The Righteous Resistance: Why Christians Engage in Non-Violent Peace Activism in Jerusalem and Palestine

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ABSTRACT

During a time of heightened violence, division and fear in the Holy Land and its capital, Jerusalem, there is a growing movement for peace, justice and dialogue from all sides of the decades long conflict. It is in this tension that a handful of International and Palestinian Christians working for a peaceful and just solution between Israel and Palestine. This project explores why these Christian peace activists and non-violent resistance leaders in Jerusalem and the Palestine engage in such activism. Data is gathered using qualitative interviews and participant observation at a number of NGOs, churches, demonstrations, farms and military checkpoints throughout the region. Seven hour-long interviews were conducted with Christian activists who are men, women, locals, internationals, and represent eight sects of Christianity. A large quantity of participant observation hours is accumulated revealing the day-to-day lives and religious practices of these individuals who work in some of the most dangerous areas of conflict. My findings reveal that there are many structural reasons for activist participation in Palestine’s Liberation Movement, such as biographical availability, networking and relationships. My data revealed, however, that cultural explanations for activism are far more crucial in this movement compared to previous research. Also, I assess of the significance of “place” to show the importance of the land to this movement’s success. The final goal of this project is not only to gain insight into the lives of these activists; it is to spread the knowledge of the Israel/Palestine conflict and shed light on some of the voices calling out for peace.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. 2

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................... 3

Introduction ........................................................................................................................ 4

Previous Research .............................................................................................................. 7
  Structural Explanations .......................................................................................... 7
  Culture Explanations .............................................................................................. 9
  Place Explanations ................................................................................................. 14

Methodology ...................................................................................................................... 18

Results ................................................................................................................................ 20
  Structural Explanations .......................................................................................... 20
  Cultural Explanations ............................................................................................. 25
  Place Explanations ................................................................................................. 38

Discussion .......................................................................................................................... 50

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 55

Interview Participants ........................................................................................................ 57

Bibliography ...................................................................................................................... 58
The most complex geopolitical issue today is the Israel/Palestine conflict, which has its origins in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1948, the British Mandate over the Holy Land ceased, resulting in the establishment of the State of Israel for Jews. Following an armistice treaty, the West Bank territory was established for Palestinian Arabs. During the formation of Israel, a great migration of Jewish people from the West, called the Zionist movement, helped create the new state. Seen as illegitimate by its surrounding Islamic nations, the infant nation of Israel went to war with its neighbors. After claiming victory, Israel secured its footing in the region despite the systematic displacement of three-quarters of a million Palestinian people from Israel. By 1967, the surrounding Arab countries once again declared war on Israel with the belief they would finally succeed in driving the Jewish population off the land. Once again, the Arabs were defeated. This left Palestinians in the West Bank under the control of Israel’s military, but with increased restrictions, and Jerusalem was annexed as Israel’s capital. In 1987, Palestinians in the West Bank mounted the First Intifada, or “uprising,” a movement of unarmed resistance and civil disobedience against the Israelis. The non-violent movement lasted until 1993 but not without displacing over a half-million more Palestinians. Due to the Israeli occupation and Jewish activity on the Temple Mount, near Al-Aqsa Mosque, the far more violent Second Intifada began in 2000. As tension and continued violence cast fear in Israeli society, the Jewish State began the controversial construction of what it called the “Security Fence” between Palestinian communities and Israeli territory. Palestinians call it the “Separation Barrier” or the “Apartheid Wall.” This barrier is over one hundred miles long and it grows each year, stretching deeper into the areas that
Palestinians consider their own country, which this thesis will refer to as Palestine. Over the last decade, Jewish immigrants have pushed into Palestine to create settlements, which currently are growing at record rates. The Palestinian refugee population has reached record numbers—around five million—but they continue to anticipate the right to return to their lands.

This conflict has led to decades of hostility and violence between the two peoples that call the land home. Though there are two peoples, three religions are represented. The majority Jewish and Muslim populations overshadow the Palestinian Christian population, which—due to continued occupation from Israel’s military—has dwindled to around 10% of the Palestinian population and to less than 2% of the region’s population overall. Nonetheless, this population has remained incredibly influential in Palestine. Many Christians are politicians, business entrepreneurs, educators, religious leaders, and social activists.

Christian social activism in Palestine has existed for decades and continues to be innovative by creating connections to other Christians and churches around the world. Christians’ peaceful efforts to free Palestinians from Israeli oppression have drawn a wide spectrum of volunteers into the movement’s ranks. Stretching across denominations, traditions, languages, nationalities, and races, Christians have become involved in this movement in numerous ways. There are, of course, Palestinian locals who lead the way in this movement, but the cause has also accumulated a massive international response. Considering the seemingly intransigent complexities of the Israel/Palestine conflict, the physical dangers to outsiders, and the restrictions enforced by Israeli security, I decided to address the question: Why are Christians engaging in non-violent resistance and peace
activism in Jerusalem and Palestine? I conducted a long-term, qualitative study in 2014 to explore possible explanations.

This question is important because significant initiatives are currently under way to unite across tradition and denomination to work toward Palestinian liberation. Palestinian Christians partner with the international Christian community through many faith-based peace and justice organizations. This has created a network of churches, non-government organizations (NGOs), and larger church organizations that have teamed up for the cause, attracting activists from around the world. In the face of continued military occupation, a minority status and a lack of human rights, new efforts are constantly being undertaken to improve conditions for the Palestinian people. These efforts take place in various forms of creative and non-violent activism. To begin, I will consider sociological research that addresses similar issues.

Many sociologists who study social movements often attribute protest to structural explanations. Sociological literature has pointed out the importance of networking and relationships as a recruiting mechanism and reason for participation in social activism. Literature also suggests that an individual’s background and circumstances determine their participation. Some sociologists, however, suggest that research has overemphasized structural explanations. They argue that social movements may be attributed to a number of cultural explanations. For example, individuals may have a subjective experience of enlightenment, which spurs their involvement. Also, many sociologists suggest that the culture of a movement creates a collective experience and identity for activists. My research on the Palestinian Liberation Movement shows, structural explanations do not fully speak to the importance of place or religion in social
activism. I argue that culture matters in the social activism in Jerusalem and Palestine. As my study will show, these cultural forces are far more central to the reason Christian activists join this movement than structural forces.

**Previous Research**

*Structural Explanations*

Sociologist Doug McAdam explores the importance of networking and relationships in social activism. He shows how church-related and other organizational connections contribute to involvement in activism over time. Also, McAdam looks at the biographical availability of individuals as an explanation for their involvement in protest.

In his book, *Freedom Summer*, McAdam explains how over one thousand youth became involved in the Freedom Summer movement of 1964. He reports that 90% of the volunteers were individuals who had previous experience in less dangerous forms of activism. McAdam points out that “it is not the intensity of the earlier involvements as much as the fact that they took place that is significant” (1988: 51). Previous experiences were usually through civil rights organizations, but many activists were also involved in student clubs, political efforts, and fundraisers. Also, 21% were from church or religious groups (McAdam 1988). McAdam argues that for most, previous experience—beginning with small commitments—led to increased experience and investment in social movements. Eventually volunteers ended up in high-risk and costly events as observed in the experiences of Freedom Summer volunteers who faced white supremacy groups in Mississippi.
McAdam provides another structural explanation for activist involvement in the Freedom Summer. His research shows that a quarter of the volunteers in the movement had extensive personal ties to the campaign. More important, the vast majority of participants knew at least one person already involved in the civil rights movement before joining. This shows that relational ties are vital factors in the decision to join a movement. Many of these people were a part of corresponding networks of friends and families, and they had the same professors in school. It was the community around these individuals that nudged them toward engagement.

According to this study, “biographical availability” is also a crucial reason many volunteers could give months out of the year to the effort. As students, they were free to become involved in the movement during their summers away from school. McAdam points out that this explains why they made up the majority of the workforce (1988). The activism required a unique set of circumstances, such as a free schedule, financial privilege, and no employment, spouse, children, or other major outside responsibilities. These traits fit perfectly with the requirements of the movement. Thus, these credentials played a role in determining who became involved. As observed in Freedom Summer, one’s social situation dictates the ability to participate.

