of reaching emerging adults, but also to receive nuances of observations and best practices qualitatively. According to Michael Patton, “The main purpose of the interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (qtd. in Sensing 104). Therefore, I adopted a mixed methods approach with that group. For the second group, the church planters, I employed open-ended questions in focus groups in order to harvest best practices through cross-pollination of the group dynamic (Sensing 120).

Summary of Literature

The literature review reveals an undiscovered country in the exploration of a new world that presents itself to the Church in the twenty-first century in the West. That country is the frontier of reaching a perpetual age group of 18–34-year-old adults, a majority of whom have not connected with the institutional Church of Jesus Christ in America for one reason or a combination of factors. This frontier is ringed with mountain ranges of shame dynamics which include formidable inherent barriers to gospel receptivity and attraction to church participation. This problem articulated by the project may be accepted as true, but there is much bewilderment and blame in circulation as to the causes of gospel resistance and absence of emerging adults from church programs and services. Six themes emerged from the literature review that are worth summarizing here to provide fodder for the project’s field research that follows.

Awareness and Understanding of Shame

American culture and its populations have changed dramatically and have been constantly changing at a breath-taking pace in the last seventy years. The Church and its leaders struggle to catch up in their awareness of the new dominant spiritual dynamic that

is operating in the unreached generations and people groups in today's context. Shame-impact and shame-aversion and all the overlapping dynamics of shame in households, schools, and churches are powerful undercurrents that make joining God on his mission in the narcissistic West difficult and frustrating. The mission and church leaders suffer from a lack of awareness and the unreached people suffer from misdiagnosis of inherent obstacles to gospel receptivity.

Not only do church leaders need to become aware of shame dynamics in their context, but they need to be educated by their districts and associations. To reach emerging adults in our generation, the literature review suggests that church leaders and congregations they serve need to grow in their understanding of shame as an operative consequence of the fall of the first parents and how narcissism compounds that condition and sends shame-impacted emerging adults into hiding. The understanding of shame will help church leaders address the stagnation of their own congregations and failures associated with evangelism, spiritual formation, and planting new churches.

Compassion for Shame-Impacted Emerging Adults

The literature review offers compelling reasons for changing Christian attitudes about absent generations in their church environments. Church leaders and their people can reinterpret the resistance to attraction and gospel presentation on the part of emerging adults as deeper than mere apathy, skepticism, or hostility. The project uncovers methods of narcissistic self-repair and defense mechanisms unconsciously utilized by emerging adults and other shame-impacted people when others attempt to influence them spiritually. Identifying and discerning these patterns in individuals and families they hope

to engage for Christ and his redemptive work may require adopting more authentic, Christlike compassion for their brokenness, self-defeating reactions, and hopelessness.

Deeper Appreciation for Treasures Addressing Fallen Humanity

Corresponding to, but lagging behind, the changes in spiritual dynamics in Western civilization has been the emergence of a theology of shame among many thought leaders in the Church, based upon new trends in research in the social sciences. I am gaining a new appreciation for the wealth of biblical and theological materials addressing shame as a human condition and the potential of integrating the Christian Faith with contributions from resources from the secular world, products of God's common grace. The literature review suggests that church leaders embrace such an integration and further develop a mature theology of shame that can be taught throughout the Church in a way that can be received and appropriated.

Nonetheless, a robust theology of shame needs to transcend the realm of pastoral care of its members. Based upon these deeper understandings of shame biblically and theologically, a careful missiology of shame needs to be developed as well leading eventually to an ecclesiology of shame for the narcissistic West. The ambition of this project is to provide the foundation and a compelling argument for such endeavors.

Healing of Shame Personally, Corporately, and Culturally

Furthermore, the literature review points to the prospects of healing shame through the redemptive work of Jesus, God's Son. As intimated in the postscript, I myself have experienced a healing of shame in the process of the project. For a local church to reach the unchurched emerging adults in its context, the church itself needs to experience deep healing regarding comparison shame, sexual shame, and perfectionism and

transform its behaviors and speech to be less shaming of each other and visitors to its programs and services. The Holy Spirit can be released to awaken and revive congregations who have been stuck in toxicity for decades in dynamics of shame preventing growth and evangelism. The Church itself can be a witness to the transforming and healing ministry of Jesus for the shame-injured, -impacted, and -averse in our American culture.

Coaxing Evangelism and Patient Disciple-making

The literature suggests a more contextual and relational approach to evangelism and disciple-making. Best practices—of slow conversion, newcomers belonging before they believe, assimilation into the life and ministry of the church through worship and service, active listening, and compassionate understanding—will require patience, transparency, accountability, and trust-building over time. Because of the dynamics of shame, unreached emerging adults need to be coaxed out of hiding into safe environments by leaders who understand shame and defense mechanisms. Engagements with the unreached may need to begin off-campus, and be more relational and less transactional.

Vision for Church Planting as Networks of Mentoring Communities

The project's purpose is to develop best practices that shape new church planting by exploring the impact of shame dynamics upon gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults. The shape of the new church is sovereignly determined by Jesus, the Head of the Church, who promised he would build his church. As they join God on mission, the Holy Spirit will guide church planters in the contextualization process of exegeting their communities and understanding the spiritual dynamics at play as well as

other cultural factors within their people groups and households. Models of church planting are not selected because they are familiar to leaders but correspond to the needs of the context. Shame shapes church planting to be more incarnational and missional, and less dependent upon attraction to a campus and its buildings dedicated to worship. Church leaders and congregations who reach emerging adults for Christ need to recover the muscle memory of the hands and feet of the Body of Christ in learning to build new trusting, compassionate relationships with the lost person, listening deeply and prayerfully into their lives and discerning how God is working around their defenses to heal their shame and save their souls. For emerging adults, the congregation has the opportunity to transform its posture to become networks of mentoring communities to journey beside and guide them through the winding road towards full adulthood, introducing them to the person and work of Christ and his nurturing community of faith.

This synthesis of the concepts introduced by the literature review into six concise themes sets the stage for the research design and methodology to develop best practices of church planting to reach unchurched emerging adults who may be resistant to the gospel due to impacts from shame. This research along these themes may enable us to discern new causal linkages between shame, receptivity, and church planting and make significant contributions toward a more robust theology of shame as well as move the church towards a missiology and ecclesiology of shame.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I introduce the research methodology for this project. The elements for the research include a restatement of the nature and purpose of the project, research questions, and how the selected instruments of the methodology correlate to each of them. It also describes the ministry context and the selection, description, and ethical considerations of the participants in the methodology. The chapter concludes by addressing the reliability and validity of the instruments, how the data is collected and analyzed.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The project is important to the practice of ministry, because it supplies an important piece of the puzzle in reaching the lost in the postmodern era. In particular, leaders in church planting need to know what kind of church should be planted to create an environment of gospel receptivity and to give room for shame-impacted or shame-averse persons in their context. The project explores the degree to which shame causes resistance to a local church plant's efforts to motivate church attendance as well as positive responses to presentations of the Gospel. This perspective is important even in the Bible Belt of the United States in which rural south-central Florida is located.

The purpose of the project is to develop best practices that shape church planting by exploring the impacts of shame dynamics on receptivity to the gospel on unchurched emerging adults. From this exploration, best practices of church planting are identified. In

short, the missiology of shame leads to an ecclesiology of shame. The following research questions guided this research project's methodology and data analysis:

Research Questions

Research Question #1. What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture? Emerging Adult Survey (EAS)

This research question relates to the “developing best practices” and “exploring gospel receptivity...among emerging adults” parts of the project purpose statement. Due to the possible sensitivity of any effort to tap into the shame experienced already by the participant through subjective questioning, the Emerging Adults Survey (EAS) asks the participant to reflect more objectively about engaging their peer group thus avoiding the hazards of potential harm. All the questions in this survey relate to this research question. Question 1 on the SurveyMonkey uses “skip logic” for “informed consent”. Question 2 asks the participant their current age. Question 3 determines their ownership of identifying as a public or private church-attender or non-attender, and measures their sensitivity to the peer group on such identification. Questions 4-5 deal with the efforts of churches to attract unreached emerging adults through need-based programs and outreach events, starting with an easy-to-answer question. Questions 6-7 relate directly to receptivity to gospel presentations or influence on emerging adults spiritually by suggesting ways shame might cause resistance, starting with an easy-to-answer question. Questions 8-9 register the impact of feelings of “worthlessness” in emerging adults that tend to produce self-repair behaviors and defense mechanisms, respectively. Question 10

suggests a variety of ways churches engage and influence emerging adults and asks the participant to select that which they think would be most effective.

Question 1 is answered as “yes” or “no” regarding consent. Question 2 is multiple choice on age categories: 1) under 18, 2) 18-25, 3) 26-34, and 4) over 34. Question 3 is also multiple choice. “Should someone ask you to identify your regular practice, your immediate answer would be...a) a church-attender or b) non-church attender.” Questions 4-7 use a five-point Lickert scale to measure the intensity of agreement or disagreement with each positive or negative statement, permitting a “no opinion” response to help prevent harm. Questions 8 and 9 use third person ranking (1 being most common) to select the most common reactions to shame incidents in their peer group. Question 10 uses ranking to facilitate input on best practices of Christians to engage and influence emerging adults.

Research Question #2. What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?

This research question addresses both the “develop best practices that shape church planting” portion and the “exploring the impacts of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults” portion of the purpose statement. The Pastor-District Superintendent Interviews (PDSI) instrument, as a qualitative methodology, explores a wide range of obstacles that seem inherent in the experience of emerging adults residing in the State of Florida in their efforts to strategize engagement and evangelism methods.

The Pastor-District Superintendent Interviews (PDSI) use semi-structural interview protocols that facilitate a summary of responses tethered to themes essential to the field research objectives of the project, while permitting elaboration from participants to enable the adequate mining of insights that emerge. In order to elicit a broad range of participation across the ten districts of the Trevecca Nazarene University education zone of the southeastern United States, I selected sixteen participants among superintendents and those local pastors or emerging adult ministers recommended by their superintendents, and I interviewed each participant only once in a one-on-one confidential setting. I predetermined seven questions and asked them in the same order. Irving Seidman emphasizes the importance of considerate questions, because “at the root of...interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman 3). I conducted the PDSI interviews by videoconferencing over the Internet one-on-one. I supplied the participant with a list of the pre-determined questions one week before the scheduled meeting along with a short summary of the nature of the project, so that the participant would be prepared to respond more thoughtfully and accurately. I recorded PDSI meetings using Zoom® technology.

I began the meeting with a warm welcome and brief explanation of the project. Small talk was limited to one minute, after which the interviewer proceeded with the first question. The order of questions was predetermined. Questions were repeated twice, if requested. After the participant gave an initial response to the question, the interviewer sometimes asked the participant to clarify or elaborate on a portion of their response by saying: “Would you clarify what you meant by...?” or “Tell me more about....” Or “Why do you think that is so?”

These PDSI interviews provided insights from leaders and ministry practitioners that helped to triangulate the findings from the literature review and Emerging Adult Survey (EAS) regarding the impacts of shame on emerging adult receptivity to spiritual influence from local churches and individual Christians.

Research Question #3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planters in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame culture?

This research question summarizes the findings of the literature review and all instruments to achieve a consensus of concepts and perspectives that are useful to avoid inherent obstacles of resistance and to embrace practices of ministry that effectively engage emerging adults and open their receptivity to the gospel. This question related to all parts of the project's purpose. The Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG) instrument supplied the needed consensus to summarize best practices and additional insights that would inform an understanding of shame dynamics as they impacted emerging adults and shaped the planting of new churches. Questions 1 and 2 probed for a broad perspective from participants on the culture of narcissism and the spiritual attitudes of emerging adults that created obstacles. Question 3 asked participants for ways the church unwittingly shamed unreached emerging adults counterproductively. Question 4 discussed the shape of shame-free churches or the safety of environments of engagement. Question 5 reflected on the order and content of gospel presentations that encouraged gospel receptivity among emerging adults.

The moderator and a note-taker teamed up to serve each focus group and debrief immediately afterwards. Two groups of Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG) meetings were scheduled with eight to ten participants each, using videoconferencing. These groups consisted of practitioners who were currently or have in the last ten years planted churches in the southeastern United States region from the ten districts that make up the Trevecca Nazarene University educational zone. “Focus group theory advocates selecting participants along homogeneous and theoretical meaningful dimensions and criteria. If you need diversity heterogeneity, then add more focus groups....research shows focus groups work best when the participants are strangers” (Sensing 120). One group featured church planters from Florida, reflecting the rich ethnic diversity of the state; the other group from districts outside the State of Florida was more ethnically homogeneous.

Predetermined questions and a summary of the nature and objectives of the project were sent out to each group of participants one week ahead of the scheduled meeting so that they would be more prepared to participate in the discussion, and more thoughtful and reflective of their experience and viewpoints. The focus group moderator began the session with a warm welcome and introduction of focus group participants. A brief explanation of the project provided context and trajectory of the discussion. The moderator laid the ground rules of the discussion (regarding talkativeness, interruptions, confidentiality, anonymity, and mutual respect) and initiated discussion by stating the first question. Field notes were taken by the note-taker as the session was being recorded using Zoom® technology. Afterwards, the session was carefully transcribed and demographic information on the participants were documented.

The questions were predetermined and open-ended. During the discussion, the facilitator helped to ensure that multiple perspectives were given time to emerge without one or two participants dominating the time. The facilitator was attentive to the discussion flow and called out the participant who is the most silent. The last question was: “Is there something I should have asked that I did not ask?” If one such question was suggested, the group was welcomed to respond to it as well.

Ministry Contexts

Geographical Context

My local context is roughly a microcosm of the Florida MegaRegion (according to the America2050.org study). Sebring, Florida in Highlands County is a relatively poor retirement community of 11,000 surging to 30,000 in the winter months in a county of 99,000. It is projected to become the apex of “the perfect storm” of the convergence of three demographic waves: 1) robust new retirement settlement from the northern tier of states and Canada due to its published lowest cost of living in the United States, 2) retirement resettlement from the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of Florida due to overpopulation issues, and 3) overwhelming streams of immigration of Hispanics, Haitian, and Portuguese families from the Caribbean and Central/South America. The county has approved a “Villages-Style” development plan between Sebring and Spring Lake (to the east) by Signature H Corporation. There are presently 65,000 vacant residential lots for sale in the county already.

Relevant Demographics and Political Context

Approximately 20 percent of the county population was under age 21. Local business leadership was invested in attracting retirement settlers, while youth

development was limited to education and scholastic/traveling team sports. The diatribe, “There’s nothing here to keep kids out of trouble,” was lamented universally with no reasonable prospects of development on the horizon. Meanwhile, the breakdown of the nuclear family continued rapidly as poverty, petty crime, suicide, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse were increasing at startling rates. Peer pressure drove youth into conformity with worldly values of instant gratification, hedonism, and recreation (fishing, hunting, mudding, and bonfires in the Florida Scrub) where they reportedly got into trouble.

Religious Context

One of 200 churches in the Sebring vicinity, the Church of the Nazarene of Sebring, which I was called to pastor in September of 2018, is a local church with a 77-year legacy of ministry, that is aging out (average age is 74), deflating financially, and fairly evangelistically sterile, until just recently. They are frustrated that their children and grandchildren have left the church across the last dozen years, and do not understand why.

In view of the projected population increases and new community developments locally and regionally, the Southern Florida District Superintendent, Dr. Brian Wilson, has asked for my help in advising the church leaders he leads on initiatives and systems of church planting. I also have a strong relationship with the incoming district superintendent of the other Florida Nazarene district, Dale Schafer, who respects my church planter coaching work, including the Nazarene Organic Church Network and DCPI on the Northwest Illinois and Michigan Districts.

Cultural Context

The American context is a rapidly moving target; it is prudent to constantly watch for signs of significant cultural change that will require that we adjust our understanding of how to contextualize the gospel. Psychologists, sociologists and theologians are calling attention to the emerging impact of shame in their recent writings.

Denominational leaders and local church pastors are frustrated and overwhelmed by the increasing resistance of Americans to spiritual things, the infrequency of church attendance, and lack of rootedness in the family. All church leaders are looking for answers to reach the lost and retain the audience and influence. Shame could be a significant factor in this resistance.

If America has indeed entered a “post-Christian” era, church leaders must treat it like any other unreached mission field. If it is a bona fide mission field, they must identify unreached people groups, and seek to understand their culture, including the prevailing spiritual dynamic. They must be accurate in their diagnosis lest they miss the mark in treatment with the gospel. Shame is an overlooked spiritual dynamic.

A staggering segment of American population is subject to narcissism and a conforming culture of shame which leaves the shamed with no way to return to honor. Attractional, established churches are not highly relational, and are bewildered by low church attendance and the ineffectiveness of their outreach programs. A significant recalibration may be needed.

America’s population is also on the move. The population of America is increasing through immigration. Disenfranchised and resented by a majority of current citizens, these new neighbors experience shame due to the frustrating path to citizenship

and inclusion in our communities. Ethnic church planting challenges the resources and ingenuity of districts and local churches who have not yet thought deeply about world missions reaching their own shores and the attendant spiritual dynamics involved.

Second and third generation immigrants represent an additional need for church planting as English becomes their heart language and they are assimilated into American culture. This fragments their extended family and promotes social ostracism.

American youth are in the crosshairs of the world system and secular evangelists have their full attention. Shaming is a powerful tool of conformity for their peers as well. The Church needs to be well-informed and equipped to address this dynamic.

Church growth is challenged by the high frequency in which people relocate. Population shifts through the year 2050 compel leaders to plant new churches to minister to them until they uproot and leave. This is a challenge to rethink their ecclesiology and allocation of resources.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

I offered emerging adults ages 18-34 in America from institutions of higher learning in south central Florida the opportunity to participate in the survey, because I wanted to know their perspective across the region. Due to the cognitive abilities required to take a survey of this level of reflection, the project selected college students for the Emerging Adults Survey. I targeted a minimum of 100 students (approximately proportionate in gender to the population of the student body) from these two institutions for an ample sampling size of emerging adults.

I selected lead pastors and clergy who work with emerging adults for interviews, because I wanted to know what they saw and experienced in their outreach and pastoral work with this demographic. I selected these practitioners from the ten Nazarene districts on the Trevecca Nazarene University educational zone by recommendation of their superintendents, one from each district, who have demonstrated some effectiveness and expertise in practices of emerging adult ministry. I targeted a total of ten local practitioners.