But McAdam points out that simple availability wasn’t enough to guarantee commitment. He writes, “Availability may be a necessary prerequisite for involvement in a project like Freedom Summer, but it certainly does not insure participation ... Only when that freedom is joined with particular attitudes and values does the potential for activism exist” (McAdam 1988: 44). One’s cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas shape behavior, and civil rights and social justice were values these privileged and
educated students upheld in their culture. They expressed idealism about their cause. The researcher writes:

[T]hat idealism is so passionately stated [by the volunteers] that it occasionally sounds naïve and a bit romanticized ... These were deeply idealistic individuals, dedicated to achieving equal rights and human dignity for all ... these values could be realized through a kind of general mission in which they shared (McAdam 1988: 45).

The optimism of the students toward civil rights was realized collectively and became a cultural value. If it were not for this idea that was subjectively held by the movement’s many participants, Freedom Summer would not have been set into motion. What McAdam finally argues is “a combination of organizational ties, personal links to other applicants, and their own histories of activism served to pull the applicants into the project even as their values were pushing them in that direction” (1988: 53). According to McAdam, a number of structural components were required to motivate individual involvement in social movements.

_Cultural Explanations_

In his book, _Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency_, Doug McAdam, 1982, examines the civil rights movement from 1930-1970 and develops a theory of protest movements he calls the “Political Process Model.” In this model, McAdam explains that excluded and oppressed groups carry out protest movements. He believes that a population’s opportunity to challenge the system fluctuates as the structures in the system change. He quotes sociologist Michael Schwartz, who said, “Power relations define the functioning of any ongoing system ... [T]he ability to disrupt these relationships is exactly the sort of leverage which can be used to alter the
functioning of the system ... *Any system contains within itself the possibility of a power strong enough to alter it*” (Schwartz 1976, 172-173 emphasis in original). The Political Process Model determines that excluded groups play a role in a society and thus their mere relationship with the power structures create opportunity for insurgency.

Exploring the source of activism, McAdam also writes, “Movements develop in response to an ongoing process of interaction between movement groups and the larger socio-political environment they seek to change” (1982: 40). For instance, in his study of civil rights movements, McAdam argues that some protest is largely a reaction by excluded groups to structural changes in combination with changing outside political climates.

The Political Process Model, however, depends on something that is not structural, but cultural. This model’s foundation is built upon a cultural experience in which there is a collective change in a group’s thinking that sparks a movement. This transformation occurs subjectively to many individuals and is the product of a collective emotion of political powerlessness (McAdam 1982: 49). McAdam refers to this experience as “cognitive liberation.” He explains that cognitive liberation is a communal phenomenon in which a change in thinking, as well as behavior, occurs (McAdam 1982: 49). The process begins when excluded groups gradually start to see leaders in their society as unjust and thus, illegitimate. This leads to a phenomenon in which people begin to demand a change in the power structure or in human-rights conditions. In the Political Process Model, this cultural phenomenon must occur if an organized movement is to take place. McAdam explains that these cultural forces combine to create a cycle that perpetuates a social movement:
Movement emergence implies a transformation of consciousness within a significant segment of the aggrieved population. Before collective protest can get under way, people must collectively define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action. The likelihood of this necessary transformation occurring is conditioned, in large measure, by the two facilitating conditions... [including] shifting political conditions [that] supply “cognitive cues” capable of triggering the process of cognitive liberation while existent organizations afford insurgents the stable group-settings within which that process is most likely to occur (McAdam 1982: 51).

Thus, cognitive liberation—a phenomenon shaped by one’s culture—occurs as the result of conditions of the power structure and the readiness of the indigenous protest organizations. In this explanation, McAdam continues to emphasize structure; however, other sociologists claim culture to be the dominant force behind social movements.

Sociologist James Jasper draws differentiations between culture and structure. He writes that culture consists of “discrete, measurable items, such as beliefs or rituals, but it is also a filter through which all action occurs” (Jasper 2007: xi). He explains that culture should not be seen in opposition to structural forces because they are fused together. Jasper explores the culture of social movements and assesses numerous perspectives on the topic. He argues that culture is crucial to one’s involvement in a social movement and that an array of subjective values spur action:

Culture is not only embodied in the action but also operates as a form of motivation and goal. ... [I]ndividual protestors have numerous motives for participation ... Their purposes in protesting are bound up with many other motives: sexual desire, a sense of fellowship, a response to technocrats’ decisions, [and] a working out of personal identity ... to name several. To understand what people are doing when they protest, we need to know a lot about their lives outside of protest, and what meanings they carry with them (Jasper 2007: 81).

As Jasper points out, there are endless personal interests around a movement that serve as reasons an individual participates, but it is clear that, for Jasper, culture serves as a
catalyst for involvement. He continues, explaining that for some, activism itself is the
motive for involvement. The sociologist writes:

Motives also correspond to diverse pleasures in protest. One satisfaction comes
from a sense of collective empowerment, and the expression of group solidarity.
Another is the thrill and energy derived from rituals and symbols: the myths and
folktales participants tell each other, the heroes and villains who emerge, the
sacred places and moments in the subculture’s history. In addition to developing
simple group loyalty, the latter often deploy rhetorical devices linking present
conflicts to grand moral themes of good and evil (Jasper 2007: 82).

The experience of activism can be exhilarating and for many even addictive.

He explains that when one participates in important historical events or global issues
there are profound satisfactions. He points out the significance of this phenomenon,
noting “that every one of these motives is emotional as much as it is cognitive or moral”
(Jasper 2007: 82). This argument is clearly not one of structure; rather, it takes place on
the individual level and due to the personal values and motives that are acquired by one’s
culture.

Though culture drives individuals into activism, culture also becomes why people
stay engaged in activism, according to Jasper. He writes, “Once they are in a movement,
political activity often becomes a central component of many people’s identity and way
of life” (2007: 82). There is a culture to activism that many view as a lifestyle that
includes rituals, symbols, and relationships that motivate and shape perceptions. Jasper
attributes the adoption of such customs to personal liberation, which he defines as finding
meaningful relationships and a larger purpose through collective protest. As Jasper puts
it, “Protest movements are often seen by their participants as seamlessly interwoven with
their lives” (2007: 82). To social activists, protest becomes the way in which life is given
meaning, a higher calling that helps construct a personal identity via culture and

Wilke 12
community. “Protest” becomes an encompassing identity for whole communities. This subculture develops unique values that are held dear by its participants. Some individuals, for example, believe in upholding these values so much that they become willing to sacrifice a great deal for the cause. Jasper explains:

[B]iography and culture thoroughly shape our evaluations of both costs and benefits, means as well as ends. Spending time in jail such as the result of an illegal protest may be a stiff cost for one person, but a moving, even addictive, “peak experience” for another. Among fellow protestors (who may be family, friends, and lovers), it may be a badge of honor (2007: 83).

As Jasper points out, this culture affects how individuals view risky behavior. This perception is important in a movement when activism becomes dangerous. Culture shapes actions, attitudes, motivation, and morality, which are at the core of a community’s collective identity and gives momentum to the work of activists.

Jasper also argues that a movement’s culture is greatly shaped by significant historical events. He writes that major events become captivating memories in the minds of activists and can be used to draw out emotions, such as hope for the future or a yearning for change. They become a part of the movement’s culture. Jasper explains that “founding events are particularly important because they forever symbolize the regime, form of action, group movement, or rhetoric that they helped establish. Events can be moral models that shame others into acting” (2007: 91). Activists existing in the wake of these events grasp onto their symbolism, values, and overall culture to serve as rhetoric for continued activism.
**Place Explanations**

One major way this culture retains collective memory of important events is the concept of “place.” Jasper states the importance of place, saying:

Places, are unusually strong carriers of history. Battlefields, buildings, monuments and statues, rivers and forests, regions: all can gain special resonance because they conveniently express how a group or nation constructs its history, what it selects for retention out of all the possible facts and emotions. Some, such as monuments, are designed precisely to express concrete memories; others gain this function through association with events. One can visit, touch, and smell these sites, and somehow be persuaded of the reality of history through the reality of the physical objects and places (2007: 93).

Since place is experienced throughout relative and subjective contexts—such as in a community, town, nationality, identity, generation, or excluded or oppressed group—it is inherently cultural. If a group is not socialized to understand a place’s symbolism, history, values, or purpose, then that place holds no power for a social movement. The powers of this place are tied to the culture of the people that hold it dear, thus place is connected to their values. Jasper thinks that morals or beliefs—like any cultural system—have the ability to drive people to protest if violated. In short, the morals associated with a place will influence social action at that location:

Certain settings and certain situations ... automatically elicit appropriate emotions from those familiar with the culture; emotions are rarely idiosyncratic creations of individuals. The power of symbols arises in part from the times and places—often formalized in rituals—of their use. Much political action plays upon precisely the symbolism of place, as protestors occupy legislatures or picket before courthouses. Caesars are best killed on the steps of capitols. Especially in the age of television, public spaces can be occupied to great effect, and the sites for protest are carefully selected (Jasper 2007: 93).

Places become symbols and carriers of a group’s ideas, values, or moral code. They become the venue through which activism may be carried out. Jasper is making a claim that this symbolism gives power to activism when a group is at the site. This power is the
result of the specific emotion (e.g. pride, nationalism, grief, hope) that a place draws out of the participants. He notes that when protest occurs, its exact location has probably been pre-selected by the protesting group specifically to harness its symbolic and emotional power.

In his article *A Space for Place in Sociology* (2000), Thomas Gieryn clarifies the fundamental elements of place and explains why it holds so much power. He argues that the field of sociology must pay more attention to place to understand how it affects our lives. Gieryn begins explaining that place is made up of three necessary features. First, it is geographical location, which is a distinct spot in the world such as a building, historical site, or a site with religious significance. Second is material form, which is the physical characteristics, materials, and objects that make up the place. Third, place holds an investment of meaning and value. Gieryn writes that “a spot in the universe, with a gathering of physical stuff there, becomes a place only when it ensconces history or ... identity or memory ... the meaning or value of the same place is labile-flexible in the hands of different people or cultures ... and [is] inevitably contested” (2000: 464).

It is through these places that social life happens, according to Gieryn; it is where institutions are established, human practices are developed, and society is created. Culture, such as norms, values, and ideas, are instilled in these places. Over time, this leads to the creation of broader social structures and the occurrence of important events. In this process, these places accumulate more significance and power. He writes, “A place is remarkable, and what makes it so is an unwindable spiral of material form and interpretative understandings or experiences” (Gieryn 2000: 471).
Gieryn explains how these places matter for culture and historical change, writing that the significance of place “stabilizes and gives durability to social structural categories, differences and hierarchies; arranges patterns of face-to-face interaction that constitute network-formation and collective action; embodies and secures otherwise intangible cultural norms, identities, memories” (2000: 473). He also stresses the importance of a place’s power comes not from the material forms present, but the meanings and values associated with it.

When trying to grasp how activists use the “power of place,” it is important to understand what ideas and values these individuals are drawing on. As Gieryn writes, “Places have power, *sui generis*, all apart from powerful people or organizations who occupy them: the capacity to dominate and control people or things comes through the geographic location, built-form, and symbolic meanings of a place” (2000: 474). It is a political and cultural power embedded in these places, and when one group or another may seem to possess them, it can be as if they hold its power. Gieryn explains, “The exercise of political power is also intimately connected with place: geography and built environments organize political behavior such as voting or activism” (2000: 474). These spaces actually symbolize the power that a group has, and the physical elements of the space—such as architecture style—produce emotions related to the kind of power they hold.

As Jasper noted, the places used by social activists are premeditated. The reason for this is that, as people are gathered into their culture’s valued place, it spawns collective emotions and actions. Gieryn agrees, arguing that these significant places are used to gather and engage a population and even trigger collective action. As Jasper
mentions, founding events or cherished historical events associated with a place make it central to a movement’s culture. Gieryn adds to this, explaining that more turbulent forms of emotion can be associated with a place. He writes:

Place is imbricated in moral judgments and deviant practices as well ... Still, just as place is caught up in definitions of deviance, so deviance on occasion defines place: sites of mass murders, terrorist violence, atrocities, or natural tragedies are variously memorialized, erased, sanctified, stigmatized, or merely rectified (2000: 480).

Vivid memories in a community’s history will always be associated with a place. Jasper explained that this culture creates the group’s identity, and Gieryn expands this idea, clarifying how place is associated with one’s identity and with the idea of “place attachment.” Place attachment comes from many biographical experiences that individuals associate with a place, including all the cherished memories and traumatic events associated with it. Gieryn points out that the longer people have inhabited a place, the more connected they feel to it, resulting in a greater place attachment in their personal identity. As Gieryn puts it, “Place attachment results from interactive and culturally shared processes of endowing places with emotional meaning” (2000: 481). Place attachment is represented in places that are “specifically designed and constructed to evoke memories, trigger identities, and embody histories. National monuments commemorating wars or centennials or atrocities ... inspire national identities, just as sacred places become the destination of pilgrimages” (2000: 481). Gieryn alludes to one form of place attachment associated with sacred places, such as churches, mosques, synagogues, a historically religious geographical area, or a town mentioned in a religious text.
When places are deeply engrained in a culture and people are attached to and shaped by them, it can be impossible for their collective identity to survive without them. Gieryn writes, “The loss of place, it follows, must have devastating implications for individual and collective identity, memory, and history ... To be without a place of one’s own ... is to be almost non-existent” (2000: 482). When groups lose their land and the structures on them, their identities are also being lost. The power of place will continue to shape the culture of movements and communities, and its importance should never be underestimated.

**METHODOLOGY**

Christian Smith’s chapter seven in *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* explores why individuals became involved in the Central America peace movement. His methodology lays the foundation for making a qualitative assessment of activists’ motivation. Smith’s research question is similar to my own:

[W]hat kinds of people participated in the Central America peace movement? Why did they tend to join or become recruited into the movement? What personal characteristics or circumstances may have predisposed them to become activists? And by what processes or mechanisms were those particular people mobilized for activism? Answering these questions—which addresses the issue social movement scholars call “differential recruitment to activism”—is the task, which this chapter takes up (1996: 169-170).

Smith conducted two national surveys, as well as 28 in-depth qualitative interviews to explore participants’ initial reason to join the movement, also known as “differential recruitment.” He also recorded the attitudes and values of two main groups of activists, Witness for Peace and Sanctuary. Smith also mailed hundreds of questionnaires to
activists (1996). From his research, he was able to identify the differential recruitment of the groups involved in the movement.

Smith’s work has provided a useful blueprint for my research design. Modeling his research, I gathered data in Jerusalem and Palestine (the West Bank) on Christians involved in Palestine’s liberation movement. This data collection used a combination of qualitative interviews and participant observation. Also, I have analyzed selected literature by Christian Palestinians in order to identify common ideas. Together, this information explains how faith plays a role in the lives of these social demonstrators.

I conducted seven qualitative interviews with Christian activists who are either local Palestinians or internationals. Convenience sampling was used to carry out interviews, which were recorded, transcribed, and later destroyed. Fake names are used at the request of participants to conceal their identities for their own safety. The activists are a group of four women and three men, two Palestinian leaders and five international activists. The foreign activists come from five countries: the United States, Scotland, England, Sweden, and Canada. These interviews took place during and after my visits to six non-violent resistance and peace-building NGOs and churches.