I selected some district superintendents in the southeastern United States for individual interviews due to their depth of experience and broad understanding of their context and mission. While I respectfully invited all those superintendents to participate, I estimated realistically that only six participants would accept due to time limits and availability (interim assignments, sabbaticals, crises, etc.).

I selected church planters in the southeastern United States, especially the State of Florida, because of the broad diversity and proximity to my local context. Those selected fulfilled three criteria: 1) they were currently planting a church or had planted a church successfully within the last ten years, 2) emerging adults were one of the targeted segments of the church plant, and 3) they were associated with the Church of the Nazarene in good standing or were planting a church of any denomination in Highlands County, Florida. The field research focused on recent experiences of church planting in order to be relevant to the issue of impacts of shame on gospel receptivity of emerging adults in this era.

Description of Participants

The emerging adults selected for field research were males and females, with college experience, ages 18-34 residing, at least temporarily, in America at the time of conduction of the methodology, whether or not they identified as Christian church-goers. Students enrolled in or graduated from college, having earned a high school diploma or equivalent, were selected to participate upon informed consent. Warner University of Lake Wales, Florida and South Florida State College of Avon Park, Florida attract a diverse set of students from the State of Florida and beyond. I was an adjunct instructor at the time for online learning at Warner University. Ethnicity, season of life, vocation or other demographics were not considered as significantly relevant to the Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), and therefore such data were not collected.

Lead pastors and clergy who worked with emerging adults participated in the Pastor-District Superintendent Interviews (PDSI). I selected local clergy serving in Highlands County, Florida based upon their effectiveness in working with emerging adults, even though they did not serve in the Church of the Nazarene. Outside of Highlands County, participating clergy served in some kind of assignment with the Church of the Nazarene. Demographic data like gender, age, ethnicity, and vocation were collected on each participant at the beginning of the interview. Season of life, education level, and other demographic data were not considered relevant to the PDSI methodology for this project.

District Superintendents from the ten districts on the Trevecca Nazarene University educational zone participated by virtue of their judicatory position. Again, demographic data like gender, age, and ethnicity, were collected on each participant at

the beginning of the interview. Season of life, education level, and other demographic data were not considered relevant to the PDSI methodology for this project.

Only church planters participated in the two Church Planter Focus Groups (CPFG). I selected them for their significant experience in leading church planting or officially training under a church planter for more than one year. Trainees who were emerging adults at the time of the study were preferred to later-life trainees in order to capture their empathetic perspectives. For the Florida CPFG, the participants were ethnically diverse. For the other CPFG, documentation of ethnicity was collected but such diversity was not intentional. Gender, age, vocational/bi-vocational, and education level data were noted during the personal introduction segment of both CPFG groups.

Ethical Considerations

Participants engaged in the methodology only after giving informed consent, which is essential to this study. Each one participated by free choice with no element of fraud, deceit, duress, or other unfair inducements or tactics of manipulation. Each participant was presented with a concise summary of information about the nature and purpose of the project to help them decide to participate. If the participant freely gave their informed consent at the beginning of the instrument, they continued with the survey, interview, or focus group meeting. For the EAS survey, the first question of the SurveyMonkey requested informed consent. If the potential participant answered negatively, the SurveyMonkey, using skip technology, ended the survey and exited the program with a “thank you” message. A positive response to the informed consent question led the participant to the second question.

For all three instruments of this study, an informed consent was utilized for each participant, whether electronic or hardcopy. The final draft of these informed consent forms can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.

Measures were taken in this project to protect the participant. Each participant was assured of the confidentiality of all individual contributions. For the EAS and PDSI instruments, by nature of the methodology's emphasis on privacy, the informed consent explicitly stated that the privacy of participants was assured. Confidentiality for the EAS instrument was documented at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. For EAS, responses were aggregated and, therefore, the identity of respondents did not appear on the analysis reports. Anonymity was maintained throughout this project from the point of first participation to the dissemination of data in the reporting phase. For the PDSI and CPFPG, pseudonyms, not actual names of participants, were used. These participants were offered the opportunity to select their "made-up" name. For the CPFPG, group members signed a confidentiality agreement as well as an informed consent form, guaranteeing that participants would refrain from repeating or sharing information heard during the group meeting or the identity of any other participant.

All research data was stored securely in a locked file cabinet drawer in my locked pastor's office. Upon the completion of the project, all research data hard copies were shredded and all digital files deleted.

Instrumentation

This project used three instruments for conducting the field research. The instruments used were surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The surveys were strictly quantitative; the interviews were both quantitative and qualitative; the focus groups were

strictly qualitative. All three instruments were researcher-designed, although a reasonable, unsatisfactory search for a standardized survey was performed. (Measures of Religiosity).

Surveys with emerging adults were used in the Emerging Adult Survey (EAS). The survey was quantitative and researcher-designed due to the uniqueness of the project's nature and purpose. From suggested multiple choices, each participant made choices that were synthesized into best practices of engagement and presentation by Christians seeking to influence this age group spiritually. SurveyMonkey allowed a maximum capacity of ten questions, which were utilized fully as closed-ended questions in this study for informed consent, demographic data, and identification of shame or worthlessness as a dominant spiritual dynamic, and narcissistic self-repair and defense mechanism as manifested coping strategies in the emerging adult's peer groups. Data from this instrument measured the prevalence of the problem of shame, and the probability that coping strategies create significant resistance to spiritual influence from individual Christians and churches. This measure supplied a prima facie case for the project's purpose of developing best practices in church planting by showing that shame was felt or avoided in a way that repelled, not attracted like guilt, emerging adults from church and the Christian faith as currently posed and propagated. I anticipated that this survey will either confirm or repudiate conjectures about the impact of shame on gospel receptivity made in the literature review.

Interviews with pastors and district superintendents were used in the Pastors and District Superintendent Interview (PDSI). These interviews were both qualitative and quantitative. I designed two interview questions to reap perspectives on the comparative

receptivity of different age groups and effectiveness of evangelism and outreach strategies, yielding quantifiable results. The rest of the interview mined qualifiable and subjective insights expressed by the participants. The participants were afforded the opportunity to express from the practice of ministry their perspectives on the inherent obstacles to outreach and evangelism targeting unreached emerging adults. I anticipated that these interviews will reveal the degree of awareness that shame is a greater obstacle than guilt or sociological and cultural factors in the resistance of emerging adults, and may identify specific practices of ministry that inherently trigger undesirable reactions. Furthermore, these interviews provided triangulation with the EAS survey for problem recognition, confirmation, or repudiation of theories posited in the literature review, and practical insights leading to ministry transformation in developing outreach, presenting the gospel, and shaping church planting strategies and environments.

I used focus groups with church planting practitioners in the Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG). I designed five open-ended questions and asked both groups. I designed the questions to guide the focus groups to consider four themes for discussion that related to reaching emerging adults for Christ and conserving the results of evangelism through innovative and effective church planting methods, models, and systems of discipleship, worship, fellowship, and service. Church planters and those they were currently training on the job offered a wealth of experience from efforts at contextualization as well as from testing approaches and methods of engagement and evangelism. In their laboratory of experience, these participants challenged assumptions, formulated strategic plans, built teams, raised funds, and reality tested for effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The CPFG offered them a forum to share their findings and learn from others in the field of

harvest. The interaction of the participants provided the study with the ability to develop best practices of church planting and evangelism of unreached emerging adults from the front-line trenches of spiritual warfare where “getting it right” counted the most. A synthesis of their responses supplied valuable depth of understanding and practical relevance for this study that can be applied broadly in the American Church. Examples of success in engaging unreached emerging adults and innovative church shapes that do not depend upon public attraction can be catalogued and analyzed from these groups. Comparisons and contrasts from Florida’s ethnically diverse focus group and the more homogeneous regional group may also provide further insights into the impact of shame in the dominant culture of America versus ethnic-American subcultures where generational dynamics are more pronounced.

Expert Review

Expert Review, with experts chosen for their experience in different areas of expertise, was employed to refine the questions in the Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), Pastor-District Superintendent Interview (PDSI), and Church Planter Focus Groups (CPFG). My project coach, Dr. Chris Kiesling of Asbury Theological Seminary, is a theological and practical expert on the age group of emerging adults. He helped me tailor the language and level the concepts of the EAS to fit emerging adults appropriately. For PDSI, Rev. James Boardman, a recently retired pastor and former college professor with decades of experience, most recently in Florida, provided both a shepherding touch to evaluating the questions and reflection on how participants might perceive the question. For CPFG, my Doctor of Ministry lead cohort instructor, Dr. Winfield Bevins, who also

led the Church Planting Initiative globally evaluated the questions from the standpoint of scholarship, program goals, and the church planting practitioner perspective.

The expert review instrument used can be found in the appendix as well as the letter sent to the experts to apprise them of the problem and purpose of the project and to introduce them to the research question applicable to the instrument they reviewed. The protocol used with the experts addressed the alignment of the question with the project purpose and the research question, as to which were advisable, should be included or eliminated, and whether new items should be added. Based upon the responses of these experts, I made appropriate adjustments to the instruments.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

The reliability of the project design was ensured by the consistency and inclusiveness of the approach and multi-methods design of the project. The participants included in this approach were representatives of the subject demographic in the study (emerging adults) as well as practitioners who customarily worked with this demographic (lead pastors, staff ministers, and church planters and trainees) as well as those who led and equipped them (district superintendents). Key theme insights and best practices of ministry were consistently discerned from all groups of participants throughout the three instruments used. Use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies across three instruments plumbing three vantagepoints of perspective served to triangulate and confirm the results leading to valuable findings. I used expert review using three carefully selected experts rather than pilot tests in order to perfect the instruments to eliminate ambiguous wording, conflicting internal inquiries, self-defeating order of questions, and inappropriate or potentially harmful topics, to provide correlation abilities to gauge

reliability, and to include any key elements that were missing. The mixed methods approach and expert reviews added to the trustworthiness and generalization of the findings. A step-by-step approach to data collection across the three instruments also ensured consistency in implementing the field research. I designed the instruments to align with the research questions comprehensively in order to reveal the dominance of shame dynamics in emerging adults, measure the impact of shame as compounded by narcissistic culture upon gospel receptivity among emerging adults, and discern the implications such impacts suggest for shaping church planting.

The validity of this study to the practice of ministry in general, and church planting in particular, is promoted by the content of the questions within each instrument. EAS2 isolated the responses in the survey that came from emerging adults themselves. EAS3 measured the presence of shame in participants in this study in regard to the sources of and the way they anchored identity and their comfort within their peer group knowing them in those terms. EAS4-6 explored the receptivity of emerging adults to efforts of Christians and churches to influence emerging adults. EAS7 indicated the presence of intellectual shame of the Christian faith in American culture. EAS8-9 began to identify the most significant narcissistic self-repair and defense mechanisms which served as obstacles to overcome in evangelism and disciple-making by the church. Identity of obstacles provided touchpoints for developing best practices of evangelism and church planting. EAS10 gave participants from the target group the opportunity to speak out about best and worst practices of the church in engagement. This array of questioning offers valuable information for practitioners of ministry, especially church planters, as they seek ways to win this age group.

Both DSPI and CPFG instruments harvested the fruit of understanding from the practitioner side of the engagement, further lending to the validity of the study. DSPI1-2 and CPFG1-2 gauged the difficulty of reaching emerging adults in comparison to other age groups. DSPI3 evaluated the effectiveness of evangelism strategies in general. DSPI4-7 and CPFG3-5 reflected upon inherent obstacles to overcome, including shame dynamics, in engaging unreached emerging adults with the gospel. The scope of DSPI was limited to engagement and evangelism while CPFG added reflections on the shape of new churches as safe environments for shame-impacted or -averse emerging adults.

Data Collection

All three instruments in this pre-intervention project were conducted and data collected between April and June 2021. For EAS, permission request letters were sent to the presidents of Warner University and South Florida State College-Avon Park, Florida in January 2021. Subsequent to written approval, I scheduled a meeting with a college designate (like director of online learning) to determine the protocols of sending out the email to protect privacy of students. I sent participants in the EAS study invitations through email with a link to the SurveyMonkey survey in April with a 30-day window to respond voluntarily. As a quantitative methodology, a 20 percent return rate was anticipated. Scoring was done automatically by the SurveyMonkey software which generated reports within ten days of the announced close of voluntary submissions.

Interviewing using a mixed-methods design yielded both quantitative and qualitative data in an efficient manner. Single interviews were appropriate in this case because the topic could be “effectively examined in a single interaction” (May). Participants were given dedicated time to respond in depth as prompted by the

interviewer using defined protocols. Restatement, reflection of feelings, and interpretations are acceptable interview techniques to confirm the meaning expressed by the participant. Sarah Knox and Alan Burkard temper the encouragement of elaboration with the warning to “refrain from therapeutic responses to avoid imposing their views and biases on the area of interest” (13). The interviewer maintained dispassionate interest during the interview following the prescribed order of questioning, while permitting the participant to give examples from personal narratives and learn by responding to the questions in the process.

For both PDSI and CPFPG instruments, I sent permission request letters to all ten district superintendents on the Trevecca Nazarene University educational zone along with invitations to the district superintendents to participate personally and nominate practitioners from their districts for both the PDSI interviews and CPFPG groups. I recruited local, non-Nazarene pastors and sent informed consent letters via email to them for the PDSI interviews in March. PDSI interviews began in April. I finalized the participants in CPFPG in March and sent informed consent letters via email by April 1 to be due by the scheduled group meeting. I held the CPFPG groups in Florida in May and ex-Florida in June. I record the interviews and focus group meetings using Zoom® technology and subsequently transcribed and attached to field notes of each engagement. I stored all materials securely in a locked facility with restricted access.

The mixed methods of the PDSI interviews and the qualitative data from the CPFPG meetings yielded rich data of thoughtful reflection on the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults. Without prejudice or judgment, I gathered varieties of perspective from district superintendents, lead pastors,

staff ministers oriented to emerging adults, and church planters and trainees. . The CPFPG meetings were opportunities to gain fresh awareness of issues, compare notes of experience, cross-pollenate ideas, create innovation, and arrive at consensus on best practices.

The benefit of using focus groups in this field research moved beyond the triangulation of individual interviews with the literature review and Emerging Adult Survey (EAS). CPFPG instrumentation added an interactive dimension to the project, as Sensing explains:

The synergy of the group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group had been interviewed separately. One person's response may prompt or modify another person's memory of an event and its details. Because not everyone will have the same views and experience, participants influence one another. Differences in age, gender, education, access to resources, and other factors will prompt a variety of responses that may not emerge in a homogenous group setting or from the individual interview. (120)

The teamwork of the moderator and note-taker in post-session conference ensured the accuracy, completeness, and conservation of the data collected.

Data Analysis

The project was a pre-intervention approach to the problem of gospel receptivity among emerging adults impacted by shame compounded by a narcissistic culture and the probability of addressing it by shaping church planting best practices from insights gained in the study. Once collected, data was analyzed thoroughly and appropriately according to the instrument used. The quantitative data from the Emerging Adult Survey (EAS) was automatically collected and analyzed by the SurveyMonkey software. A wide varied of reports were generated from the software. A comprehensive analysis of all participants was first generated to gain insight from all responses without respect to age

or identification with church. Next, the data was analyzed isolating only participants in the 18-34 age category. Afterwards, the four categories of identification with church were compared from within the 18-34 age category to identify patterns in responses.

Correlations and coefficients of variation were computed and recorded to document degrees of reliability.

I read the Pastor-District Superintendent Interview (PDSI) field notes and transcripts twice for each interview. I then sorted the interviews according to vocation (district superintendent, lead pastor, and staff minister) categories. Responses from each vocation category was summarized separately in order of the questions. Then, I noted comparisons and contrasts per question across the vocation category to detect any significant patterns in responses. Alignment in conceptualization, perspectives, and I noted best practices in the hierarchy. Conclusions were summarized in one document and compared with the data that corresponded with the EAS quantitative yielded to note any disconnects in perspectives and differences in recommendations. In particular, I compared the quantitative data in both EAS and PDSI to see if emerging adults and practitioners view engagement the same way.

Awareness and best practice qualitative data analysis was particularly critical for the Church Planter Focus Groups (CPFG) instrument. I read the field notes and transcripts twice for both groups. I compared the responses from the two groups to explore any significant variance between the ethnically diverse group and the more homogenous group. The analyses of EAS and PDSI were copied on different colored paper and cut up and sorted according to theme and posted on a bulletin board. Because church planters and the trainees would most benefit professionally from the full set of

findings from this project, I took special care (a third reading of all notes) to consider all the nuances of the interactions to capture as much relevant insight as possible. A summary of the analysis was copied on white paper and cut up into themes and posted like the EAS and PDSI posts. Once the sorting and posting were finished, I completed a report on the triangulation of these instruments with the literature review.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

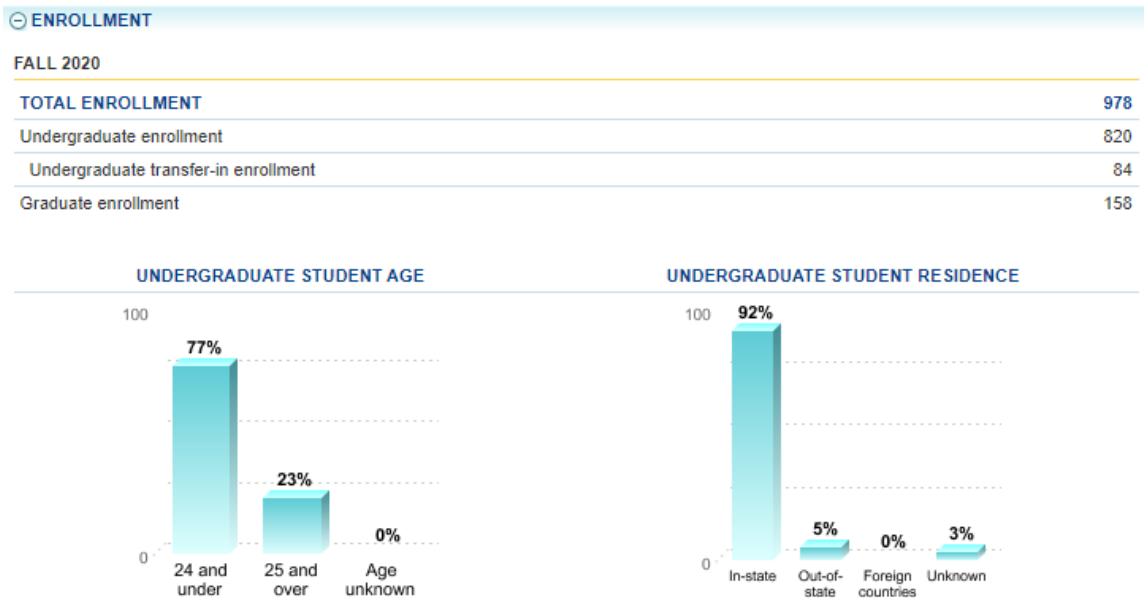
This chapter examines evidence for the project collected from the execution of three field research instruments described in the methodology of Chapter 3. The project addresses the problem of the tendency away from gospel receptivity among emerging adults as defined and the evident lack of attraction to church as they know it in this age group in Florida and beyond in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this project is to develop best practices that may shape future church planting that would reach emerging adults by exploring the impact of shame dynamics upon their gospel receptivity.

First, this chapter accounts for the actual participation in the three field instruments, as described and anticipated in the previous chapter. Next, it organizes analysis of the data collected from the instruments according to the research questions outlined by the project. Finally, this chapter closes with the major findings discovered from analysis of the data.

Participants

Instruments for the field research were designed to gather input from emerging adults themselves, district leaders who strategize church planting and oversee the evangelism in their territories, lead pastors and staff ministers who engage and shepherd emerging adults, and recently successful church planters. To involve participation from emerging adults, I approached two Florida area institutions of higher learning and made applications to their IRB boards: South Florida State College-Avon Park, Florida and

Warner University of Lake Wales, Florida. Only the latter approved the application. Participants in the first instrument, the Emerging Adults Survey, were self-selected from among students at Warner University. This instrument’s design did neither prevent participants from ages outside the target range nor from completing multiple surveys. Warner University had a total Fall 2020 enrollment of 978 students, as reported to College Navigator. Of undergraduate students, 92 percent resided in Florida, and 77 percent were 24 and under in age. In gender, the student body consisted of 47 percent female and 53 percent male. The project instrument did not consider it necessary to request demographic information as relevant to the project’s purpose, given the demographic make-up of the school. The EAS SurveyMonkey link and invitation were sent to the entire student body in late April and September of 2021.



- Age data are reported for Fall 2019.
- Residence data are reported for first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates.

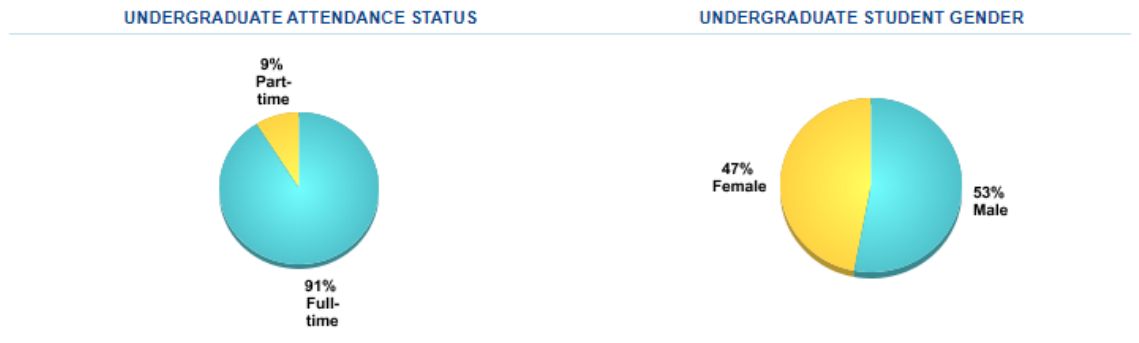


Figure 4.1. Warner Enrollment for Emerging Adult Survey (EAS)

Actual participants in the Pastors and District Superintendent Interview (PDSI) instrument included fourteen Nazarenes from Florida and the Trevecca (southeastern United States) educational region along with four other non-Nazarene ministers in our local community of Sebring, Florida. Of the Nazarene participants, four were district superintendents, eight were lead pastors (one of which was a church planter), one was a pastor to emerging adults, and one was a chaplain. Of the non-Nazarene participants, two were lead pastors and two were discipleship ministers. Local churches represented were

Baptist, United Methodist, and an independent Bible Church.

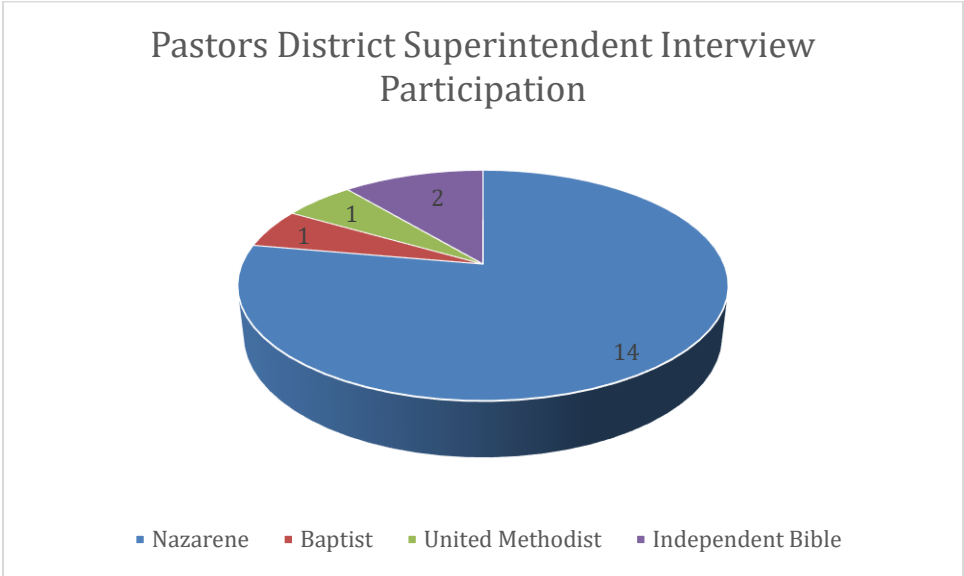
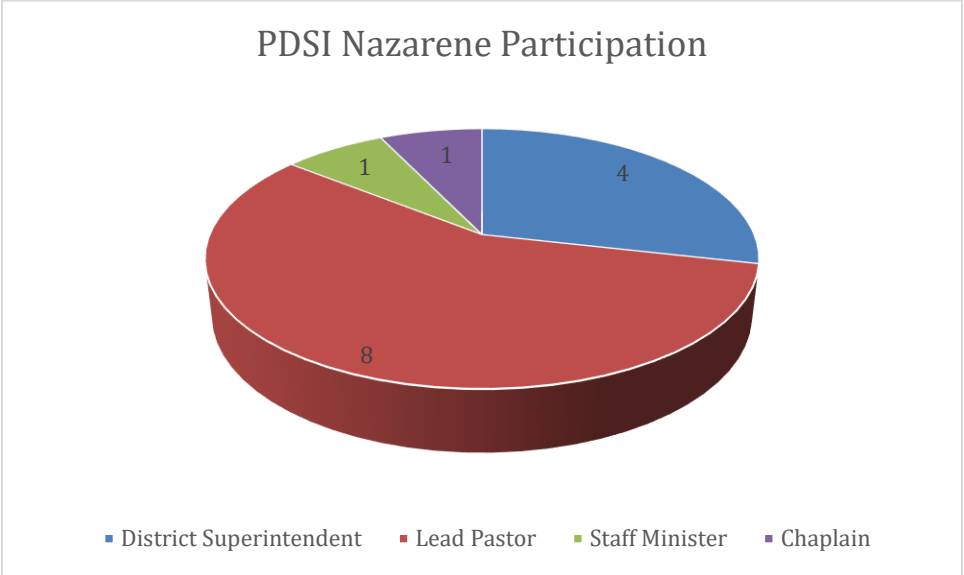


Figure 4.2. Pastor District Superintendent Interview Participants (PDSI)

Finally, the Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG) instrument was used with three focus groups instead of two in order to involve enough church planters (9) whose schedules were difficult for arranging group participation. Focus groups ranged in size

from two to four participants, which did not maximize the cross-pollination of ideas effect of the instruments as hoped. Five participants were from the two Florida districts, and the others were one each from the districts of South Carolina, the Mid-South, Georgia, and Central Gulf Coast.

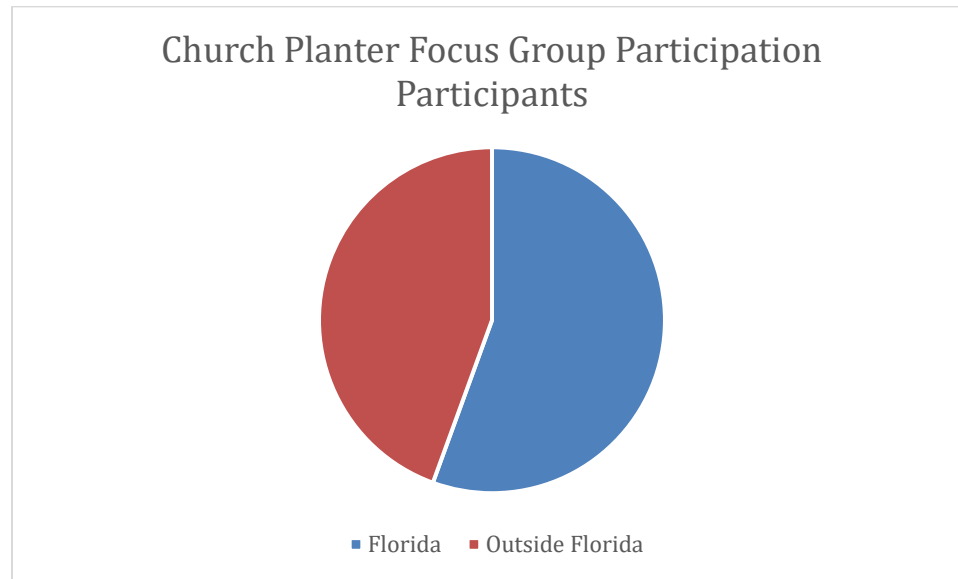


Figure 4.3. Church Planter Focus Group Participants (CPFPG)

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

Research Question #1. What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture?

This research question is key to understanding the spiritual dynamics, perspectives, and attitudes of emerging adults (18-34) to unlock gospel receptivity and shape church planting by inviting churched and unreached emerging adults speak for themselves and reflect upon how they believe their peers respond to Church and attempts to influence them spiritually. The backdrop of this question consisted of the perspectives

of church leaders (district superintendents, local ministers of legacy churches, and church planters). The Emerging Adults Survey furnished a possible reality check to the perspectives of church leaders, and provided data to show degrees of correlation and divergence.

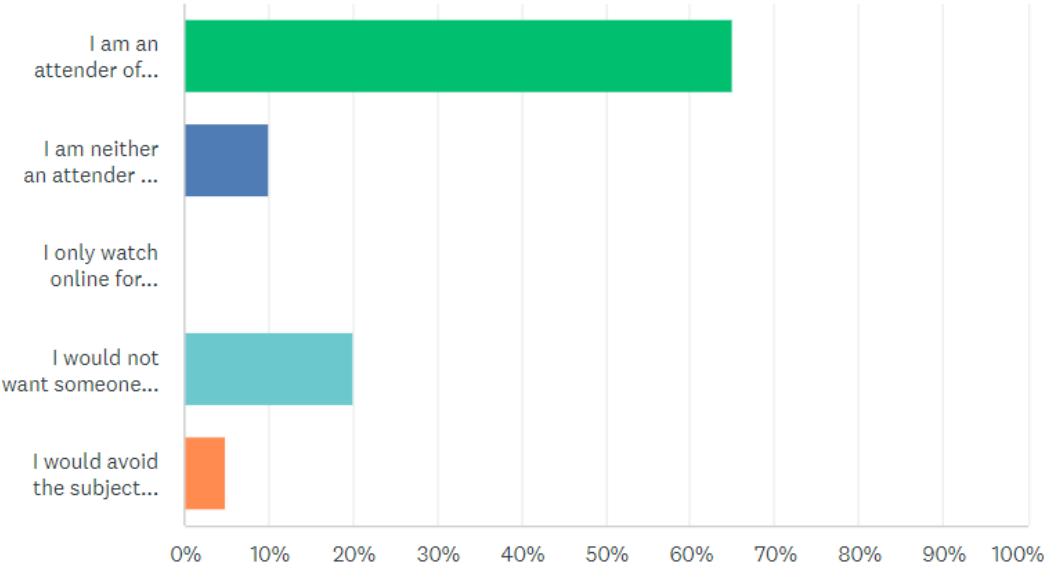
The Pastors District Superintendent Interviews included a quantitative section of three questions, the first two of which gauged the difficulty of gaining a positive response to attractational invitations to the church campus, and secondly to gospel presentations. According to PDSIQ1, Emerging Adults ranked as the least receptive age group to attraction to church attendance of all age groups with a mean of 4.3 out of 5, a standard deviation of 1.6, and a variance of 2.4 (the highest variation of any age group). According to PDSIQ2, Emerging Adults ranked as the least receptive to gospel presentations of all age groups with a mean of 4.6 out of 5, a standard deviation of 1.3, and a variance of 1.6 (the highest of any age group.) Therefore, on both fronts, emerging adults were perceived by most church leaders as the most resistant age group to reach for Christ and his Church. CPMGQ2 asked each focus group of church planters about the spiritual attitudes of emerging adults in their community, particularly those who were unreached. Their responses were clearly tied to their local contexts and varied widely.

What did emerging adults surveyed say about current engagement between the Church and their peers, and what they viewed as best and worst practices? EASQ2 offered emerging adult survey participants the opportunity to express their level of participation and of comfort with identifying with a local church. Of those surveyed, 65 percent openly identified with worshipping publicly at a local church. None attended *only* on-line worship, leaving 35 percent who either did not consider worship attendance as a

part of their core identity (20 percent), did not attend regularly (10 percent), and hid their religious practices temporarily from new acquaintances (5 percent). This large minority of this particular sampling may have indicated a significant level of shame impact or aversion to public worship.

I would most likely identify myself to someone with whom just becoming acquainted:

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



▼ I am an attender of public worship.	65.00%	26
▼ I am neither an attender of public worship nor a watcher of online worship.	10.00%	4
▼ I only watch online for worship.	0.00%	0
▼ I would not want someone to define me partly by my worship practices.	20.00%	8
▼ I would avoid the subject until I learned more about the worship practices of my new acquaintance.	5.00%	2
TOTAL		40

Figure 4.4. Emerging Adult Survey Question #2 (EASQ2)

Adding to this insight of identifying with church towards best practices, EASQ5 tests emerging adult participants’ perception of the church’s understanding of their peer group and their needs. They were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: “Most churches do not understand my friends and what interests them most.” To this negative statement, 42.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed, with only 20 percent undecided. This may have indicated that approximately two-thirds of emerging adults view the Church as out-of-touch with their peer group, suggesting that church leaders need to be more intentional about relating with and listening actively to this age group. These results supported the suspicion of a generational gap in the Church.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	10.00% 4
Agree	32.50% 13
Neither agree nor disagree	20.00% 8
Disagree	30.00% 12
Strongly disagree	7.50% 3
TOTAL	40

Most churches do not understand my friends and what interests them most.

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3

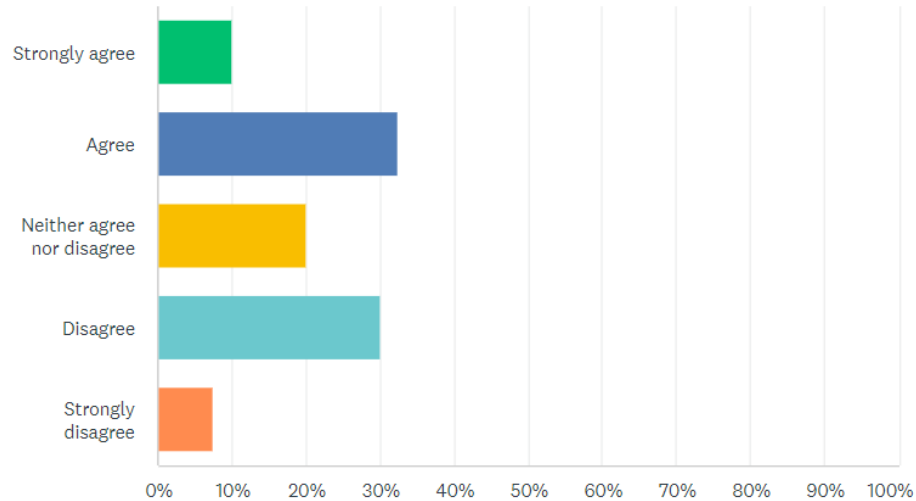


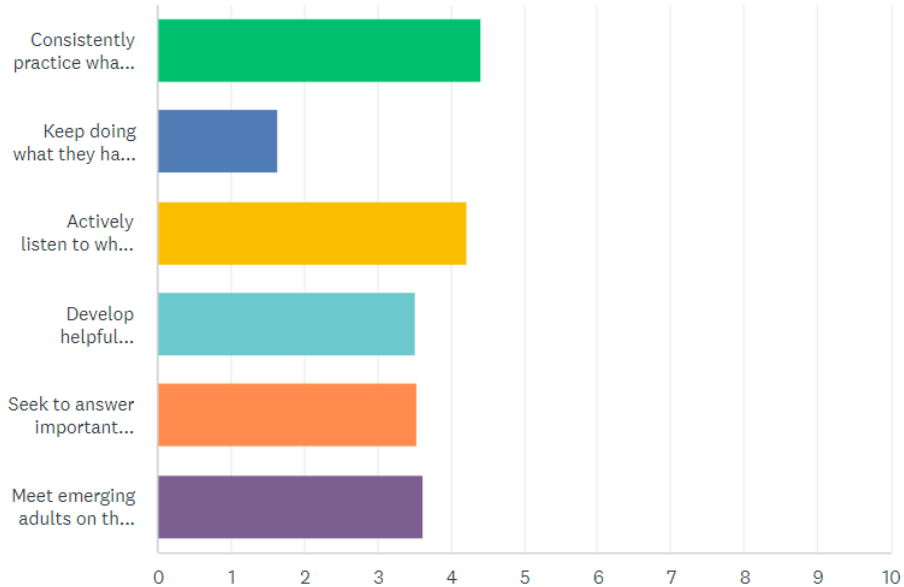
Figure 4.5. Emerging Adult Survey Question #5 (EASQ5)

Finally, EASQ10 collected best practices advised by emerging adults for the church to use in engaging and influencing their peers. The top two best practices from this sampling were 1) “Consistently practice what they preach” (4.42 composite score) and 2) “Actively listen to what emerging adults say and offer them a seat at the table of making a difference locally and globally” (4.22). The worst practice was “Keep doing the things they have always done, just louder and more often to compete with other cultural influences” (1.65) The other three options were ranked sufficiently close to the two top preferences for serious consideration (ranging 3.52-3.66), but, though definitely not considered a bad practice, lacked consensus to merit the label of “best practice”. Therefore, emerging adults value credibility and congruence of the church’s witness with

observable behavior as well as the dialogue between equals as best practices of engaging with the Church.