I also undertook participant observation at a number of organizations working in Jerusalem, as well as Palestine. Data was gathered while attending non-violent direct-action efforts (e.g. tree planting), workshops, and conferences. Also, when possible, speeches, prayers, and meetings were recorded for further research-gathering purposes. I also will analyze Christian Palestinian activism literature, studying the goals, methods, and beliefs of prominent Christian Palestinian activist leaders. Using these texts I examined how activists in Palestine use the concept of place to influence their work.
RESULTS

Structural Explanations

The interviewees provided extensive information about their background, history of activism, and church/NGO networks. This section includes the patterns of their biographical availability and shows how their life situations allow them to engage in protest. Also, I will show how churches have provided my subjects with opportunities for activism. Involvement often began with a low-commitment experience, which led to increased amounts of more high-risk volunteering. The following data supports structural explanations for differential recruitment in Palestine’s liberation movement.

Biographical Availability

Biographical availability—or the opportunity for individuals to become involved in a movement—is what allows for engagement. Activism in the Christian community in Jerusalem and Palestine requires a set of factors that is similar to what is found in other movements. For international activists, these circumstances include a denominational affiliation, access to financial support, degrees in higher education, no full-time jobs outside of their organization, few or no outside responsibilities to other people (such as young children). Due to the amount of travel required for internationals to reach Palestine and the lengthy visits that these activists commit to, these traits and circumstances are required to be involved in this movement. Internationals can be divided into three age subgroups: “twenty somethings” who are salaried volunteers/missionaries through their denominations; people in middle age who are employed by denominations and represent
them at various conferences and events; and retirees who have the time, money, and church connections to help volunteers come to Palestine.

For example, Melissa (as with all subjects, her name has been changed) is a twenty-something American missionary through the United Methodist Church, and she is financially supported by the church’s ministries. She is unmarried and a recent graduate from university without responsibilities in her home country. This allows her the freedom and resources to live in Bethlehem and volunteer at the Wi’am Conflict Resolution Center full time. Kate, another international activist, is a retiree who is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron, Palestine. Originally from Scotland, Kate is an elder in the Church of Scotland, is well educated and widowed. Her strong ties to the church and other organizations and few obligations to family or outside career allow her the freedom and opportunity to engage in activism.

The biographical availability differs for local Palestinian leaders. To engage in social activism these individuals require financial support from international church organizations, higher education, and employment through their organizations. Luke, a Lutheran farm owner outside of Bethlehem, has the resources to finance his organization, the Tent of Nations, through donations from churches and other religious organizations that believe in his non-violent mission. He is well educated at university and works full time for the Tent of Nations, a small NGO focused on non-violence and peace. Luke would not be able to fund his efforts without international support from the churches. Mark, a salaried organizer at Sabeel (the center for Palestinian Liberation Theology in Jerusalem), is university-educated. His organization is funded by donations from denominations, as well as religiously affiliated independent organizations. This data
provides a structural explanation for activism in which participant availability requires education, employment, and resources.

*Church Networks and Relational Ties*

Beside biographical availability, all interview subjects share connections to a denomination’s social justice ministry or other Christian NGO that led to their participation. Activists were either assigned by their church to work in Palestine or were recruited to an NGO by a friend. This was observed in one interview with Melissa, who works for the United Methodist Church in Bethlehem. In the past, she had other assignments through the church. For example, she spent a summer leading construction projects on a Native American reservation. This background shows that one job in the church connected her to future opportunities for ministry. The United Methodist Church later placed her in Bethlehem, Palestine, to work at the Wi’am Conflict Resolution Center. Melissa helps organize events for Muslim women and connects with other Christian organizations.

Another subject, Samantha, described how she first joined the Mennonite church and was inspired by the work of Mennonites in Palestine. Eventually she became connected through her church and personal friends to two job opportunities, the first with Sabeel in Jerusalem. She obtained her second position through a friend who had been previously employed at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Bethlehem. She tells how these friends inspired her to join the organization. Samantha said, “To me I see them as always doing the most radical work of the Mennonites … MCC was living out the call of faith rather than just preaching it.” Church connections are a common trait for every activist I interviewed, except for one outlier named Robert, an ordained deacon in the
Church of England. He serves on the denomination’s Diocese of Peace Unit and speaks at every synod on peace and justice issues. He has traveled to Palestine frequently without ties to an NGO; however, he considers justice advocacy part of the church’s ministry.

Robert explained his reason for traveling to Palestine: “I wanted to be a part of the global peace and justice movement and to work on whichever campaigns seem most relevant.”

Robert’s activism in Palestine was preceded by a long history of activism and networking in the church. The common pattern among interview participants is their connection to the Palestinian liberation movement initially through church networks. The church structure is key to why activists are able to make international connections.

As sociological literature also reflects, all of my interview subjects explained that initially they were introduced to activism through a low-commitment event such as a march, demonstration, or educational trip—usually with a Christian group. Through those experiences they built relational ties with groups of activists and became increasingly committed to certain efforts. I found that all of my interview subjects share a pattern of becoming engaged in gradually more dangerous and costly peace and justice efforts.

Church organizations or ministries provided the initial opportunity for activists to become engaged in protest. Not only did networks of churches create opportunities for individuals, but they also continually connected them to a growing community of activists dedicated to Palestinian independence.

This experience is reflected in Emma’s story. An elder in the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Emma works with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)—an organization in Israeli-occupied Hebron, a flashpoint in the Israel/Palestine conflict. However, she did not begin at such a high-intensity initiative. “My background started
fourteen years ago ... when I was aware of the Sabra and Shatila massacre (the murder of thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese Shiites by Lebanese Christian radicals in 1982). I remember I was walking in a demonstration [because] we had a lot of Palestinians in the parish at that time ... [Then] for half a year I was at a checkpoint working for EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel).” Emma began at a single demonstration and was later recruited to work in Palestine on long-term projects. This trajectory became increasingly intense as she grew more committed to the efforts for peace and justice in Palestine.

Kate, another interview subject who also works at CPT, is a retired elder in the Church of Scotland. She also had many connections and positions in several organizations, including the World Council of Churches. Kate described how her participation in one organization led to the next, earning her concurrent positions on a number of councils, committees, and international church boards. Kate described a rapid increase in participation:

I am on the church’s World Mission Council and the Middle East Committee of the church and represent the church on the EAPPI group ... And I represent the World Mission Council on the Church’s Safe-Guarding Committee ... It started through my Palestinian stuff with EAPPI and I was asked to represent the church on that group and because I was the Church of Scotland person with the most experience ... I was still involved and interested. Also, I had been on the CPT Steering Committee and from that came membership on the Middle East Committee and from that I was invited to accept nomination for the World Mission Council.

As observed, participation in a social movement usually begins with a church affiliation, which leads to a connection to an organization or ministry through a church. Over time, activists are invited to participate in a low-commitment experience. With biographical availability, one’s work can grow into all-consuming undertakings for months and even
years. These structural explanations, however, do not begin to fully explain why these people have become so committed to this cause, these organizations, or the people involved. To answer this I turn to cultural explanations.

Cultural Explanations

Many cultural explanations for involvement in Palestine’s liberation efforts emerged in my qualitative interviews. These themes were also reflected in literature as reasons for social activism. I found that the two main cultural reasons for participation are cognitive liberation and protest culture. An important element of culture is place, which will be highlighted because of the unique religious significance of place in the context of Jerusalem and Palestine. Together these aspects of culture create a shared worldview for Christians involved in the Palestinian liberation movement. Activists have adopted these cultural experiences, ideas, and values as a part of their identity, which explains their continued involvement in protest.

Cognitive Liberation

Cognitive liberation is the collective change in a community’s thinking that sparks a movement. This transformation often takes place after individuals have encounters with intense suffering, hopelessness or powerlessness. My interviews found this pattern in all individuals, who either had experienced or were currently experiencing a traumatic occurrence of pain, loss, grief, illness, or persecution. The personal suffering in the lives of every activist led to empathy for other individuals, especially the marginalized or oppressed, or it provided motivation to be a catalyst for positive social
change in the world. Interview subjects Melissa, Robert, and Mark demonstrate these common experiences among activists.