What do you feel are the best ways Christians or churches can engage and influence emerging (young) adults? (Rank the following items from “1” as the best ways to “6” as the worst way)

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL	SCORE
Consistently practice what they preach.	45.00% 18	15.00% 6	7.50% 3	5.00% 2	25.00% 10	2.50% 1	40	4.42
Keep doing what they have always done, just louder and more often to compete with other cultural influences.	5.00% 2	2.50% 1	5.00% 2	2.50% 1	10.00% 4	75.00% 30	40	1.65
Actively listen to what emerging adults say and offer them a seat at the table of making a difference locally and globally.	22.50% 9	32.50% 13	12.50% 5	15.00% 6	12.50% 5	5.00% 2	40	4.22
Develop helpful programs to address the important issues and real needs of emerging adults.	7.50% 3	12.50% 5	27.50% 11	35.00% 14	12.50% 5	5.00% 2	40	3.52
Seek to answer important questions emerging adults ask, instead of deflecting with "just take it by faith".	2.50% 1	22.50% 9	27.50% 11	25.00% 10	20.00% 8	2.50% 1	40	3.55

▼ Meet emerging adults on their own turf and terms without judging them, especially fully utilizing social media and online technology.	17.50% 7	15.00% 6	20.00% 8	17.50% 7	20.00% 8	10.00% 4	40	3.63
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Figure 4.6. Emerging Adult Survey Question #10 (EASQ10)

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

Research Question #2. What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?

Shame Injury, Impact, and Aversion from all Sources

PDSIQ4 measured the degree of perceived impact that shame dynamics from all sources have upon emerging adults regarding church attendance. Twelve interviewees in the Pastors District Superintendents Interview thought that shame impacts attraction to the church campus to a high degree, four to a moderate degree, and two to a lesser degree.

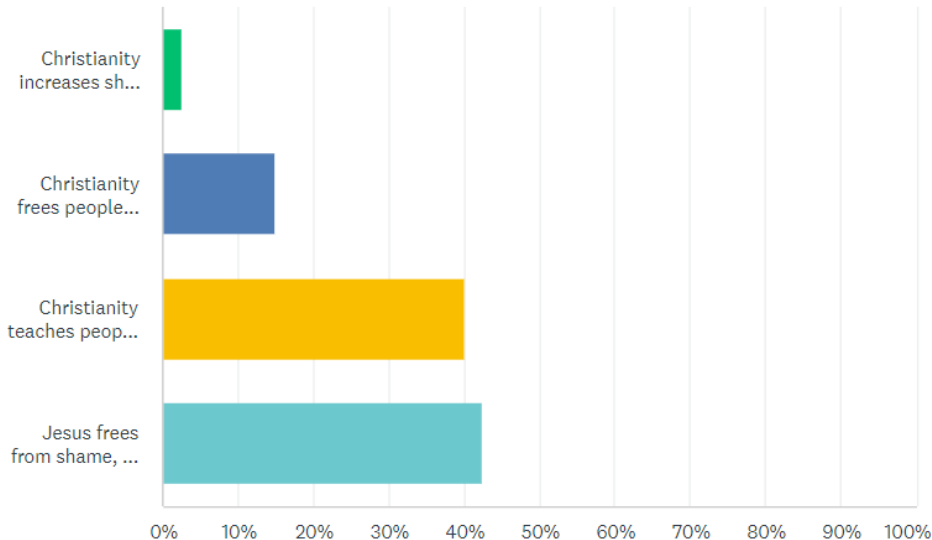
PDSIQ5 measured the degree of perceived impact of shame dynamics of all kinds upon resistance to gospel presentations. Twelve interviewees in the Pastors District Superintendents Interview saw shame impacting gospel receptivity to a higher degree, two to a moderate degree, and four to a lesser degree.

With CPFQ1, participating Church Planters in the focus groups revealed a wide range of perceptions about shame and narcissism dynamics in American culture and their influence upon reaching unchurched emerging adults. Two (CPFQ3) of the nine total participants denied any observable significance of shame impact outrightly due to their urban, multi-ethnic contexts. The other seven planters expressed moderately high recognition of shame compounded by narcissism upon the emerging adults they were trying to reach.

For triangulation purposes, EASQ3 encouraged reflection upon the Christian Faith in relation to shame among emerging adults themselves. Of the four statements, survey respondents agreed the most with the statement: “Jesus frees from shame, but churches don’t get the message right” (42.5 percent). A close second was “Christianity teach people that they can be forgiven” (40 percent). Only one respondent out of forty felt strongly that the Church itself shames people through exciting guilt (2.5 percent). The church’s gift of belonging as an antidote for shame was chosen by 15 percent. Therefore, emerging adults themselves viewed both shame and guilt as compelling issues for their peers, but that the church is better about communicating the removal of guilt than the healing of shame. Surprisingly, the causal link between judgmentalism and shame was not significantly reflected in the results of this survey question.

Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Christianity increases shame in people by making them feel guilty.	2.50% 1
Christianity frees people from shame by giving them a place to belong.	15.00% 6
Christianity teaches people they can be forgiven.	40.00% 16
Jesus frees from shame, but churches don't get the message right.	42.50% 17
TOTAL	40

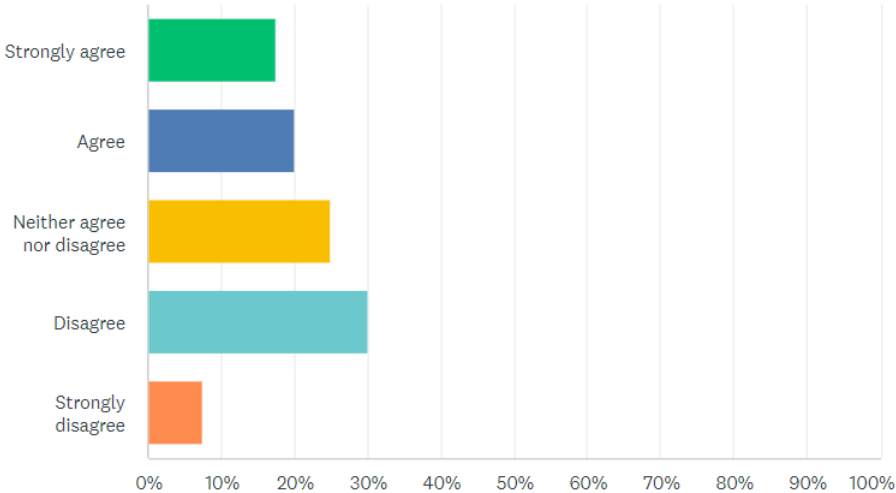
Figure 4.7. Emerging Adult Survey Question #3 (EASQ3)

EASQ4 asked emerging adult participants to express their feelings about the posture of Christian witnesses with their peer group. The statement addressed the perception of the aggressiveness of Christians, “pushiness,” in their efforts to influence emerging adults with the Good News of the gospel: “Most of my friends feel Christians are too pushy in their efforts to influence people.” The results were evenly distributed and therefore, inconclusive, with 37.5 percent agreeing and 37.5 percent disagreeing, leaving

25 percent undecided or neutral. The number of those who “strongly agreed” (17.5 percent) was markedly greater than those who “strongly disagreed” (7.5 percent), suggesting that those who felt more strongly that Christians tend to be pushy might be more vocal in their perceptions.

Most of my friends feel Christians are too pushy in their efforts to influence people.

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



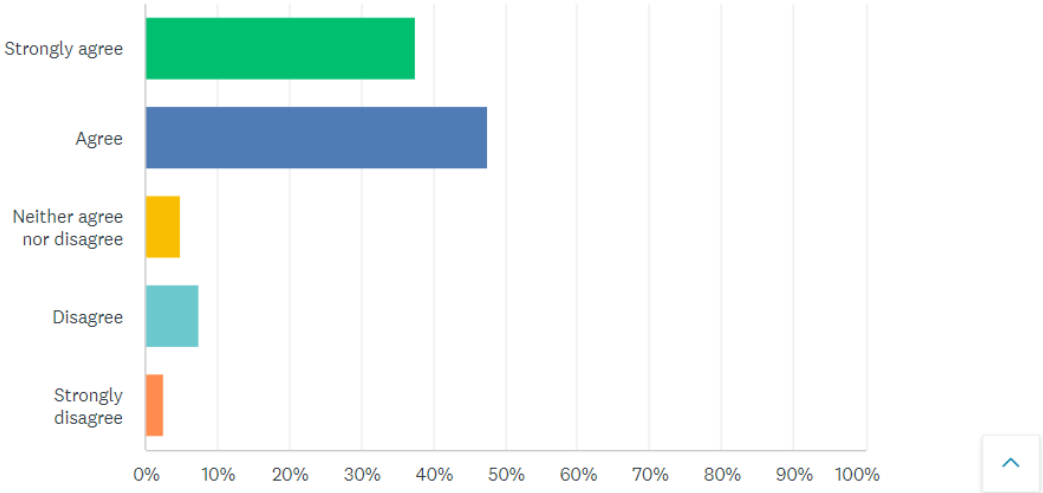
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	17.50% 7
Agree	20.00% 8
Neither agree nor disagree	25.00% 10
Disagree	30.00% 12
Strongly disagree	7.50% 3
TOTAL	40

Figure 4.8. Emerging Adult Survey Question #4 (EASQ4)

EASQ6 specifically gauged the height of the inherent obstacle of perceived judgmentalism in the church for emerging adults. The results were telling. When asked to respond to the statement, “Young adults I know who avoid public worship, do so because they think churches are too judgmental about the choices people make that do not align with their beliefs and practices,” only 10 percent disagreed and 5 percent were undecided. Therefore, the more judgmental a church appears to be, the more emerging adults avoid their campuses.

Young adults I know who avoid public worship, do so because they think churches are too judgmental about the choices people make that do not align with their beliefs and practices.

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	37.50% 15
Agree	47.50% 19
Neither agree nor disagree	5.00% 2
Disagree	7.50% 3
Strongly disagree	2.50% 1
TOTAL	40

Figure 4.9. Emerging Adult Survey Question #6 (EASQ6)

CPFGQ3 asked church planters to describe ways they believe the church has unwittingly and counterproductively shamed emerging adults in the past. “We as a church have been guilty of shaming; we seem to place ourselves in this elite role, or narcissistic role and that we sit on our throne, and we make judgments” (MLM, CPFG1, 7). KM in CPFG1 confides that he was shamed by his pastor and local church members early in his Christian walk when he got his girlfriend, now his wife, pregnant. Only one Christian friend “stood by my side, even through all of my shame, while I said ‘I don’t know how to do this and why the church is doing this to me’” (KM, CPFG1, 7). Fellow church planters, JP and BLP, also shared their stories of being shamed by the church due to circumstances like church leader’s parents divorcing after 40 years of marriage. BLP added that the Church tends to shame people because of an “incredibly narrow ecclesiology” regarding “calling and empowering” some and “isolating and dislocating vast portions of the body of Christ” that we need right now (JP and BLP, CPFG1, 8-9).

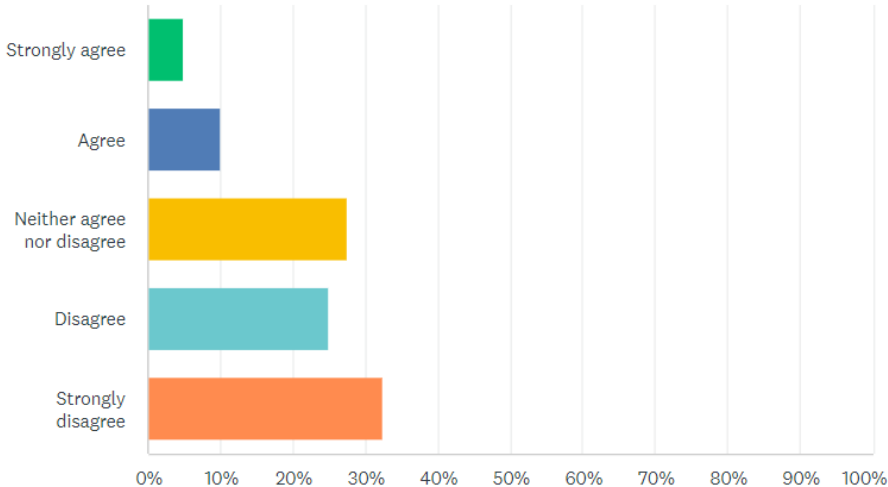
Modern, Post-Modern American Culture Contribution to Shame

EASQ7 turned the direction of shaming around from church to emerging adult to measuring the degree that American culture shames the Church for emerging adults. Only 57.5 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, “Modern science has proven that the Bible is full of primitive and outmoded ways of making sense of reality and the meaning of life.” On the surface, this is encouraging for church leaders who hope that biblical authority is still influential among unreached young adults. However, 42.5 percent of the respondents were not so certain, reflecting a significant segment of doubt (27.5 percent), if not outright rejection (15 percent) on a Christian college campus. The

shaming of the Church by the popular culture is a moderately significant factor for emerging adults.

Modern science has proven that the Bible is full of primitive and outmoded ways of making sense of reality and the meaning of life.

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	5.00% 2
Agree	10.00% 4
Neither agree nor disagree	27.50% 11
Disagree	25.00% 10
Strongly disagree	32.50% 11
TOTAL	40

Figure 4.10. Emerging Adult Survey Question #7 (EASQ7)

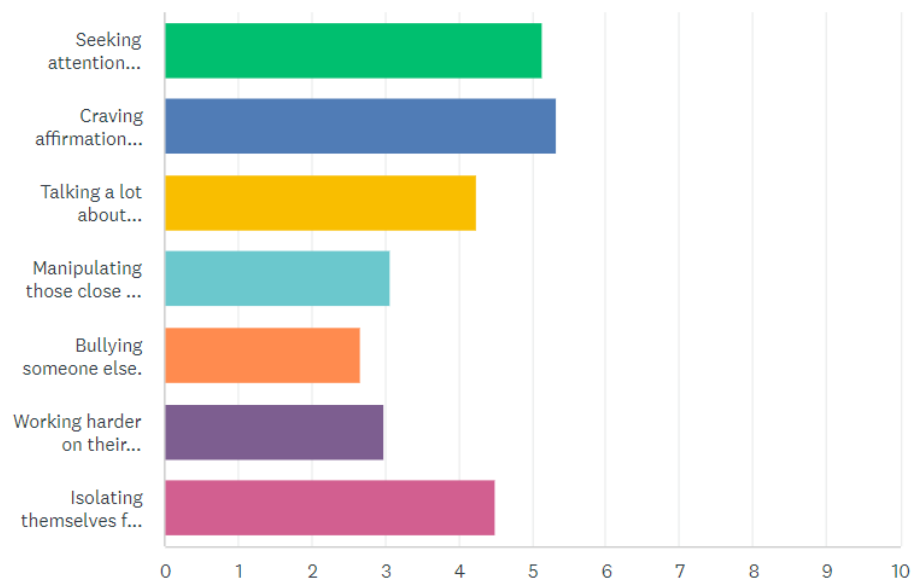
Narcissistic Self-Repair and Defense Mechanisms of Shame-Impacted Persons

Inherent obstacles to attraction to church campus and gospel receptivity emerged from the survey about shame dynamics. EASQ8 helped to identify which methods of narcissistic self-repair was most used by shame-impacted or -averse emerging adults, so

church leaders can better understand and address how emerging adults attempt to resolve fear or feelings of shame. When feeling worthless, emerging adult peers resorted to three methods of self-repair the most: 1) craving affirmation from others, 2) seeking attention through appearance, fashion, or sexual exploits, and 3) isolating themselves from others. Bullying someone else is the least used method. This accounted for judgmentalism being an obstacle to attendance and gospel receptivity.

When they are not feeling good about themselves, young adults I know tend to address those feelings by: (Rank the following statements from “1” most often to “7” least often)

Answered: 40 Skipped: 3



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL
Seeking attention through appearance, fashion, or sexual exploits.	17.95% 7	38.46% 15	12.82% 5	10.26% 4	15.38% 6	0.00% 0	5.13% 2	39
Craving affirmation from others.	28.21% 11	23.08% 9	25.64% 10	12.82% 5	0.00% 0	7.69% 3	2.56% 1	39
Talking a lot about themselves and their accomplishments.	10.00% 4	7.50% 3	22.50% 9	35.00% 14	12.50% 5	7.50% 3	5.00% 2	40
Manipulating those close to them.	2.63% 1	5.26% 2	5.26% 2	23.68% 9	21.05% 8	31.58% 12	10.53% 4	38
Bullying someone else.	2.56% 1	5.13% 2	10.26% 4	5.13% 2	25.64% 10	17.95% 7	33.33% 13	39
Working harder on their relationship with God and others.	10.00% 4	5.00% 2	10.00% 4	10.00% 4	10.00% 4	22.50% 9	32.50% 13	40
Isolating themselves from everyone.	30.00% 12	15.00% 6	10.00% 4	5.00% 2	12.50% 5	15.00% 6	12.50% 5	40

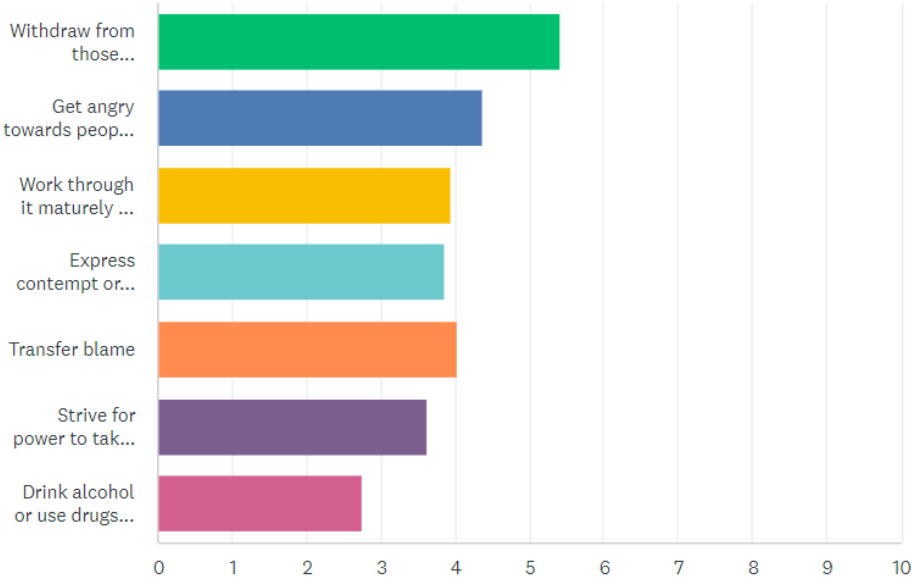
Figure 4.11. Emerging Adult Survey Question #8 (EASQ8)

Furthermore, EASQ9 identified the most prevalent defense mechanisms shame-impacted/averse emerging adults automatically employ encountering uncomfortable environments or attempts to influence them, especially applicable to presentations of the gospel. The top choice of emerging adults was “withdraw from those situations or people into social media, video games, or other virtual fantasies” (5.41 composite score). The second highest score was aggression, “get angry at those who shame them or bitter about life in general” (4.37). Therefore, self-defense mechanisms of withdrawal and aggression present the greatest challenge for church leaders and other Christians in reaching lost young adults impacted by shame dynamics. Strategies of attraction may prove to less fruitful than in times past. Engagement with shame impacted emerging adults will need to

discern and overcome the active self-defense mechanisms that may surface and cause resistance to efforts to influence the unreachable.

When my friends are confronted with uncomfortable topics or situations, they tend to: (Rank the following statements from “1” most often to “7” least often)

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
Withdraw from those situations or people and into social media, video games or other virtual fantasies.	35.14% 13	29.73% 11	13.51% 5	8.11% 3	0.00% 0	2.70% 1	10.81% 4	37	5.41
Get angry towards people who shame them or bitter towards life in general	26.32% 10	5.26% 2	18.42% 7	5.26% 2	26.32% 10	10.53% 4	7.89% 3	38	4.37
Work through it maturely and constructively	21.05% 8	10.53% 4	7.89% 3	5.26% 2	26.32% 10	15.79% 6	13.16% 5	38	3.95
Express contempt or find fault	5.13% 2	7.69% 3	25.64% 10	23.08% 9	15.38% 6	12.82% 5	10.26% 4	39	3.85
Transfer blame	2.63% 1	21.05% 8	21.05% 8	21.05% 8	7.89% 3	18.42% 7	7.89% 3	38	4.03
Strive for power to take control of situations to avoid embarrassment.	7.89% 3	15.79% 6	7.89% 3	18.42% 7	10.53% 4	28.95% 11	10.53% 4	38	5.3

Figure 4.12. Emerging Adult Survey Question #9 (EASQ9)

From PDSIQ6, many themes emerged from open-ended conversations with pastors and superintendents in identifying inherent obstacles to gospel receptivity among emerging adults, one of them was culture in general and social media in particular.

American culture broadly has a “negative perception of the Church and social media has not helped especially as many Christians have decided to express political sentiments at times that could be inappropriate and confusing for emerging adults.” Instead of the church adopting a defensive position with culture, it should foster an engaging position (SAF, PDSI8, 3). Hostility towards the Church by the media and overall culture is pervasive. The other side of the coin is its promotion of a culture of

affirmation for children and youth, rather than the culture of correction of fifty years ago. The gospel informs the Church as a culture of transformation (DM, PDSI14, 5).

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

Research Question #3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame culture?

PDSIQ3 asked church leaders to rank the most effective methods of evangelism in their experience and observation. Friendship evangelism, small groups, and compassionate ministries ranked first, second, and third as the most effective evangelism strategies for all age groups with standard deviations of 0.4, 1.3 and 2.0 respectively.

PDSIQ7 asked pastors and district superintendents about best practices for reaching emerging adults for Christ. CFPQG4-5 dealt with preferred models for planting new churches to reach emerging adults and best practices for presenting the gospel to this age group. The following themes emerged from these interviews and focus groups:

Building Relationships of Authenticity and Trust

“I think many young adults are fearful that the moment they engage in a church conversation with other adults that it’s going to become an argument. What we need to seek is building a relationship of care and friendship before those tough topics ever come up. The past shapes perceptions so the greater degree of shame and conflict the higher the barrier will be then to engaging” them (WKP, PDSI13, 3). When emerging adults walk into the church, regardless of what they look like, “we just love the ‘stew’ out of them and say ‘we want to love you and come and be a part of what God wants to do in your

life” (KM, CPFG1, 3). “Three big things for me that I’m learning from some of our young staff members and young people at church is that they value transparency, authenticity, and consistency” (DM, PDSI12, 6).

Contextualization, Adaptation, and Agility

The church needs to become agile, according to church planter JPV. Referring to the demise of many Fortune 500 companies in the twentieth century, he advocates for the kind of agility in church planting that “free us up to say, ‘when I start something it doesn’t need to last for the next millennia.’” It means a “freedom to pivot into change. As soon as I start asking questions of security and how do I make this thing keep going, I’ve lost.” (JPV, CPFG1, 12). The Church’s motivation of “self-preservation rather than actually a burden for God’s kids, and sometimes when our systems break, we’re trying to figure out how to fix them and we’re looking for a solution that’s actually a self-preservation technique rather than a burden from the heart of God” (BLP, CPFG1, 16).

Paced Discipleship: Belong, then Believe

Before unreached emerging adults are converted, church leaders can identify areas that do not involve spiritual authority where they can participate in the church and feel like they are a part of what is happening. Belong before they believe (DDS, PDSI10, 3). One district superintendent as well as many pastors interviewed mentioned the importance of visible emerging adults at the local church upfront and in leadership, incorporation and involvement in the ministries of compassion and community service (BEW, PDSI12, 5).

Weave the Gospel Story into Recipient's Story

When a Christian uses “canned gospel presentations” with emerging adults, “that’s just treating them as a number or project as opposed to a person, they will quickly resist and shut down” (WKP, PDSI13, 3). “Weaving their story that you listened to with the story you’re trying to tell” them will greatly increase their receptivity (WKP, PDSI13, 5).

Community Involvement and Service

Church leaders in both the PDSI and CPFPG agree that community partnerships (schools, police, fire and city departments) and regular demonstrations of unity among the churches of the community is a strategy that opens up a way to engage emerging adults. This is something RC learned from one of the pillars of collaborative efforts of Youth for Christ (RC, PDSI18, 7).

Healing Holiness: A Culture of Transformation and Affirmation

Finally, the Wesleyan message and lifestyle of holiness is attractive to American emerging adults. Two Nazarene church planters (one in Kentucky and the other in Alabama) testified to the extraordinary appeal of entire sanctification and the challenge of consecration of all of life to God to this age group. Both churches had 25-60 percent of their new believers among the ages 18-34. One young lady dealt with a “massive amount of shame in her life and the message of holiness—the fact that God can actually transform us from the core of who we are—was so attractive to her” (ELF, PDSI15, 5). As opposed to a Calvinistic judicial grace, holiness heals shame (HJD, PDSI7, 4).

Summary of Major Findings

Based upon analysis of the data collected from the three field research instruments of this project, the following are major findings:

1. While all district superintendents acknowledged the significance of the problem, awareness among lead and staff pastors and church planters, in regard to the presence and impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults, varied greatly. Many participants admitted to limited exposure and expressed insight from those who resist or reject invitations to church and gospel presentations. A few denied that shame is a major problem.

2. Joining God—in building a genuine relationship of trust, love, and authenticity with the emerging adults on their turf, terms, and around their interest—is the best practice for reaching them. This includes active listening to their stories, slowly earning the right to share the gospel, and discipling them to maturity and service.

3. Weaving the gospel story into the emerging adult's story, that they have told you, is the best way to present the gospel to them in a way that they will be most receptive.

4. The biggest inherent obstacles to gospel receptivity is the hypocrisy and institutionalism of the church, the pervasive culture that dominates emerging adults' mindset, and their own feelings of inadequacy and not understanding themselves and their comprehension and appreciation of what the Bible says.

5. The peers of emerging adults surveyed use a wide array of self-defense mechanisms and techniques of narcissistic self-repair when engaged with the gospel or

invitations to church, which are best addressed and overcome by equippers of the saints to reach them.

6. Emerging adults surveyed indicate that while they publicly identify with the church, the intellectual shaming and judgmentalism of the church are significant barriers to the participation of their peers.

7. Church planters and the church in general need to be agile and adaptive in the missional-incarnational approach and contextualized strategy as culture rapidly changes in order to reach unchurched emerging adults with the gospel, offering safe spaces for nurture and worship, and a supportive community with an engaging network of mentors to help emerging adults process the big questions of identity, purpose, meaning, and destiny.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**Overview of the Chapter**

The research project tackled the elusive objective of gospel receptivity among young adults in Florida and throughout the southeastern United States who may be impacted by western shame dynamics, and far from God as a result, to discover a fresh perspective on evangelism and disciple-making that might shape best practices in church planting. The project sought to develop a fresh set of best practices that would shape church planting in the future by exploring the impact of western shame dynamics upon unreached emerging adults' openness to the gospel message and efforts of church leaders to influence them to participate in a new or existing church.

I approached this research with sincere curiosity that would allow me to read experts widely and listen deeply to church leaders in the field as well as emerging adults themselves to discern the issues connected to shame in the narcissistic West, identify observable and inherent obstacles to receiving presentations of the gospel and other church outreach efforts, and learn from the successes and failures of church leaders. The results of this research suggested the following findings.

Major Findings**First Finding: Awareness of Shame Dynamics' Impact on Emerging Adults**

Not every church leader is aware of the dominance of shame dynamics in Western Civilization or perceive shame as a significant problem to be addressed. The field research shows that there is a divergence of opinion ranging from a total lack of awareness or outright denial of that dominance to full awareness among lead and staff

pastors and church planters in regard to the presence and impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults. Some of this lack of awareness may be attributed to their limited exposure and expressed insight from those who resist or reject invitations to church and gospel presentations. Many, especially urban church planters, deny that shame is a dominant dynamic at play in their work.

Early in my pastoral ministry, I observed a lack of interest among young adults in spiritual things, particularly those related to church activities. This observation was amplified across the years. I interpreted this lack of attraction as apathy or irrelevance. In later years, I considered the role of shame in that resistance to attendance and gospel receptivity.

In September 2018, the Church of the Nazarene of Sebring, Florida called me to be their lead pastor. After my wife, Valarie, and I moved into the community the following January, we heard stories about the history of the local church extending back seventy-five years. The children and grandchildren of current members of the congregation were surprisingly absent in the life of the church to a total or significant degree. This lack of participation aroused my curiosity and I asked questions concerning this fact as I made my pastoral rounds to member households. I found widespread bewilderment and dismay in the stories I heard. No one seemed to know why youth and young adults were increasingly leaving the local church and were so resistant to returning. This was in spite of the fact that this attractational congregation had largely sacrificed their preferred traditional worship music for a more contemporary style and invested in paid nursery workers and traditional ministries to children and youth to

provide the welcome and need-based services they assumed would attract younger people to their church.

I wondered if there were other forces at work behind the scenes of the local church and its context, or perhaps regional trends that would help both pastor and laypeople understand what was happening, directly or indirectly causing this disheartening reality. The church board and I had even considered that new church planting in the Heartland of Florida might offer new avenues for the return of young adults to the church. If so, then, I determined to find out what kind of new churches or ministries would be effective in reaching the young adults of Florida who avoid our church as they find it. The Asbury Doctor of Ministry program and Church Planting in the 21st Century cohort afforded me the opportunity I needed to explore this question deeply and academically.

During the research process, I observed the downcast pose and the withdrawn demeanor of young adults I engaged in the community once they learned that I was a Christian minister or when the subject of the Christian faith was introduced. I noticed their unusual lack of interest in church activities, including contemporary worship and needs-based programming of outreach and pastoral care. As I shared my experiences with other ministers in the area, I found the same perception along with a long list of reasons or excuses for this phenomenon. One suggestion was a flipping of the dominance of guilt and shame impacts in the culture at large. To wit, guilt attracts; shame causes withdrawal. While it might seem counter-intuitive, when a person does something wrong that is not characteristic of who they see they are, the most significant pain is guilt. That guilt motivates them to assuage it through denial, self-justification, or confession/repentance,

in order to maintain their reputation and standing in the community of people like them. On the other hand, if a person does something wrong that threatens to expose them for how wrong and unacceptable they are, they tend to feel the pain of shame more readily and will retreat from the eyes of the community to avoid further the pain of rejection.

As I researched the subject of shame, I discovered a growing awareness among professionals in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and theology, and, to a lesser degree, among ministry practitioners of the dominant impact of shame dynamics operating within the cultures of narcissism and affirmation in the West. Dr. Kiesling shared with me a comment one of his emerging adult ministry students wrote on an assignment that is testimony to emerging adult awareness of shame impacts.

I feel that some of our youth have had some issues when it comes to turning to God, and I feel that this is out of shame. To me, it seems that our youth has grown up a little faster than in years past, and shame is something that seems to be a hump to try and get over for them. This has been an issue that my youth leader and I have talked about for a few months now. We are trying to develop a program to target this feeling so it can be something that we talk about openly.

As confirmed by my research instruments—Pastor District Superintendent Interviews (PDSI) and Church Planter Focus Groups (CPFG)—the divergence of awareness of shame dynamics among church leaders ranges from a wholesale denial of its impact on emerging adults they engage to a strong conviction of its pervasiveness and dominant impact upon the age group, as demonstrated on pages 171-72.

Since the conclusion of my field research, I have reflected upon my local and regional context with fresh eyes and deeper understanding. We church leaders are only able to observe what is within the economy and range of our vision. If our engagement seldom extends beyond the circles of like-minded peoples and church fellowship,

naturally the leader will be exposed to mostly receptive people. Attractional positioning of the Church (“Come meet my pastor”) as opposed to entering the traffic lanes where emerging adults live, work, and play (like the Sebring Speedway or the campus cafeteria of South Florida State College) rarely permits leaders to see unreceptive people and seldom ascertains what motivates ignorance or avoidance by the unreached and causes the unreceptive to stumble on their way back to God. Today, I must be intentional to go where the unreached and unreceptive may be found and enter their worlds on their terms and turf and discover and enter into their interests.

The literature review provided rich insight into what I was observing in my ministry context. Some seventy years ago, therapists across America began to notice a significant shift in the types of cases that presented themselves in the clients that came to them for psychological counseling: from guilt-based neuroses to shame-based emotional injuries and identity issues (Pembroke 16). In addition, Donald Capps and Christopher Lasch tracked the rise of narcissism as an individual character condition and pervasive culture in the west. Narcissism compounds shame-based injury and aversion. One district superintendent specified a “culture of affirmation” in recent decades replacing a “culture of correction” in which he was raised.

Concomitant to these trends was an increased interest of theologians in the theology of shame. While ministry practitioners were readily retooling to care for people suffering from shame injury, few were aware of or, if aware, showed little interest in pondering the implications of shame on missiology. Still fewer saw any implications for ecclesiology (Pembroke 15). One way to look at church history is to trace the church’s response and effectiveness as the dominant spiritual dynamic within the surrounding

culture changes: from guilt to shame and back to guilt. Here, I run the risk of oversimplification. If shame is the dominant influence, the culture tends to be classified as more barbaric and less receptive to attraction-based evangelism strategies. People who experience shame more keenly and painfully hide from spiritual influences designed to excite guilt as the principal motivator to accept the gospel. Shame as a dominant dynamic was the case in the Roman-dominated British Isles during St. Patrick's Celtic Mission. This missionary's incarnational-missional approach entered barbaric Ireland to join God in transforming hearts with the Good News rather than planting institutional-style Roman Catholicism designed to civilize savages before it saves. If, on the other hand, guilt is the dominant influence in the culture, the pain of guilt overwhelms the pain of shame leading the unreached to seek the relief of forgiveness of God mediated through established forms of church. The legacy of Christendom shows that during periods in which guilt is the driving force of motivation of the masses, the institutional church will attract a full range of adherents and thrive numerically and financially. Such was the European Middle Ages and much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in North America.

The literature review explored the biblical foundations of the project's purpose. Guilt and shame are major existential consequences of original sin inbred in Adam's race. Satan planted doubt in the minds of Eve and Adam as to the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God and tempted them with the benefits of detaching from the Creator's life-giving resources and rebelling against his loving boundaries of design which he promised would launch an evolution (similar to his) into a super-human, god-like position. The Devil's Big Lie was immediately apparent when their disobedience began to make them less than they were created to be (in God's image), dehumanizing,

depleting self (a fall from God's glory), leading to their first sensations of shame and guilt. In shame, the first parents hid from God, separated from his life-giving relationship and, ironically, their new freedom from the Creator enslaved them to the law of sin and death.

The Good News of the Gospel is that God in Christ reconciled the world to himself, provided a once-for-all sacrifice to atone for acts of human sin and redemptive healing of shame through the shame-embracing, substitutionary death of Jesus upon the cross and resurrection from the grave. The full plan of salvation narrated, developed, and taught throughout the literature of the Christian scriptures (from Genesis to Revelation) is available to every human being, regardless of the depths of their guilt-shame experience, and restores progressively their original humanity, culminating in the second resurrection. Many of the events recorded in the Gospels, parables of Jesus, and Romans 10 illustrate the interplay of shame and gospel receptivity in the plan of salvation. Humans are saved by grace through faith by accepting the Good News message presented to us. However, healing from shame in the atonement and mutual ministry of the Church is also a work of God's grace.

To the degree that church leaders are aware of the spiritual dynamics of the unreached populations within their contexts, whether ethnic or generational, and fully appreciate and apply the full biblical message of salvation, they will be best prepared to communicate in ways that can be best received. The purpose of this project is to increase such an awareness broadly throughout southeastern United States and to all who love unreached emerging adults and seek their salvation and incorporation into the body of Christ, the Church.

Second Finding: Personal Relationships with Emerging Adults

The most common theme that surfaced in the field research was the importance of personal relationships of trust in those who sought to engage and influence emerging adults. Joining God—in building a genuine relationship of trust, love, and authenticity with the emerging adults on their turf, terms, and around their interest—is the best practice for reaching them. This includes active listening to their stories, slowly earning the right to share the gospel and discipling them to maturity and service.