In one interview, Melissa—who grew up in a household in which both of her parents were ordained in the United Methodist Church—told her narrative of hardship. When she was six years old her father contracted meningitis and encephalitis, leaving him unable to remember even his own daughter’s name, which forced her mother to be his primary caregiver. Melissa was then raised in a poor Christian household, with her father’s life constantly on the line and with little financial support. Melissa explained how this experience shaped her upbringing:

I realized I could only depend on God from a very young age. So since that moment I believe Christianity was more at the core of who I was than if that hadn’t happened. For a long time I really understood ‘the joy of the Lord is my strength’ ... That was all very formative, seeing both of my parents’ faith throughout that time, and also I have an understanding of poverty. We were very poor for much of my time growing up but also learning what it means in terms of power, privilege, and poverty and things like that ... So having empathy for the poor, having that kind of feeling was also fueling in my work.

Melissa said she believes her impoverished background has connected her to the people she now serves. “There is always something in me that I do understand sadness on a different level,” she said. Melissa is working to become a minister while advocating for the oppressed around the world. She is currently placed in Bethlehem, where she leads a group for Muslim women. Melissa has faced adversity her whole life, which has shaped her worldview and ultimately has led to her participation in peace work in Palestine.

Robert is an activist who suffers from fibromyalgia, a chronic condition that causes pain and lethargy; he has also experienced the loss of close friends, and he has overcome substance abuse. Robert talked about God in one interview and described his struggles with his disease:
[Fibromyalgia] keeps me humble, which is a good thing. I’ve looked to get through the frustration, you know. I feel there was this big sense of calling and all these things I want to do and [God had] given me the gifts to do them, but now [God took the gifts] away by not giving me the energy and it doesn’t make any sense. But ... life doesn’t make any sense, does it? That’s what the faith journey is about really, isn’t it? The key thing for me is about letting go of wanting to achieve lots of things and wanting to have a list and say I’ve done this, this, this, and this ... And I think, you know, if I didn’t have fibromyalgia I would still be working [in England] and I wouldn’t have time for [the Palestinians] ... So how do you measure achievement? Is it by being very active and doing lots of things? Sometimes it’s not.

Robert travels from England to Palestine to work in Hebron for months at a time. During the hours of the day he has strength, he documents the conflict and Israeli settler violence with his camera, visits those imprisoned by Israeli military, questions unjust military actions, and assists local Palestinian farmers.

A Palestinian Christian activist, Mark works with young volunteers in Jerusalem at Sabeel. I asked him how, as a Christian, he endures the deprivations that come with living in Palestine. He responded:

Sadly, it’s not just as a Christian, it is as a human being. When you suffer ... you get used to it. How do I know? Living here I am used to crossing the checkpoints ... You get used to settler violence, you get used to harassment or having court orders against you. I mean, you don’t have to be a Christian or a Muslim. What doesn’t break you makes you stronger ... Another part of it is that you know you are not completely alone. My faith is that when you are in the middle of a storm, some are praying for Jesus to come to us. I believe that Jesus is with us. This is why God strengthens us and we don’t think of immigrating. We continue to be creative, because God is with us ... So part is we get used to it, but part is that we feel God’s presence ... Sometimes people want God to come and throw the settlers out, but God acts in a different way, a more ethical way.

Mark’s experience as a Palestinian challenges him to be stronger in his religious ideas as well as drives him to continue advocating for Palestinian rights. He does this primarily by creating dialogue with Christian Zionists who advocate for Israeli occupation over Palestinian people. Experiences with suffering shape people, and when these encounters

Wilke 27
are paired with a social issue, they can often lead to one’s commitment to changing that situation through protest.

Another form of cognitive liberation occurs when an individual is exposed to a social issue or instance of injustice. Participants I interviewed shared personal stories of enlightenment about the Israel/Palestine issue, which they said led to a sense of calling to be involved in activism. I came in contact with many participants who visited Palestine and felt they had to respond through activism, leading to a journey of activist work and increased religious commitment. These stories of calling are similar to the ideas of cognitive liberation described in other research.

Luke, the Palestinian Christian who is a local leader of the Tent of Nations, described his upbringing on a Palestinian farm just outside of Bethlehem; he shared his family’s multi-generational struggle to keep their land from becoming an Israeli settlement. Since 1991, Luke’s family has been in front of Israeli military courts and even Israel’s supreme court defending the farm from confiscation. His rare success in the Israeli court system has resulted in his family’s constant harassment by the military. Luke said his family chose to respond to the harassment with creative non-violent resistance by starting the NGO. Luke told me of his latest encounter with the Israeli government:

Recently on the 19th of May [2014], soldiers came and they damaged hundreds of olive and grape trees. [About 1,500 trees were destroyed.] They are now trying to put restrictions on us on buildings, on water, on electricity. When the [separation] wall is finished, this area will be outside the wall and it won’t be easy to cross into Bethlehem, so this will be a challenge for us in the next few months and years. ... So we started a new way of resistance. We started a positive way of non-violent resistance under the title “We Refuse to Be Enemies.” Of course it is easily said and difficult to live. Then we started the Tent of Nations. That was in 2002. ... The suffering is not the end of the story in Christianity. It’s not like after today my problems will go away and it will be normal. It is the path into new situations. This is how we see it.
Luke’s NGO and family will continue to fight for legal rights to own their land in the West Bank. His lifelong struggle for his home has shaped him and challenged him to become an advocate for non-violence and peace in the face of adversity.

Kate, the CPT activist, exhibits both kinds of cognitive liberation. She lost her husband to illness fifteen years ago, which resulted in her return to church. During this time she was first exposed to the Palestinian political situation under Israeli military occupation on a church trip. Kate described a transformative episode that led to her desire to participate in the movement:

When we heard that my husband was terminally ill, we wanted to return to the local church. I contacted the local pastor and he visited my husband several times, so then the funeral was indeed there about 15 years ago. Just a few months after that I went back to the local church and I have been involved ever since...I came first to a Sabeel Conference, then there I was in Beit Sahour, [Palestine,] seeing three shell-damaged homes and one gutted by fire and just hearing the stories of the families there. It was my first visit and I was very shaken by it, very upset and I came out [of a session] to kind of compose myself. There was a shepherd herding his flock up the street and I knew then, I was going to do something ... I had seen these people from CPT, with the red caps, and I looked it up and I found you could go for a ... two-week delegation and I thought, “That would be great!” That was about middle of 2002 and I’m still here.

Kate’s visit with the Palestinian Christians at Sabeel affected her perspective about the Israeli occupation. She interpreted the sight of a shepherd herding his flock as a sign to participate in activism. Kate’s enlightenment and solidarity with Palestinian suffering led to her deep commitment to Palestinian liberation.

Cognitive liberation, as described in other sociological literature, is the catalyst for social movements. However, this is only the inciting incident in the stories of the activists I interviewed. Other elements of their movement’s culture sheds light on what keeps these people motivated and bonded in the midst of their challenging task.
The Elements of Christian Protest Culture

My interviews have portrayed many of the ideas of “protest culture” that sociological literature has articulated. Many sociologists have pointed out that elements of protest culture create an energy from collective empowerment, common symbols, beliefs, sacred places and a common history, which create the idea that activists are participating in a struggle between good and evil. These themes certainly arise in protest culture in Jerusalem and Palestine and serve as a driving force behind activism. However, I argue that in the case of this specific Christian activism, protest culture is made up of a complex set of values, ideas, and collective attributes with an emphasis on religious ideas.

I have gathered a number of principal protest-culture themes that I found in every interview and in all experiences of participant observation in Jerusalem and Palestine, as well as in the books and texts by the leaders of this social movement. This group of values, ideas, and collective experiences create a foundation for the liberation movement in the Christian community. This list includes: 1) an upbringing that features a connection to a church/organization or socialization for protest, 2) the common endorsement of Liberation Theology, including a belief that God advocates for the marginalized and oppressed, 3) the consistent understanding that peace in the Israel/Palestine conflict is only possible through social justice for Palestinians, 4) the collective condemnation of Israel’s military occupation of Palestine and understanding that it is illegal and immoral, 5) and the shared belief that non-violent tactics are the best way to face oppressive structures. These shared experiences, ideas, and values create protest culture. This culture serves as the worldview of activists involved in the Palestinian liberation movement. It
drives them, bonds them together, determines what is right and wrong in the context of
the movement, and helps them find meaning and purpose, as well as serves as a reason to
continue to engage in this activism.