Prior to moving to Florida and assuming my current ministry position, I founded and led a church planting movement in the Great Lakes Region of the United States. I observed that emerging adults craved connection and were more open to influence when engaged by non-professionally posed people in the neighborhoods, marketplaces, workplaces, and leisure venues in which they frequent. During my field research, I noticed that emerging adults typically held back until they had been given time to discover if I could be trusted, truly cared about them, and lived my faith authentically. I had to learn how to listen more actively and ask open-ended questions concerning their narratives, interests, and aspirations. Instead of inquiring about their ethics, I learned to discover how they make meaning or sense out of their lives (Parks location 702). Since then, I have had a few opportunities to exercise these enhanced skills with some encouraging results.

The disappearance of young adults and their families from our local church in Florida was blamed upon a variety of villains in the eyes of the community, as I listened to the stories. Missing from that “villain” list was the quality and continuity of relationships between the generations. The literature review, conversely, bore ample

witness to authentic, egalitarian relationships as the lynch-pin in influencing emerging adults from multiple angles. Fowler outlines the stages of human development and the impact the resolution of each stage has upon the nature of the development in a person's faith journey. Trust/autonomy is an early stage. If a person does not finish the work at that stage, their ability to trust others may be dwarfed. Those who seek to influence those stuck in this stage will need to work harder, be more transparent and authentic, and develop new skills to reach them in ways that they will recognize as love. They will need to supply the absent face-to-face mirroring of the residues of God's image in the lost, shame-impact person, so that person feels acceptance, and experiences a deep emotional healing that opens them to gospel receptivity.

Similarly, Lasch demonstrates the impact of full-bloomed narcissism as a personal character as well as a societal trait in the West stemming from at least eight roots embedded in the soil of our American culture. The dominance of narcissism tends to further compound the sin-consequence of shame. Led by media-fueled celebrities in entertainment, sports, business and government and the bureaucracy of corporations, government, and education, western citizens have been conditioned through the mass evangelization of popular culture sources to become self-absorbed and question their identity and life purpose. Turkle documents the dehumanizing impact of an accelerated, modern roll-out of new technologies to consumers which consume their interests and attention, transform their emotional life, and hamper their development of human interaction and critical thinking. Kohut and Capp point to the absence of parent-child mirroring and dysfunctional family life in general as the bases for identity-confusion and self-depletion.

Church growth, missional, and church planting experts consulted collectively bemoan the trend toward the church as an industrial complex for mass production of religious consumers and away from the humanizing, organic, disciple-making movement of Jesus, which is concerned with the whole person and their intrinsic value to God as those created in his image. Should church leaders fully appreciate the resources of the Bible in addressing shame dynamic dominance in their time and place, the way of Jesus with people was through authentic relationships of unconditional love, fully embracing them in their mess and maladies. From the Cain-Abel's murderous tragedy to David and Absalom's fracture to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot, salvation history is replete with examples of the critical consequence of horizontal relationships upon our vertical relationship with God. Jesus was called the friend of sinners. The contemporary call to authentic relationship is not being answered strongly in the practice of ministry yet, so no one should not wonder that emerging adults who insist on trustworthy relationships are exiting or ignoring the Church in droves. It is no longer their center of meaning.

Third Finding: Story Weaving in Evangelism of Emerging Adults

The purpose of the project was not limited to identifying a major cause of resistance to the gospel and invitation to church attendance. The double barrels of shame-injury and shame-aversion is one of many tributaries in the torrential river flowing away from the institutional church in America. The goal was to discover and develop best practices that shape church planting in a way that unlocked the gospel receptively among emerging adults. One important finding was evangelism strategies in the context of authentic relationships that are consistently effective in restoring gospel receptivity in emerging adults. Perhaps, most compelling for the shame-impacted subject is weaving

the gospel story into the emerging adult's story that they have revealed is the best way to present the gospel to them in a way that they will be most receptive.

Adrian told me his story at the shopping mall over several cups of coffee. He dropped out of college to start his own computer programming business after his parents had invested their life savings. He told of his high standard of living after his extraordinary initial years of success with a lovely girl on his arm who introduced him to alcohol and party drugs after he moved in with her. His addiction led to a car accident and he lost his business, his wealth, and his friends including her. Homeless he had returned in disgrace and anger to his estranged parents' home only to find them divorced. As I prayerful listened to his long, woeful story I silently prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance and his openness of heart and mind. When I asked him what he hoped to happen in the future and what his next step was, he choked up, dropped his head, and got really quiet. When he looked up, he had tears in his eyes. "I really don't know. Neither do the guys on my bus every week. We live trip to trip." I told him his sounded like another story I had heard. I began to share Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and at each point of similarity with his story, I asked if he could relate to the Bible story's character. At the point of the prodigal's father's acceptance upon his return, I told Adrian of God the Father's love for him and about Jesus, his Son who was not like his parents or the reception he received from them. Ten years later, Adrian is still following Christ as a disciple, because someone wove a Holy Spirit chosen story into his story that opened his heart to Christ.

Before the inception of this project, I experienced mixed and certainly inconsistent results with a wide variety of evangelism and disciple-making strategies,

beginning in my late teenage years. From gospel tracts to elaborate presentations like Evangelism Explosion (Kennedy), and Personal Evangelism (Burgess), to biblical/biographical media presentations of “The Jesus Film Project” (Campus Crusade for Christ), and “The Chosen” (Dallas Jenkins), I have diligently studied and leveraged any method available to me to win souls, particularly among the younger generations. During the study, I found refreshing liberation from fixation upon tried-and-tested tools. Instead of looking for someone who would fit the tool I was preferring to use, I learned to be present with whomever God placed in front of me and listened for and observed what God was doing in and with them. Both in my literature review and field research, I grasped the freedom that authentic relationship gave for the sake of the lost themselves and the counterintuitive, but empowering vocation of simply joining God in his mission to the world. Since then, I approach disciple-making with a more relaxed, discerning manner. One district superintendent, a father of an emerging adult, disclosed his discovery of story-weaving, relying upon the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the course of relational encounters, to unlock receptivity and customize delivery of the gospel message to the person’s experience, interests, point of need, and mode of receptivity. Utilizing all major, biblical atonement theories and appreciating the wealth and breadth of Bible materials in narratives, parables, and teachings provide the catalog of resources that an evangelist/disciple-making can access in real time. While the message of the gospel itself is powerful for salvation (Rom. 1:16), the genius of this methodological design lies in the way story-weaving provides the receptor with the possibility of multiple points at which he/she may attach emotionally and see themselves in the story of our loving God redeeming a lost world through his Son, Jesus. Christian worker’s openness to their story

begets their openness to God's story, certainly. The relationship between the discipler and the potential disciple must be augmented by the ability of the hearer to relate to the message they convey.

The literature review provides the rationale and the theoretical foundation for what I observed and now more fully embrace in the relational-narrative approach to presenting the gospel to emerging adults. Face-to-face, one-on-one conversations where full-body communication, verbal and non-verbal, are probable increases to the speed at which trust can be gained in the progression of an interpersonal relationship. While advanced communication technologies, such as social media, may be utilized as part of an effort to meet the unreached emerging adult on their terms or turf and coax them out of hiding, fully depending upon these arms-length avenues throughout the journey of disciple-making and evangelism settles for a second best, mediated relationship that might not be honest, vulnerable, or healing.

For instance, Kohut's theory that providing the mirroring that was deficient in the mother-infant, father-toddler experiences of emotional intimacy may prove therapeutic in healing the injuries suffered and resolving trust issues common to borderline personality disorders. Turkle testifies to the toll that the downward spiral withdrawal from relationships of near proximity takes upon the individual, blurring their perception of the line between the real and virtual worlds. The authentic, actual self is lost in the fantasy of avatars and vicarious-beckoning heroes imagined and imaged. The vacuum of the soul that results yearns for fulfillment and longs for a transcendent purpose. The relational-narrative evangelist provides merciful, loving intervention, joining God in restoring the soul and bringing real life to those living in the twilight of self-absorption and depleted

self. Missiologist Thomas Steffen studied oral cultures around the world and the new illiteracy of the first world and concluded that storytelling provides the most resistant hearer of the gospel with the access they need regardless of the spiritual dynamic or frame that is dominant in their life, if the evangelist/missionary will do the hard work of compassionate discernment. (Steffen, *Worldview-Based Storying*)

The sixty-six books that form the Church's canon of scripture, the Bible, include history, poetry, prose, and prophetic utterances of foretelling and forthtelling truth. Jesus was a masterful storyteller, a skillful weaver of spiritual truth into the hearts of his hearers. The Gospel narratives both summarize this loving, unhurried activity of the Lord during his earthly ministry, but also highlights specific instances of engagement with named and unnamed persons he called to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. In addition, he was able to draw upon a treasure trove of stories from the Old Testament as well as current events and cultural stories from every nuance of contemporary life. For instance, Luke 15 opens with a shaming incident instigated by religious leaders who criticized Jesus for welcoming and eating with sinners (verses 1-2). Jesus counters this attack upon his ministry and attempt to shame his new friends by telling a triad of parables about the joyous finding of lost things: sheep, coin, and son. His narratives of good news were woven into the narratives of the strangers and undesirables within his hospitality. His redemptive search and acceptance provided healing for shame.

Fourth Finding: Culture Clouds Perceptions about Christians and Church

The project addressed a core ministry problem as more narrowly manifest in the most-resistant age group of this era. The decline of the participation of emerging adults in institutional, attractional churches is well known and documented, and therefore, begs the

question of what the inherent obstacle(s) to gospel receptivity is (are). Identifying the most common objections that lead to a persistent, then final rejection of the gospel message was a key objective of this study.

Parallel to my professional career in ministry was work in sales and business. I was trained to carefully discern and answer objections that arose during a sales call or presentation. I found it was important to first understand the customer's needs and desires, goals, and dreams before offering a specific product or service, whether it was a fastener in their foundry, a power tool they sought in my lumber yard, or a financial plan in my firm's conference room. These experiences were consistent with those in ministry where I attempted to influence someone in their own best interest: the abundant and eternal life that God paid the ultimate price of his Son, Jesus, to offer to all humanity (John 3:16; 10:10). Before this study, I observed, both in the religious community and the business world, that consumers are sensitive to shame. People in the West, raised in a culture of affirmation, many of them steeped in the "Me Generation" of the 1980s and 1990s, others born as natives in the digital/social media saturated era, do not enjoy being told that they are inadequate to help themselves, incomplete without God or sinners needing a savior. They avoid anyone who attempts to influence their moral decisions, confront their unhealthy lifestyles, change their beliefs or persuade them with uncomfortable truth. My field research confirmed these prior observations. The wholesale rejection of moral absolutes and absolute nature of truth in the West leaves popular culture, influence leaders and authorities at all levels of government with only one remaining weapon to secure conformity within the population of our fragmented country: SHAME. My Emerging Adults Survey (EAS) revealed that culture-based shame is as

great as church-based shame. Shame comes from all directions and multiple sources, both in the personal experience of the individual (child abuse, bullying, human trafficking etc.) and from the larger cultural context (secular college professors shaming unscientific Christian beliefs and parental traditional values, LGBT+ agenda, political polarization, racism, etc.).

To be sure, according to the study, the biggest inherent obstacles to gospel receptivity is the hypocrisy and institutionalism of the church, the pervasive culture that dominates their mindset, *and* their own feelings of inadequacy and not understanding themselves and their lack of comprehension of and appreciation for what the Bible says. The issue of receptivity is larger than the issue of persistent or final rejection of the claims of Jesus and his gospel. The Bible teaches about the essential offense of the gospel. Respondents in the EAS suggested that Christians should practice what they preach. The Christlikeness of the followers of Jesus lends credibility to his claims; the adverse is also equally true, adding to the offense inherent in the Gospel. The offense of the gospel is that everyone are called to deny themselves rather than pridefully engage in self-repair (self-preservation) and become more self-absorbed. As holy people identified with Christ who embraced human shame, like him Christians are not given to self-preservation necessary to protect us from pollution, from associating with the shameful, instead in love find solidarity with the other and gain their trust. The unreached shame-impacted emerging adult becomes attracted to the image of God incarnated in the Christian disciple-maker through holy love. The lack of attention to relationship-building in attractional churches outside its campus and programming also creates a credibility gap according to the literature. Many PDSI and CPFPG participants affirmed or suspected that

the feelings of unworthiness among emerging adults is a significant factor in their avoidance of the church campus and ministries as well as accounting for a good measure of their resistance to the most popular types of gospel presentations or strategies.

The Bible addresses the problem of gospel receptivity repeatedly, anticipating the rejection of the Messiah in the prophets, particularly Isaiah (chapter 53), and the struggle of the apostle Paul who grappled with the irony and mystery of Jewish rejection/Gentile acceptance in Romans 9-11. In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus taught that his disciples were the “light of the world,” “a city on a hill” unhidden, and “the salt of the earth” which might lose its preserving qualities (Matt. 5:13-16). The first Epistle of Peter addresses the acids of hypocrisy and institutionalism in teaching the dual characteristics of the People of God as organism and organization in a hostile environment. The premier apostle exhorts the “living stones” to roll with the “stone rejected by the builders” and form a “royal priesthood” and live holy, credible lives among an unreceptive population to win some to the Savior. Peter’s sermon on the identity of the Church in its relationship with Christ in the world lends rich understanding of the contemporary Church in the West. One district superintendent with deep experience with emerging adults in his own family as well as the church noted that emerging adults largely lack self-understanding and make a lot of mistakes as a result. We cannot expect them to understand themselves and the church’s value proposition and message when the Church itself is uncertain of its own identity so that it crystalizes into a dead form of its former organic movement force in the world.

Fifth Finding: Identification of Shame-Induced Defense Mechanisms

The project explored the impact of western shame dynamics as compounded by a proliferation of individual narcissistic characters and culture of narcissism upon emerging adults. Hinderances to this age group's general receptivity to the gospel once the dominance of shame has been discerned in the subject was inventoried. Fourth Finding above focused upon obstacles external to the emerging adult: the lack of credibility of the Church in general and Christians' witness in particular, and the adverse influence of popular and secular culture. The Fifth Finding identifies internal obstacles that shame-impacted emerging adults face when spiritual influences are offered by the church as an attractional institution and as representative members of it. The field research discovered that the peers of emerging adults surveyed use a wide array of self-defense mechanisms and techniques of narcissistic self-repair when engaged with the gospel or invitations to church, which are best addressed and overcome by equippers of the saints to reach them.

In my own efforts to communicate the unconditional love of God and seek the salvation of the souls of emerging adults, I noticed a pattern of responses over time that coincided with what psychologists describe as "defense mechanisms," automated, mostly unconscious reactions to threatening stimuli. Christians—who endeavor to share the gospel, give witness to the transforming grace and power of Christ in their own lives, and invite family members, friends, and acquaintances to church activities—naturally fear rejection of their efforts. Feelings of shame within the heart and mind of the witness may or may not motivate that fear as the Apostle Paul recognized in Romans 1:16. Should that fear be overcome and the witness, gospel presentation or invitation be issued, it may be met with some degree of acceptance or resistance. Any resistance may spring from a

variety of reasons or sources including relational, intellectual, or matters of scheduling. For the shame-impacted subject, resistance may spring from a perceived threat to self. Dealing with the initial sense of threat is a self-defense mechanism. Dealing with the residual effects of the uncomfortable or threatening situation is considered by psychologists as one of many functions of self-repair typical of narcissists. Prior to this study, at one time or another, I had the occasion to observe most of the types of self-defense mechanisms or methods of self-repair without realizing what I was seeing or their connection with shame.

During and after the study, I developed an educated skill of discerning these reactions and reinterpreting their cause, so I did not take the rejection of my efforts so personally. Humans are relational beings, and generally care what people think of them and how they respond to our initiatives to interact and grow in trust. My growing self-awareness of my own fears of rejection and sensitivity to negative reaction as well as understanding more about the dynamics of shame operating in the lives of both believers in Christ and those without saving faith and far from God have nurtured a settled peace and confidence in my mind which has resulted in better poise and preparation for the next engagement with the lost as I join God on mission.

Psychologists in the field of study of personality disorders and therapists managing caseloads that include narcissists and shame-injured people identify vigilantly signs of resistance, rejection, and transference in their subjects. They are trained to handle defense mechanisms and navigate through resistance and other forms of acting-out the pain or dysfunction clients experience. Experts like Kernberg, Christian Smith, Snell, and Kaufman have researched and identified six common self-defense mechanisms employed

by shame-impacted people of various ages. Morrison and Capps have additionally called attention to three methods of narcissistic self-repair. Both categories of internal hindrances were included in my field research instruments, most visibly in the Emerging Adult Survey, along with other possible responses not related to shame for differentiation.

The theological and biblical foundations included in the literature review further informed the structure of this study along these lines of internal hinderances. The essence of the original sin of Adam is self-preservation in the absence of the life-giving resources of Creator God which Adam had formerly trusted to preserve his life eternally. Whatever nurtures that self-preservation tendency manifested in pride, greed, envy, and selfishness/self-absorption further leads those created in the image of God farther and farther into their fallen predicament with its dehumanizing consequences, yielding more rebellion to God and committing more sinful acts in their pursuit of a super-human state of being that does not need another supreme being to survive. I call this the “narcissistic loop”.

Filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, Jesus demonstrated throughout his earthly ministry a depth of discernment that saw through appearances of outward behaviors and emotional reactions as he called lost people as disciples, just as a shepherd would rescue or recover a straying lamb, delivered the tormented from their demons, and sought to heal unhealthy and broken people. He rebuked religious leaders for judging others based upon appearances, behaviors, and reactions. He corrected his own disciples when they misinterpreted or reacted inappropriately to people who rejected or opposed Jesus and his message of the coming kingdom of God. Jesus sought the heart of every

person he engaged. He saw those no one else would give notice or a place at the table. He welcomed little children his disciples considered unworthy of His time. He embraced the leper, the outcast, the tax collector, the prostitute, and other kinds of people most respectable people instinctively shun.

The book of Acts and New Testament correspondence show how the apostles and the early church continued the way of Jesus with people. Resistant people and bad-acting characters were subjects of the church's search and rescue mission. Joining God on his mission meant an ever-widening circle of loving witness from local to global, from familiar to foreign, from those like us to those not like us, from friend to foe. Saul of Tarsus was transformed by Christ from a chief persecutor of Jewish disciples to the early church's most prolific and traveled missionary to the Gentiles.