Movement Socialization

A pattern emerged that showed my interview subjects were brought up in a
church to value social justice. Also, several interview subjects grew up with parents
involved in Palestinian rights activism. For example, Melissa described her upbringing
with both parents working as clergy in the United Methodist Church. She added that she
plans to also become ordained, saying, “I am looking to continue to also do this kind of
global peace and justice work. I was raised in the church so I think it has always been
who I am and the center of my life.” The religious upbringing in a home focused on
social justice has greatly influenced Melissa’s vocation and activism.

In her interview, Samantha explained that, during her childhood, her parents were
close friends with activists working at NGOs in Palestine. She told how CPT activists
were a part of her upbringing and impacted her. Samantha said, “I was declared an
honorary ‘CPTer’ at 8 years old ... It was really influential for me.” Similar to Melissa,
Samantha was raised in a context in which Christianity and social justice were linked.
These experiences of socialization are common for international activists. This pattern
was also observed in the Palestinian activists interviewed. Luke, for example, explained:

I grew up involved in church issues, you know, Sunday school. I was leading the
youth work at the church so it was important. It was something I got from my
father and of course my mother. So living in a house like this you start from the
beginning being active and involved in the church … It’s like the seeds were
planted. Day by day you see the fruits of those seeds. Of course you see how they
are acting now on how we grew up.
For Luke and others, a family history of religious belief led to early socialization into Palestine’s liberation movement. This socialization also provides reason for Palestinian involvement in activism.

*Liberation Theology*

Another crucial element of Palestine’s protest culture is activists’ subscription to “Liberation Theology”—the belief that Hebrew and Christian texts are best interpreted from the perspective of oppressed peoples and grassroots liberation movements. Roman Catholics in Latin America developed Liberation Theology during the mid-twentieth century and it has been influential on Palestine’s Christian community. Many of my interview subjects attend the same churches in Palestine, they hear the same sermons, scriptures, and read the same books based on the ideas of Liberation Theology. In result, activists in the movement see themselves as challengers of the status quo, and it is something they are drawn to engage in. Often, activists lift up stories of the past where they participated in radical efforts of change. They all hold the common belief that God always advocates for marginalized and oppressed peoples—especially when the political situation does not appear to favor the oppressed. For inspiration, participants regularly lifted up leaders, such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and significant events that embodied the ideas of Liberation Theology. Pictures, quotes, and sayings about Liberation Theology surrounded the activists in their organizations and homes. These Christian ideas are sewn into the cultural fabric of these activists’ communities and surroundings. Liberation Theology is a culture all its own, providing a set of beliefs,

Wilke 32
values, and prescribed ways of acting. One interview subject, Samantha, told her perspective on the theology:

Liberation Theology means that the people at the grassroots level can interpret the Bible in their own context, and [it] has particular meaning to those who are oppressed. And I do believe that, but here I think it is different than in South America, in Ecuador, or Colombia, so there are particular Liberation Theologies. But at the same time overall it’s still the Gospel. Overall it’s still the same message. Overall it’s the same sort of calls for how to live.

As Samantha pointed out, Liberation Theology in Palestinian activism is unique in comparison to other movements because its ideas are rooted in Hebrew texts. This forms a paradox because the same books are interpreted by Israeli Zionists to justify settlement construction on Palestinian land. The activists interviewed all embrace Liberation Theology, but they often pointed out this irony. For example, Melissa commented on the inspiration Judaism gives her due to its basis in justice. She was quick to lament, however, that it is the same religion that has brought the conflict to Palestine. She said, “This sense of justice found in Judaism ... really shaped the view of justice I find in Christianity. So it’s this great irony that it’s [the same] justice I learned from Judaism that brings me here to Israel and Palestine and says that this isn’t right.” Liberation Theology is also embraced among local Palestinian Christian leaders. Luke, the leader of the Tent of Nations, elaborates on how Christians in Palestine deal with this conundrum:

Yes, we read the scriptures as if they are talking to us. Also with Old Testament stories. For example, God was always speaking to the weak ... God [was] talking to the Israelites as their hope to have a better life and freedom ... The scriptures are talking to us, the weak people ... We believe that God is always on the side of the poor and the weak. I’m not saying that God is not with the people in power. No, I’m saying that the scriptures are talking to people who are in suffering.

Luke explained that it is not race or bloodline that determines God’s favor, but rather social status. This idea shaped the conversations, actions, values and ideas of every
activist interviewed, and it was notable in the writings and speeches of the movement’s leaders. Mark, a Palestinian Christian organizer at Sabeel, the center of Palestinian Liberation Theology in Jerusalem, illustrates this. “Know that God is good,” he said. “That’s it ... This is my theology. Know that God is good ... and everything that is good, comes from Him. If it bad, it doesn’t.” These participants show that Liberation Theology is significant to the culture of Christian activists in Palestine.

Peace Requires Justice

Next, all participants believed that peace requires social justice, especially in the context of the Israel/Palestine issue. It was also a common message in this community that peace is only possible with justice. Melissa’s comment was representative:

I think we can talk about the idea of “negative peace” versus “positive peace,” so the idea of negative peace would be a society that is not at war, there’s no bombs, no, like, warfare happening, but there is extreme economic injustice and extreme inequality. So I think even in this moment we have negative peace in Israel and Palestine. I mean there’s no rockets, no mobs right now. But we don’t have peace unless all parties are on equal footing and have equal access to dignity and resources and everything. We will have positive peace.

Melissa explained that peace is understood by activists to be the byproduct of justice; otherwise, peace is submission of oppressed peoples to their oppressors. Another subject, Kate, explains, “We support Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers who are working for justice and peace ... We don’t believe you can have reconciliation before you have justice.” She expanded on these ideas, explaining that not only peace but reconciliation is impossible without justice. This political perspective on the ideas of justice, peace, and reconciliation always returned to social justice as the solitary way to make the next step in resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict. This common idea was crucial to identify with.
the movement. It is understood by all participants in this movement that the Palestinian people are oppressed by Israelis, and for peace to come, the Israeli military must end its control over the daily lives of Palestinians. Mark, a Palestinian Christian, summed up this idea simply, by stating, “Justice is the cornerstone for peace and reconciliation.” This idea leads to another major element of the protest culture of the Palestinian liberation activists: the collective denouncement of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Condemn Israel’s Military Occupation of Palestine

In a political arena such as the Middle East—and especially in the face of the complexities of the Israel/Palestine conflict—few people ever agree on political ideas, conflict solutions, or the correct next step toward peace. However, these activists do agree on an important first step toward peace: the end to Israel’s military control of Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza. For these activists, it is the continued dehumanization, second-class citizenry, injustice, and military presence that most perpetuates the continued violence between Israel and Palestine. Ending the occupation—in the eyes of these activists—would begin with the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from Palestinian lands and the removal of the Separation Barrier, as well as equal permission to use roads, hospitals, schools, and government and equal access to resources like water and farmland. In my interview with CPT volunteer Kate, she elaborated about this shared perspective:

I think the problem is the occupation; occupation in itself isn’t illegal. But the way Israel is persecuting [through] occupation involves the daily abuses of human rights, the daily breaches of international law, and ... pieces of Israeli law, too. I
think that I deplore all violence from all sides. I think nothing excuses violence, but I think there are things that explain violence.