The five-fold functional gifts of Spirit-filled ministry outlined by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians highlight the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4). Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherding pastors, and teachers serve the people movement of Jesus throughout the ages by ensuring that the Church Jesus said he would build would be best prepared to free the captives of sin and death even through the very gates of hell. Resistance of hell's gates would even be futile (Matt. 16:18). Church leaders today, gifted by the Holy Spirit, have the challenge of equipping the members of their churches and other organizations in learning how to reach shame-impacted emerging adults. The best practices developed from this study may be foundational to that objective. The possibilities of unlocking receptivity to the gospel among emerging adults as a result of implementing the findings of this study is very exciting.

Disciple-making and the resultant church planting as conservation of the soul harvest are arenas of spiritual warfare. Joining God on mission necessitates the spiritual communication and appropriation of the power of prayer as the personal evangelist prepares for engagement with the lost emerging adult and listens for the guidance of the Holy Spirit during the interview. The Christian witness learns to discern the prevenient work of grace in the emerging adult, listens to the personal narrative and watches for the manifestation of defense mechanisms. The well-equipped soldier of Christ knows not to take rejection personally, instead compassionately identifies with the lost, and lovingly and patiently seeks to remove barriers of resistance and cultivates trust and openness to God. The wisdom of the best practice of entering the mission field in pairs becomes apparent in this watchfulness, prayer, and supportive reinforcement of truth and love during the engagement. Equipping church leaders will wisely role-play such engagements, rotating self-defense mechanisms and other inherent barriers in various hypothetical cases, to demonstrate and practice the skills of listening, checking for understanding, and narrative weaving in relational evangelism and disciple-making. As evangelist-pastor David Gallimore advises succinctly: “Witnessing is moving the lost person just one step closer to Christ” (sermon at Avon Park Holiness Campmeeting on February 13, 2022).

Sixth Finding: Recognition of Intellectual Shaming and Moral Judgmentalism

Prior to the project, I heard anecdotes and read testimony of practitioners and church growth experts that pointed to intellectual shaming of Christianity as anti-scientific and regressive in popular culture and secular institutions of higher learning. I also heard and witnessed personally the toxic practice of moral and cultural

judgmentalism practiced by professing Christians, especially the more charismatic and fundamental church leaders, and how unreached emerging adults and youth responded negatively to such attitudes and behavior. I saw in the latter present-day examples of the Pharisees and other hypocritical religious leaders whom Jesus encountered, suffered, and challenged. These observations were confirmed through some of the literature review but not as much as I expected to find. Through the Pastor and District Superintendent Interviews and two of the three Church Planter Focus Groups, I found many participants who shared my perspective. In the Emerging Adult Survey, these two inherent barriers to gospel receptivity did not top the list of responses, which I found both surprising and encouraging. I have included in my findings for the project with the acknowledgement that it does not have the same triangulation support for validity as I expected, but that may be due to the small sampling of the EAS survey or may simply point to how social media has exaggerated the perceived pervasiveness of intellectual shaming of Christianity by secular higher education.

Seventh Finding: The Need for Incarnational-Missional Shapes in Church Planting with Mentoring Networks

I leave the most significant and determinative finding for last. Before the project, I observed that emerging adults were largely absent from most institutional churches, even those which invested immense resources, effort, and strategy to attract them to their campuses and programs of ministry. However, I did not know the underlying reason. I assumed spiritual apathy: their generation was not interested in spiritual things that resembled the Christian Faith. I faulted the hypocrisy of church members and the slow adaptation of church programs to the felt needs of the younger age groups. One of my former church planter trainees, Marvin Gerbig, who had begun the study of the theology

of shame, shared with me another possibility for the emerging adult age group apparently hiding from church and Christians.

The literature review points to the dominance of western shame dynamics fomented by the drowning, toxic bath of narcissism in today's era which make efforts and strategies to attract the unreached generations largely futile. The broad perspective of church history reveals that this is not the first time the Church has faced this confusing, frustrating situation, but offers hope of addressing it from various examples of incarnational-missional shape to church planting while joining God on his mission. The field research corroborates this finding that attractional systems of church are mostly effective with the unreached whose dominant spiritual dynamic is guilt/innocence. The dominance of other spiritual dynamics makes attractional systems less and less effective over time, shame/honor-glory dynamics being the most lethal to the attractional model of church, except, perhaps in mega-churches where anonymity is easily maintained, and accountability is perceived as escapable.

The project gleaned best practices from the literature review and participating practitioners and recombined them to develop best practices that shape church planting in order to address gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults impacted by shame dynamics. The contributions of Hearn, Parks, and Seversen to the development of an ecclesiology of shame are profound when applied to planting new churches that reach younger generations who otherwise appear apathetic or skeptical. Churches that turn the tide of the relationship of emerging adults with the gospel and the church develop a highly relational culture of acceptance, trust, vulnerability, affirmation, and safety that offer opportunities to belong before they believe and serve in the community along their

passions and dreams for changing their world for the better. The support of networks of mentors that will help them process the big questions that enable them to navigate the difficult journey to full adulthood.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The findings of this project have important implications that extend beyond broader theological reflection and verdant, sensitive pastoral care to the recalibration of evangelism and shaping of new and reshaping of existing churches. I see at least three general implications for both missiology and ecclesiology. The first general implication is the need for rediscovering the biblical identity of the Church including the priesthood of all believers as taught in, among others, the New Testament correspondences of Ephesians and 1 Peter. Concentration of ministry in professional leaders stunts the church's ability to wage spiritual warfare in the full array necessary in this complex culture. Christ directly distributes gifts to spirit-filled believers, both clergy and laity, a wide variety of abilities which contribute to the team effort in the competition for souls. Distributive ministry liberates the aspect, scope, and power of evangelism in a local community. Second, these project findings point to the need for raising the awareness of shame dynamics and their impact from all sources on gospel receptivity, especially understanding and discerning basic reactions to internal shame, narcissistic self-repair, and defense mechanisms in general. In particular, the observation of shamelessness in the unreached should be discerned from the absence of subjective or existential shame as, in actuality, a mask or "false self," and therefore, a method of narcissistic self-repair or a self-defense mechanism. All unredeemed souls suffer objective shame, which needs the healing of Christ regardless of their degree of self-awareness. Telling the whole story of

salvation, particularly the guilt and shame impacts of sin upon Adam and Eve, as one weaves the gospel into the narrative of the lost emerging adult, may bring a powerful breakthrough in gospel receptivity. Therefore, raising the awareness of shame impacts may be as helpful to the unreached as it is for the disciple-maker if done with sensitivity.

Additionally, the research, focused on emerging adults, suggests a crippling lack of understanding of this perpetual age group and what they need, both for those who seek to influence them spiritually as well as their own self-understanding. This implies that the prospect of mentoring emerging adults is more formidable and crucial than the American Church would have predicted, perhaps even as essential as younger age groups due to their affinity with youth and their leadership and influence of children within the immediate and extended family. Perhaps the most obvious of all the implications is that church leaders need to disengage from their wholesale commitment/obsession with the attractional system of institutional church and balance it with a more incarnational-missional system of church, which is essentially relational.

Beyond these general applications, specific implications for missiology revolve around the discovery of shame as a dominant spiritual dynamic in the West, with fundamental differences in character and impact to Eastern shame cultures. Evangelism within the narcissistic west, in recognition of its compounding of the shame experiences of the lost, must be retooled at every level of engagement with western culture and unreached populations therein, to be more inclusive. First, in the spirit of The Way of Jesus and his Twelve and the Celtic Mission, engagement with unreached emerging adults should be done most often as a “community” of faith, rather than the “Lone Ranger” soul winner posture. Second, the speed of evangelism needs to be slower and

less transactional as a function of building a trustful, enduring relationship in the context of the disciple-making/discipleship journey to allow the seeker ample time to come to understand and thoroughly consider all the claims of Christ and implications of following him the rest of their lives.

Other implications for evangelism emerge from the literature review and field research in the areas of approach, presentation content, and order. Engagement or approach to evangelism is biblically and theologically a joining with God on his mission to the world, and therefore, a partnership of faith and dance of walking in the Spirit of the Triune God while relating to the unreached. This means actively listening to God and the unreached emerging adult, being curious, asking good, open questions, rather than leading with a gospel presentation or manipulatively steering the conversation to the desired end. The importance of asking for, hearing and deeply understanding the prospect's personal narrative is determinative to learning how to best present the Good News to them as a unique person for whom Christ died. This patient listening and building of trust, perhaps over multiple encounters over an extended time, provides the understanding of how to select biblical and theological materials of the gospel/salvation narrative, and weave its story, not propositions, into the person's own story to provide multiple points of emotional attachment and identification. This facilitates openness and receptivity as well as increases the possibility of a positive, and consistent response.

The Bible has provided a broad and exhaustive range of stories, human experiences, and theological richness. Should Christian workers fully appreciate this plethora of materials and well-stocked arsenal, they have in their repertoire all they need to communicate the Good News to the lost. Not the least is the kaleidoscope of atonement

images that may be used equally to excite and relieve guilt (where guilt is the dominant spiritual dynamic discerned) or avoid shame or shaming and heal that shame (where shame is the dominant dynamic). The Christus Victor theory may become as oft utilized in our contemporary context as the Penal Substitution theory has been used for centuries of Christendom. Finally, in order to avoid and heal shame, the order of the gospel presentation best begins with the creation of humankind in God's image to distinguish between the true and false self and diffusing defense mechanisms triggered by leading with "judgmentalism" which might be received as shaming instead of redemption, restoration, and healing. Succinctly, the order of presentation should be 1) original image, 2) original sin, 3) judgment upon sin and those who finally identify with it, 4) incarnation/identification of God in Christ with fallen humanity, 5) Christ's victory of grace to forgive, lift, and heal through his work on the cross and resurrection from the dead, and 6) invitation to the journey of following Jesus, whose "yoke is easy" and "burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Specific ecclesiological implications of this project inform the shape of future church planting and the reshaping of the culture of existing churches. Fresh contextualization of the target area or group will be necessary in order to accurately imprint the new church plant and refocus the existing, legacy church is one of the many implications of this study. Primarily, the church leader will need to initiate a theological and contextual conversation within the church planting launch team or existing local congregation. Together, they need to discern the biblical nature of the Church and what God has sovereignly called them to do uniquely within the neighborhood and wider community in which they are planting or already rooted. Is the dominant spiritual

dynamic guilt/innocence, shame/honor-glory, pollution/purity or fear/trust among those unreached God is leading them to engage and make as disciples of Jesus? Even in the Bible-belt, so-called the “deep South,” are pockets of barbarity or only a veneer of civilization hiding populations impacted by shame or shame aversion.

The project implies that the shape of church planting in America will need to be relatively safe from shame to nurture those who have been emotionally or relationally injured or those who are averse to contexts or situations where they perceive shame to be probable and eventual. New and existing churches will reach unchurched emerging adults only to the extent that members of the launch team and generations of church leaders are grounded in Christ, credible in witness, worthy of trust in relationships and equipped to make disciples in the Way of Jesus with the Twelve. To achieve a shame-safe church culture will mean that the Church will be more like a farm than a factory, organic and relational, adaptive and agile in methods and model, yet rooted in the message, pedestrian more than parking lots, going to the fields instead of waiting for the field to come to the barn. Such churches will equalize the importance of mission to neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and leisure haunts with weekend campus-center events. Leaders will need to develop church cultures that are accepting of people despite their appearance and/or behaviors, safe and secure emotionally, with focus on gradually building trust-filled relationships with the lost.

Limitations of the Study

The project’s design was focused exclusively upon one of four spiritual dynamics, *shame/honor-glory* (which I contrasted with guilt/innocence, but the other two, fear/trust and purity/pollution were not included) and its impact on the gospel receptivity of one of

five age groups, emerging adults, both male and female genders. So, no differentiation or analysis was done on specific gender impacts. Churched emerging adults participated as well as unchurched in the quantitative survey, but I did not interview any emerging adults one-on-one and the online survey only asked about their peers, in order to avoid causing harm. The sample for the Emerging Adults Survey (EAS) was unfortunately minimal. I was only able to secure the permission on one university/college in Florida to conduct the survey instead of two. The Institutional Review Board of South Florida State College-Avon Park denied my request late after a nine-month application process. Warner University's IRB did approve the request, but distributed the instrument through email to commuter/online students only and on the very day classes were dismissed at the end of the Spring 2021 term. Upon my request for redress, Warner University did run the survey at the beginning of the Fall 2021 term, but to meet deadlines I collected data for only three weeks. To generalize this research, a broader sampling across the Southeastern United States would be necessary and advisable to increase the accuracy of the findings.

On the Pastor-District Superintendent Interview instrument, I was able to access sufficient numbers of regional Nazarene and local non-Nazarene pastors, but only four of the 10 Nazarene District superintendents made themselves available for interview due to the time of year, being the season for holding district assemblies. For the Church Planter Focus Groups, I was able to include a sufficient number of participants, but, due to outside work schedules of those who were bi-vocational, I had to hold three, instead of two focus group sessions, limiting the cross-pollination effect that benefits such an instrument. My research assistant was not available for some of the focus group sessions due to ill-health and scheduling.

In response to these limitations, I would have approached more universities and earlier in the process. I would have conducted a pilot test of the Emerging Adults Survey to improve the response rate and finding accuracy, and expanded the list of questions to include other spiritual dynamics, including apathy. I would have also picked a different season of the year to interview district superintendents just after New Year's Day. Due to these limitations, I may not have gotten as accurate representation of what emerging adults think. I would have prepared and trained my research assistant better on the subject and research protocols, especially in the expectations of what data to observe, collect, and record and what form his final submission was expected to be. I would have also recruited a second research assistant to help with dictation and analysis.

Nevertheless, despite all these limitations, the triangulation of the three instruments of field research with the literature review strongly supports my findings. Other researchers may conduct similar studies which may add to the insights with nuances and stronger data in the future, and I would encourage them to do so to contribute to this important, emerging field of the theology, missiology, and ecclesiology of shame.

Unexpected Observations

I was surprised to receive less an indication of shame awareness among leaders working with the unchurched emerging adults in the urban areas (Miami) where these participants labor.

I had not seriously considered the possibility of apathy as an attribute of shame. Is it a function of shame like shamelessness as a self-repair strategy or is it truly a different dynamic operating in this age group, as I initially believed before this project? Or do

leaders merely assume, perceive, or misinterpret the avoidance of all things church as a sign of apathy, they do not care about the things the Church cares about? If Capps is correct, apathy is the manifestation of shame as a self-defense mechanism (99–101). If so, then the relationship between shame, apathy, and narcissism might merit additional investigation and worthy of reinterpretation of what church leaders observe.

Some leaders like CR did not think it is difficult reaching emerging adults; in fact, they have seen them as most responsive in their context in the last four years. That was a rare finding.

Recommendations

The project offers some compelling recommendations for changes in the practice of ministry, particularly evangelism and church planting. The current sustained trends in extending evangelism as a process within the journey of discipleship, instead of a crisis that opens the door to discipleship should be lengthened and slowed when the emerging adult is observed to be impacted by shame dynamics. The order and content and method of delivery of gospel presentations should be less formal and impersonal and more fashioned to fit the individual's life ingredients brought forward to the moment of engagement. Evangelists and disciple-makers, both clergy and laypersons, should be equipped with the development of practices that are less scripted and more relational and conversational (dialogue, not monologue). The church growth expert, Peter Wagner, has often stated, "Church planting is the most effective form of evangelism known under heaven." (Wagner) For church planters, the project offers a new combination of best practices that inform the selection of the model of church planting to be utilized and offers structures that permit agility and adaptation. For shame-impacted populations and

geographic sectors, the period of time planned for on-the-ground research and preparation of the field for the launch of public gatherings for information, fellowship, or worship (soft-launches and grand openings) will be greatly lengthened to account for the cultivation of receptivity. I also recommend that district superintendents in the USA/Canada region schedule orientations on their districts for all lead pastors and staff and church planters and launch teams to increase their awareness and understanding of western shame dynamics and narcissism and the findings and implications of this project.

The purpose of this project was to *develop* best practices that shape church planting through exploration of the impact of shame dynamics upon gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults. The next task may be to test these newly developed best practices through intervention type projects in a variety of contexts where shame-injury and shame-aversion have been significantly observed to see if receptivity to the gospel is objectively amplified among emerging adults and other age groups. To access my bibliography of 225 works consulted, the reader may send me a request via my email address, rmarkmontgomery.mm@gmail.com.

Some research may be suggested and advisable on the spiritual attitudes of apathy to discern if there are unique characteristics or impacts upon gospel receptivity that are not addressed by the best practices developed by this study or the status quo. Other research may build upon Nathanson's four basic reactions to internal shame and ten avoidance behaviors, Morrison's three methods of narcissistic repair, and Kaufman's six primary defense mechanisms to develop specific approaches and techniques for shepherding the unreached emerging adult through the maze of emotional blocks and guide them to shed the masks of false self. Disciple-maker and certified health coach,

Lynnae Yates, clarifies the challenge of receptivity to spiritual influences: “People will show you a wall, not their heart. We have to remove that wall brick by brick by asking good questions and listening. Silence provides space for honesty to come forth. About seven levels of questions and listening leads to their hearts. When the tears finally flow is a sign that they have revealed their true heart to you. Reaching their heart is the key to their success on beginning their transformation journey.” (Yates) Existing local churches and new church plants should focus on developing networks of mentors that engage unreached emerging adults in community to help shepherd them through their journey to full adulthood, guide them in discovering answers to their big questions, and process meaning and purpose for life from the Christian Scriptures.

Postscript

This project has been an unexpected journey of discovery for me personally as well as professionally. I have experienced multiple layers of emotional healing and raised my own self-awareness. The literature review was humbling with the realization of how little I really understood about gospel receptivity, evangelism, and the psychology of young adults. The field research taught me to become less rushed in my engagements and more attentive in listening really listening to the heart beneath the words of the speaker and observing body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal communication. Doctoral level research with its attention to protocols, analysis, and synthesis sharpened my exploration of truth and understanding of the world around me, and its usefulness for the practice of ministry. This project helped me to challenge my assumptions, presuppositions, and judgments about the congregation I lead and the community in which I serve and hope to reach. The study has forced me to pause before jumping to

conclusions. My project advisors and coaches have provided helpful, and at times painful objectivity to make it possible for this project to become more valuable for myself, my congregation, and others who might look to it for guidance in evangelism or church planting. The bottom line is that this ministry transformation project has at least transformed me.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Survey/Interview/Focus Group Questions with Expert Review Letters

Dear Dr. Winfield Bevins:

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary. The topic of my dissertation is: *How Shame Shapes Church Planting*. The purpose of this study is: to develop best practices of church planting by exploring the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults in south central Florida.

My research questions have been approved by my Dissertation Committee. They are:

1. What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture?
2. What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Nazarene Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?
3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame culture?

As a part of my ministry transformation project, I am using three researcher-designed instruments to collect data. The first is an Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), a quantitative instrument. The second is a Pastor-District Superintendent Interview, a mixed methods design. The third is a Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG), a qualitative instrument. Prior to using the survey, interview, and focus group questions, I am in need of an expert review. **I am asking you to serve as one of my reviewers on the Church Planter Focus Group questions only.**

I have included a copy of the abstract of my dissertation proposal. Please evaluate the attached document using the evaluation forms included. You are certainly free to share any narrative that you wish. Please return the evaluation to me in the enclosed envelope by December 31, 2020. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert Mark Montgomery
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary

Dear Dr. Chris Kiesling,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary. The topic of my dissertation is: *How Shame Shapes Church Planting*. The purpose of this study is: to develop best practices of church planting by exploring the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults in south central Florida.

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2. What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?
3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame culture?

As a part of my ministry transformation project, I am using three researcher-designed instruments to collect data. The first is an Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), a quantitative instrument. The second is a Pastor-District Superintendent Interview, a mixed methods design. The third is a Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG), a qualitative instrument. Prior to using the survey, interview, and focus group questions, I am in need of an expert review. **I am asking you to serve as one of my reviewers on the Emerging Adult Survey questions only.**

I have included a copy of the abstract of my dissertation proposal. Please evaluate the attached document using the evaluation forms included. You are certainly free to share any narrative that you wish. Please return the evaluation to me in the enclosed envelope by December 31, 2020. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert Mark Montgomery
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary

Dear Rev. James Boardman,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary. The topic of my dissertation is: *How Shame Shapes Church Planting*. The purpose of this study is: to develop best practices of church planting by exploring the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults in south central Florida.

My research questions have been approved by my Dissertation Committee. They are:

1. What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture?
2. What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?
3. Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame culture?

As a part of my ministry transformation project, I am using three researcher-designed instruments to collect data. The first is an Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), a quantitative instrument. The second is a Pastor-District Superintendent Interview, a mixed methods design. The third is a Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG), a qualitative instrument. Prior to using the survey, interview, and focus group questions, I am in need of an expert review. **I am asking you to serve as one of my reviewers on the Pastor-District Superintendent Interview questions only.**

I have included a copy of the abstract of my dissertation proposal. Please evaluate the attached document using the evaluation forms included. You are certainly free to share any narrative that you wish. Please return the evaluation to me in the enclosed envelope by December 31, 2020. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert Mark Montgomery
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary

Expert Review

Emerging Adult Survey (EAS)

1. Informed Consent? Yes or No
2. What is your current age?
 1. Under 18
 2. 18-34
 3. 35-59
 4. 60 or over
3. I would most likely identify myself to someone with whom I am becoming acquainted:
 - a. I am an attender of public worship.
 - b. I am not an attender of public worship nor a watcher of online worship.
 - c. I only watch online for worship.
 - d. I would not want someone to define me partly by my worship practices.
 - e. I would avoid the subject until I learned more about worship practices of my new acquaintance.
4. Most of my friends feel Christians are too pushy in their efforts to influence people.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree No Opinion
5. Most churches do not understand my friends and what interests them most.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree No Opinion
6. Young adults I know who avoid public worship, do so because they think churches are too judgmental about the choices people make that do not align with their beliefs and practices.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree No Opinion
7. Modern science has proven that the Bible is full of primitive and outmoded ways of making sense of reality and the meaning of life.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree No Opinion
8. When they are not feeling good about themselves, young adults I know tend to address those feelings by: (Rank the following items from “1” most often to “6” least often)
 1. Seeking attention through appearance, fashion, or sexual exploits
 2. Craving affirmation from others
 3. Talking a lot about themselves and their accomplishments
 4. Manipulating those close to them
 5. Bullying someone else
 6. Working harder on their relationship with God and others
9. When my friends are confronted with uncomfortable topics or situations, they tend to: (Rank the following statements from “1” most often to “6” least often)
 - a. Withdrawing from those situations or people and into social media, video games or other virtual fantasies.
 - b. Getting angry towards people who shame them or bitter towards life in general
 - c. Working through it maturely and constructively
 - d. Expressing contempt or finding fault
 - e. Transferring blame

- f. Striving for power to take control of situations to avoid embarrassment.
- 10. What do you feel are the best ways Christians or churches can engage and influence emerging adults? (Rank the following items from “1” as the best ways to “6” as the worst way.)
 - a. Consistently practicing what they preach.
 - b. Keep doing what they have always done, just louder and more often to compete with other cultural influences.
 - c. Actively listening to what emerging adults say and offering them a seat at the table of making a difference locally and globally.
 - d. Developing helpful programs to address the important issues and real needs of emerging adults.
 - e. Seeking to answer important questions emerging adults ask, instead of deflecting with “just take it by faith”.
 - f. Meeting emerging adults on their own turf and terms without judging them, especially fully utilizing social media and online technology.

Expert Review

Pastor-District Superintendent Interview Instrument _____ Page 1 of 2

1. Rank the following groups in responsiveness to church efforts to attract them to attend church regularly (one being the most responsive):
 - a. Children (5-12)
 - b. Youth (13-17)
 - c. Emerging adults (18-34)
 - d. Middle-age adults (35-59)
 - e. Senior adults (60 and over)
2. Rank the following groups in responsiveness to gospel presentations (one being the most responsive):
 - a. Children (5-12)
 - b. Youth (13-17)
 - c. Emerging adults (18-34)
 - d. Middle-age adults (35-59)
 - e. Senior adults (60 and over)
3. Rank the effectiveness of evangelism methods (one being the most effective):
 - a. Evangelistic sermons inside sacred spaces
 - b. Christian music concerts inside sacred spaces
 - c. Christian music concerts in the secular spaces
 - d. Friendship evangelism through hospitality or recreation
 - e. Clergy calling on the lost in their homes or workplaces
 - f. Scheduled small groups for fellowship/Bible study and Sunday School classes
 - g. Christians engaging strangers in the marketplace (café, mall, community events, etc.)
 - h. Community service projects of compassion and doing good
4. To what degree have you observed or suspected that an unchurched emerging adult's feelings of worthlessness or fear of shame factor into their resistance to advertising or personal invitations to need-based programs or outreach events at church?
5. To what degree have you observed or suspected that an unchurched emerging adult's feelings of worthlessness or fear of shame factor into their resistance to gospel presentations or other evangelism strategies?
6. What do you think are the inherent obstacles to gospel receptivity among unreached emerging adults?
7. What do you find are the best ways to engage unreached emerging adults and overcome barriers to church attendance?

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestion to clarify
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

Review Completed by _____

Signature _____ Date Completed _____

Expert Review

Church Planter Focus Group instrument

- 1. From your perspective, in what ways does the dynamic of shame as compounded by the pervasive culture of narcissism in America make reaching emerging adults more difficult or challenging?
- 2. In your practice of ministry recently, how would you characterize the spiritual attitudes of emerging adults in your community, particularly those who are unreached?
- 3. In what ways do you think the church has unwittingly and counterproductively shamed emerging adults in the past?
- 4. What models of church planting do you see as most effective in reaching emerging adults in your community?
- 5. What have you discovered to be best practices in presenting the gospel to emerging adults, including approach, order, and content of the presentation?

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestion to clarify
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Review Completed by _____
 Signature _____ Date Completed _____

Appendix B. Informed Consent Letters/Forms

1. Emerging Adults Survey (EAS) Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM For Emerging Adults Survey (EAS)

How Shame Shapes Church Planting

Introduction: You are invited to be in a research study being done by Robert Mark Montgomery, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because *you are a student*.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study how shame shapes the practice of church planting. The researcher is exploring young adult attitudes and receptivity to efforts by Christians and the church to influence young adults spiritually.

Procedure: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to respond to a short list of questions in a survey.

Time Required: The survey should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is strictly voluntary without compensation. This survey does not affect any class grade. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact **Robert Mark Montgomery** at robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu or his research supervisor, Dr. Chris Kiesling at chris.kiesling@asburyseminary.edu.

Risks: While this survey has been carefully designed, there is a possibility a question might upset you. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while

you are in the study, please tell **Robert Mark Montgomery** who can be reached at **robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu**.

Benefits: While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions. The results of this survey may benefit young adults in America by helping Christians and church leaders learn how their current efforts are received and better ways of engaging people outside the church, making for a more peaceful and kind society.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: Your identity will be kept secret and your responses will be kept confidential.

Sharing the results: The researcher plans to use the results of this survey along with his reading and other field research he is conducting to confirm facts relevant to his ministry transformation project. He plans to share his findings with his local congregation and fellow students.

Publication: There is a possibility that the researcher will publish this study or refer to it in a published writing in the future. In this event, the researcher will continue to use pseudonyms (as described above) and may alter some of the identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

Before you give your consent: Answering this first question in this survey for informed consent as “yes” means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, answer “no”. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not participate or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

2. Pastor-District Superintendent Interview (PDSI) Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR Pastor-District Superintendent Interview

How Shame Shapes Church Planting

Introduction: My name is Robert Mark Montgomery, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. My phone number is 517-648-5858. You are invited to be in a research study I am doing because you are a pastor or judicatory leader in the church and have had some significant experience ministering to young adults.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study how shame shapes the practice of church planting. I am exploring young adult attitudes and receptivity to efforts by Christians and the church to influence young adults spiritually.

Procedure: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to answer a series of questions based upon your experience and reflection in a one-on-one Zoom videoconference with me.

Time Required: The interview should take you no more than 40 minutes to complete.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is strictly voluntary without compensation. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me at robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu or my research supervisor, Dr. Chris Kiesling at chris.kiesling@asburyseminary.edu.

Risks: Interview Questions have been carefully designed and are included as an attachment to this letter of informed consent. There is a possibility that reading these questions or the process of answering them in the interview may upset you in some way.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell **Robert Mark Montgomery** who can be reached at [robert.montgomery@ asbury seminary. edu](mailto:robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu). You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact **Robert Mark Montgomery** at [robert.montgomery@ asburyseminary.edu](mailto:robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu) or his research supervisor, Dr. Chris Kiesling at [chris.kiesling@ asburyseminary.edu](mailto:chris.kiesling@asburyseminary.edu).

Benefits: While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions. The results of this interview may benefit young adults in America by helping Christians and church leaders learn how their current efforts are received and better ways of engaging people outside the church, making for a more peaceful and kind society.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: Please know that every effort is made to protect your identity and confidentiality about your responses. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. You can select a “made-up” name; otherwise a number or initials will be used instead of your name. Our interview will be recorded for the sole purposes of transcription. The recording file will not be shared with anyone else, and will be deleted after the study is complete. All field notes and transcription data will be stored in a secure facility behind locked access and carefully managed and kept private during the project and after the project is complete.

Sharing the results: I plan to use the results of this survey along with my reading and other field research I am conducting to confirm facts relevant to my ministry

transformation project. I plan to share my findings with my local congregation and fellow students.

Publication: There is a possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in a published writing in the future. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms (as described above) and may alter some of the identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

Before you sign: Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

3. Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG) Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER for Church Planter Focus Group

How Shame Shapes Church Planting

Introduction: My name is Robert Mark Montgomery, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. My phone number is 517-648-5858. You are invited to be in a research study I am doing because you are an experienced church planter or trainee.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study how shame shapes the practice of church planting. I am exploring young adult attitudes and receptivity to efforts by Christians and the church to influence young adults spiritually.

Procedure: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to join in a discussion of around five different church planting and disciple-making topics. Attached is a copy of the questions for your consideration. If you agree to be in the study, you will join other church planters in a Zoom videoconference with me.

Time Required: The focus group discussion should take you no more than 90 minutes to complete.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is strictly voluntary without compensation. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Robert Mark Montgomery at [robert.montgomery@ asburyseminary.edu](mailto:robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu) or his research supervisor, Dr. Chris Kiesling at [chris.kiesling@ asburyseminary.edu](mailto:chris.kiesling@asburyseminary.edu).

Risks: Interview Questions have been carefully designed and are included as an attachment to this letter of informed consent. There is a possibility that reading these

questions or the process of answering them in the interview may upset you in some way. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell *Robert Mark Montgomery* who can be reached at robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact **Robert Mark Montgomery** at robert.montgomery@asburyseminary.edu or his research supervisor, Dr. Chris Kiesling at chris.kiesling@asburyseminary.edu.

Benefits: While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or you may find the conversation meaningful. The results of this focus group may benefit young adults in America by helping Christians and church leaders how their current efforts are received and better ways of engaging people outside the church, making for a more peaceful and kind society.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: Please know that every effort was made to protect your identity and confidentiality about your responses. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. You can select a “made-up” name; otherwise a number or initials will be used instead of your name. Our focus group session will be recorded for the sole purposes of transcription. The recording file will not be shared with anyone else, and will be deleted after the study is complete. All field notes and transcription data will be stored in a secure facility behind locked access and carefully managed and kept private during the project and after the project is complete. One research assistant will be assisting me with the research tasks. There will be multiple participants present in the focus group. Although confidentiality will be encouraged, it

cannot be guaranteed due to the presence of other participants. All participants will be asked to keep each other's identity private and responses confidential.

Sharing the results: I plan to use the results of this focus group along with my reading and other field research I am conducting to confirm facts relevant to my ministry transformation project. I plan to share his findings with his local congregation and fellow students.

Publication: There is a possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in a published writing in the future. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms (as described above) and may alter some of the identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

Before you sign: Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

Appendix C. Permission Letters

Dear Steven Weathers,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary. The topic of my dissertation is: *How Shame Shapes Church Planting*. The purpose of this study is: to develop best practices of church planting by exploring the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults in south central Florida.

As a part of my ministry transformation project, I am using three researcher-designed instruments to collect data. The first is an Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), a quantitative instrument. The second is a Pastor-District Superintendent Interview, a mixed methods design. The third is a Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG), a qualitative instrument.

Prior to using the survey with emerging adults who are college students at Warner University, I respectfully request your permission to invite the students to participate. I would merely provide you with a SurveyMonkey link, which you would send to the email addresses of your student body by April 30, 2021, to give them the opportunity to participate as subjects of this field research, if they choose. Results will be tabulated and recorded confidentially by SurveyMonkey software.

I have included a copy of the abstract of my dissertation proposal, the language of the informed consent, and the actual survey questions for your review. These questions have been evaluated by an expert in emerging adults and approved by the Doctor of Ministry department.

Please, sign the authorization below and return it to me in the enclosed envelope by February 28, 2021. Thank you in advance for your assistance.
Sincerely,

Robert Mark Montgomery
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary

I, Steven Weathers, Dean of Students, authorize Robert Mark Montgomery, a D.Min. student at Asbury Theological Seminary, to conduct field research at Warner University, Lake Wales, Florida through his Emerging Adults Survey using SurveyMonkey® through a link sent to email addresses of the student body by my Dean of Students office in April 2021.

Signed _____ Date _____

Dear District Superintendent,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary. The topic of my dissertation is: *How Shame Shapes Church Planting*. The purpose of this study is: to develop best practices of church planting by exploring the impact of shame dynamics on gospel receptivity among emerging adults in Florida and more broadly the southeastern United States.

As a part of my ministry transformation project, I am using three researcher-designed instruments to collect data. The first is an Emerging Adults Survey (EAS), a quantitative instrument. The second is a Pastor-District Superintendent Interview (PDSI), a mixed methods design. The third is a Church Planter Focus Group (CPFG), a qualitative instrument.

I am writing to respectfully request your permission to interview you, and select pastors, young adult ministers, evangelists, and church planters in your district, and receive your recommendations on the selection of individuals. Findings from this field research may lead to missional breakthroughs in understanding and strategy that might benefit your district's growth and well-being.

Specifically, besides yourself, would you please recommend three pastors/young adult ministers/evangelists and three church planters who have demonstrated a high level of engaging young adults ages 18-34? These church planters must have a successful church planting experience in the last ten years. Your recommendations need to be practitioners who are currently mentally and physically fit to mitigate harm to human subjects. Ethnic diversity in your recommendations is preferred.

I have included a copy of the abstract of my dissertation proposal, the language of the informed consent, and the actual individual interview and focus group questions for your review. These questions have been evaluated by an expert in emerging adults and approved by the Doctor of Ministry department.

Please, complete sign the authorization below and return it to me in the enclosed envelope by March 31, 2021. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert Mark Montgomery
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary

I, _____, District Superintendent of _____ district, authorize Robert Mark Montgomery, a D.Min. student at Asbury Theological Seminary, to contact and invite the following ministers of my district to participate in a personal interview or a focus group of church planters.

_____ I would make myself available for a personal interview.

I recommend the following three pastors/young adult ministers/evangelists:

Name	Phone Number	Email address
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

I recommend the following three church planters for a focus group:

1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

Signed _____ Date _____

D. Appendix D. Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

This study, How Shame Shapes Church Planting, is being undertaken by Robert Mark Montgomery, a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary.

The study addresses three research questions/objectives:

- What do emerging adults in or out of church see as best and worst practices to engage people in shame culture?
- What are the inherent obstacles Southeastern United States Nazarene Districts pastors and church planters encounter when engaging and evangelizing unchurched emerging adults impacted by shame culture?
- Moving forward, what are best practices for current pastors and new church planting trainees in the Southeastern United States Districts of the Church of the Nazarene to use when seeking to engage the unchurched emerging adults who are impacted by western shame culture?

Two focus groups of church planters will be conducted by the principal investigator. You have been asked to serve as a research assistant to help collect data from these meetings. Data from this study will be used to develop best practices for pastors, young adult ministers and church planters to use when engaging and seeking to influence emerging adults spiritually.

I, James Boardman, agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Principal Investigator(s);
2. Keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession;
3. Return all research information in any form or format to the Principal Investigator(s) when I have completed the research tasks;
4. After consulting with the Principal Investigator, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Principal Investigator(s) (e.g. information sorted on computer hard drive).

Research Assistant:

(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Principal Investigator:

(print name)	(signature)	(date)

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Professor Chris Kiesling
204 N. Lexington Ave.
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390
chris.kiesling@asburyseminary.edu

This study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of Asbury Theological Seminary. For questions regarding participants' rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Doctor of Ministry Office at 859-858-2187.

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