This perspective was echoed in many speeches, texts, and interviews throughout my time with these individuals. This critique of occupation is a significant because it is shared by all Palestinian Christian activists, as well as the international Christian activists. Occupation also holds religious significance for these activists because it is often compared to the Roman occupation of the land during Jesus’ life. Palestinian Christians read the Bible through a lens of occupation, which is the original context in which Jesus taught his ideas. I consider this a core element to protest culture because it is the key cause these activists are protesting for.

*Non-Violent Direct Action Is The Best Way To Face Oppressors*

Another theme is that all participants believe non-violent direct action is the best way to face one’s oppressors. All but one of these activists identified as pacifist. In the perspective of these protestors, the best way to support the liberation of Palestine is through non-violent direct action, as well as through varying forms of peaceful and creative resistance. Not only is non-violence a part of their religious identity, but it is also a moral ideal they hold to be true. Luke said:

For us we have to believe non-violent resistance should be a way of life, not a strategy ... This is exactly what Jesus did. He also said, “Love your neighbor like yourself.” He knows how difficult, how impossible it is to love your enemy, but this can be seen as a non-violent way to show “the other” the human side of it. So when “the other” sees your love, you are changing the life of “the other” by acting that way. For us, I would say as people living in a difficult situation with occupation as Palestinians, it’s easy to hate. On a daily basis you practice. You go to the checkpoint and you are stopped because you are Palestinian. You know you feel the anger and so on. But for us our therapy here is the challenge of how to invest all this negative energy constructively ... Non-violence here is living the experience and trying to motivate others by doing it. Not by just preaching theory.
No, we are practicing it. This will help more people believe in this way of resistance by living the situation and dealing with it. It is also important to say that it is a way of life, not a strategy. We are acting in a non-violent way because we are acting on our faith. Faith for us is the foundation for acting in a non-violent way.

Luke describes the ideas of non-violence that make up an important value in protest culture. In a daily struggle to deal with frustration and injustice, these activists attempt to channel their anger into new and creative ways to resist the wrongs that are committed against them. Mark explains, “I believe completely in non-violence ... and I believe this is the way of Jesus; if there is blood to be shed, it should be our blood. I’m sure it is the Christian way.” Kate, whose organization’s main task is supporting Palestinian non-violence, echoed this in her interview, listing these as important traits of activism: “trying to live a Christ-like life in terms of non-violence; pacifism, but not an isolationist pacifism; being active in peacemaking; ... inclusiveness, concern for justice, an engagement with ideas.” Similar to Luke, Kate did not see non-violence as a tactic, but rather the lifestyle of a Christian. She continued:

People think of resistance as being demonstrations, but it’s just about living your life, it’s about going to school, building a new home even though you know it might be demolished. It’s about getting married and having children. It’s about getting an education and finding a job. It’s about not leaving, and we do that in [many] ways. We do that first and foremost by protective presence. That’s about presence. That’s about the biblical scriptural thing, about accompaniment, about being with people, and breaking bread with people. But it’s also about because we know that having internationals present and watching, actively watching, reduces the likelihood of human rights abuses. But it doesn’t completely remove them so we record those abuses and report on them to groups like the U.N. and the Red Cross and so on.

For peace and justice activists in the middle of the Israel/Palestine conflict, there are many layers to the culture of protest. Unlike many sociologists, I argue that culture is not only a primary motivator through cognitive liberation, but that protest culture infiltrates
the whole lives of these people and becomes significant to their identities. They are socialized—some from a young age—to hold the values, beliefs, and attitudes necessary for protest culture. They subscribe to the religious ideas of Liberation Theology, which makes up much of their worldview. Activists believe that peace always requires justice, especially in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and these people collectively denounce Israel’s military occupation of Palestine. These persons are committed to creative forms of non-violent resistance against what they understand as an oppressive and unjust society. These ideas have been developed not by single individuals, but in community during the decades-long movement. As previous literature predicts, participants are socialized into the movement’s protest culture and value it as a part of their identity. One of the ways protest culture is observed is participant use of place in creative non-violent resistance.

Place Explanations

Place and the Christian Palestinian Identity

Place is essential to social activism. Not only is a group’s culture built around places, but collective identity—through values, memories, and emotions—is also invested into these places. As identity is found through place, it provides an explanation as to why and how activists protest. Due to the significance of place, it is constantly used in activism. As literature shows, leaders in activist organizations consider place when arranging protests. However, place is a powerful tool for protest only when an individual is socialized into the movement’s culture and grasps its symbolic importance. During my
interviews and participant observation, I saw an assortment of ways in which place is used by activists in Jerusalem and Palestine.

Mark, a Greek-Orthodox Palestinian, described how he chose to use the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—Christianity’s holiest site—as the location for his protest. He was objecting to a 2005 decision by foreign church leaders in the Greek Orthodox patriarchy to sell traditionally Palestinian Christian property in Jerusalem’s Old City. However, the decision sparked controversy in the Palestinian community because the land was sold to an Israeli settler company. Christians decided the Church of the Holy Sepulchre would be an effective place for protest because of the memories, values, and emotions attached to it by the Palestinian Christian community. Also, the demonstration was scheduled during the week of Easter—the church’s busiest time of the year.

Thousands of pilgrims observed the activists while cramming through the ancient building’s small entrance. As a result, the activists effectively gained the attention of the Greek Orthodox patriarchy. Mark said:

We were just first intifada young adults, [around] 24, [or] 25 [years old]. We were all very active Palestinians and we were Christian. ... When the church messed with us we were younger and we couldn’t do anything but now we were going to say “no.” ... So we started organizing ... and said, “Tomorrow, we are going to do a demonstration.” We went down to the Holy Sepulchre, [and] we did a demonstration. [There] were lawyers, doctors, engineers, drivers and so on ... People heard we were having a demonstration in Jerusalem that day [and] singing patriotic songs at the Holy Sepulchre. It started with like 35 [people], and our numbers grew.

Mark showed how Christian Palestinians in Jerusalem used place as a tool to their protest. Due to the structure’s significance and the large crowds during Holy Week, a huge audience was present for the protest. These factors increased the effectiveness of the demonstration and eventually led the patriarchy’s decision to cancel the business deal.
Luke, the founder of the Tent of Nations, a farm focused on peace work and non-violence advocacy, demonstrates how place can be used to evoke meaning, memories, and emotions. The Tent of Nations farm teaches values such as family, faith, non-violence, diversity, and unity to all who visit. The peace farm also becomes a cherished place to activists who volunteer there for months. Luke tells the story of his family’s fight to keep their land. Using the farm as the center object for his story, the property gains value and becomes a “place” in Gieryn’s sense of the term. Luke articulated the history of his land—as he does to all of the farm’s visitors—to show how important it is to his family. He said:

In 1916, my grandfather bought this land [and] then registered the land during the Ottoman Empire, Jordanian Rule, British Mandate and Israeli occupation ... My family lived on the farm. My uncle and grandfather lived in a cave. They grew up connected to the ground. Of course my grandfather was a spiritual man. He always used to sit [during] evenings around the fire and end the day with a Bible study ... This is how we grew up, as children and grandchildren, connected to the ground, but also having faith from the beginning, growing up with it, you know. Now my father died in 1976 and left my mom with nine children and my uncle lived in the same cave until he died in 1987. They grew up here, lived here in caves, until they died. ... In 1991, the Israeli authorities declared our land as “state land” in order to confiscate this last hill and build the settlements. So we challenged that, and with the Israeli military court to prove ownership and we are still in court since 1991.

Luke brought up the recent episode when Israeli soldiers came onto the farm and destroyed about 1,500 of its olive and grape trees, and how he has struggled with a non-violent response to it.

Sometimes you ask yourself, “Why am I acting this way? Why am I loving ‘the other?’ And still the other is acting differently, not as we do, but negatively, you know? For example, such as the destruction of the trees, there was a moment where I asked, “why, why is that?” Even if they claim this is state land in the court, why do they come and smash the trees as if without even feelings? You know the trees for us are like our children ... It’s unjust. But again, you know, we remember it has always been this way. The path of faith is narrow, as Jesus said. It’s not wide where you can have more space. It’s very difficult and if we decide
to go on that, we have to bear the responsibility. Like Jesus said, you need to carry your cross and follow me.

Luke described how his family has lived and died on the farm for generations. This connects his culture and identity with that place. His faith is also associated with the farm; he recalled hearing family members tell Bible stories around a campfire on the property. Clearly, Luke’s cultural identity is found in this place, thus providing reason to continue his decades-long legal battle against the Israeli military and Jewish settlers. The Tent of Nations holds events for Israelis and Palestinians to plant trees together as a way to build relationships between the two peoples. Individuals from around the world visit the Tent of Nations to work in its fields; local children attend summer camps there; and the group has also started a women’s center. Farm visitors usually plant and sponsor a tree, which Luke believes connects them to the place, as well. Luke’s story shows that place is not only a tool for activists to use during protest, but also the foundation of a group’s identity and culture. This connection, as seen at the Tent of Nations, can be used to gain support in a political effort, such as saving a family’s farm.
Photos from field notes: The Tent of Nations, September 2014

The first photo (left) captures the farm’s main entrance and a large rock painted with the Tent of Nation’s logo. Behind this sign is a field of fig trees. The second photo displays the farm’s “Nations Gathering Tent,” a place for visitors to gather, presentations to be given, and summer camps to meet.

Place: A Symbol for Values

Every December, Bethlehem is decorated for Christmas, and Christians and Muslims alike gather to celebrate the holiday and partake in its range of festivities. As religious pilgrims visited the town to celebrate Jesus’ birth in 2014, I observed many forms of activism take place. One demonstration was held in Manger Square,
Bethlehem’s main plaza. The Ministry for Tourism in Bethlehem in partnership with several NGOs created a massive banner hung near the Church of the Nativity. The red and gold banner was a backdrop for a large stage that the holiday festivities were centered around. In Arabic and English the sign read, “All I want for Christmas is Justice.” The scores of international visitors for Christmas could not miss this political message. The individuals that created the banner chose to display the message at one of Palestine’s most famous and revered locations. These activists were thinking about place. They chose to display it in Manger Square next to a manger scene with a massive Christmas tree and by the front door to the Nativity Church (which marks Jesus’ traditional birth site). Thousands were in attendance that Christmas Eve night, in which live bands performed with this banner overhead.

*Photo from field notes: Live Concert in Manger Square, Bethlehem, Palestine. December 24, 2014*
This photo captures the live music on stage; behind the musicians is the banner that reads, “All I want for Christmas is Justice.” Next to the stage stands Bethlehem’s giant Christmas tree.

Places Spawn Collective Activism

Also on December 24 in Bethlehem’s Manger Square, not far from this Christmas banner, a group of young Palestinians decorated one of the large trees in the plaza’s landscaping. However, these activists were not using Christmas tree ornaments. Instead, they had brought boxes of empty tear-gas canisters and used stun grenades that were fired at the youth by the Israeli military. They hung these canisters in the tree as if they were classic Christmas ornaments. This image juxtaposed Bethlehem’s massive Christmas tree standing nearby. Also, it reminded everyone in Manger Square of Bethlehem’s political situation. I watched these young activists climb the tree and decorate its branches. Interestingly, they also hung a picture of Ziad Abu Ein, a recently deceased Palestinian government official and non-violent resistance activist. He died three weeks before Christmas Eve during a peaceful demonstration that turned violent with Israeli soldiers. Together, these reminders were powerful statements in the midst of Bethlehem’s Christmas celebrations. It was clear that these activists also chose Manger Square for their demonstration because of the cultural significance of the location.
Photo from field notes: “Tear Gas Tree” in Manger Square, Bethlehem, Palestine. December 24, 2014

This photo shows a Palestinian boy climbing the tree with a cardboard box full of empty tear gas canisters to hang in its branches. Palestine’s flag is attached to the tree and a poster of deceased Palestinian Minister Ziad Abu Ein is found in the lower area of the photo just left of the brown box.

Bishop Munib Younan’s Christmas Eve Sermon

The following is an excerpt from a sermon by Bishop Munib Younan on Christmas Eve at the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, Palestine. As the bishop who presides over Palestine and Jordan, he also serves as the president of the World Lutheran Federation. Half of the individuals I interviewed attend this church regularly and were present at the Christmas Eve service. The church is the epicenter of
networking, activism, and creative non-violence for the global and Palestinian Christian community in the West Bank. This church is near the center of Bethlehem, two blocks from the Church of the Nativity. It also hosts offices for a number of other Palestinian Christian-led NGOs that work for Palestinian liberation. The church is pastored by the well-known Palestinian activist and author Rev. Mitri Raheb.

Bishop Younan’s sermon that evening was based on the biblical story of Jesus of Nazareth being born in a stable because there was no room for his family in the inn. Younan’s sermon was a commentary on current Middle Eastern issues dealing specifically with the struggles for Christians being killed for their religion in multiple countries. He also focused on Christian Palestinians living in the face of occupation and oppression in Israel and Palestine. Younan rhetorically used the current context of Bethlehem under military occupation as a way to articulate ideas about non-violence, peace, and hope for the activists and locals present. He often referred to Bethlehem as the “place of Jesus’ birth.” It was a clear example of how Christian activists use place to build momentum for their social activism. Younan said:

The Christmas story always fills us with joy. And yet, we know that all was not calm on that holy night in Bethlehem ... Even though it was time for the baby to be born, the family could find no place to rest their heads or their weary feet. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth. And laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn. Today, we must ask the same question. Who has a place in the inn? If Jesus did not have one, do his followers have a place in the “inn” called the Middle East? ... We are here in this part of the world for one reason, because that baby, who had no place in the inn, did find a place in the manger and the stable. Jesus [was] denied a birthplace of comfort. He alone has given us the right, the full right to be in this country and in the whole Middle East. ... You need only to hear today what our president, President [Mahmoud] Abbas, said to the mass media. [He said] that all Arab Christians are not only an integral part of their society, but an integral part of the Palestinian national movement. ... Jesus is never in palaces, or in seats of power. The manger of Jesus today is found among the displaced, the refugee, the persecuted, and the occupied! The manger of Jesus is ... with the children of Gaza,
trying to build their lives. The manger of Jesus is there with ... all who have been turned away, cast out, denied permission or treated as second-class citizens and to all victims of violence and terror. Jesus says today from Bethlehem, “Do not be afraid little flock for it is your Father’s pleasure to give you the kingdom.” God’s children are sleeping in the cold, fleeing from persecution and violence this evening or being born as refugees. We find Jesus proclaiming. He has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recover sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free. Even if there is no place for us in the inn, Jesus would widen his manger so that there would be a place for all of us. ... Standing with our Lord Jesus among the persecuted and the forgotten of the world, together we can raise our voice to challenge injustice and oppression wherever it is found and when our sisters and brothers of a globally established church stand with Arab and Middle Eastern Christians, not just with words and statements, we have had enough of them, but in action and in truth. Then our collective voice will be heard across the world. Then we can make a change. Reclaiming our identity as a public church, calling to be a witness of our Lord Jesus, we can ensure a place in the inn for even Christians in this region.

Bishop Younan drew from the significance of place while paralleling the history of Bethlehem with present day social and political issues. He politicized the place by utilizing the group’s Christian identity. Christian themes from the Nativity Story became his avenue to make a social commentary, as he compared oppressed Palestinians to an oppressed baby Jesus. The Bishop harnessed the cultural ideas associated with the town of Bethlehem to encourage these activists. He continued:

In the place of Jesus’ birth, ministry and death and resurrection, we will continue to be instruments of peace, initiators of dialogue, defenders of human rights, including gender justice. We will continue to be pro-social justice, ministers of reconciliation, and promoters of healing. We will be apostles of love, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, to every human being. This is not only our goal, but our hope this Christmas. Is there a place for justice in the inn? If you want the truth, the answer is no. There is no justice in the inn, the truth is that the ones occupying the inn on the holy night were the affluents, the well connected, and the comfortable. The inn is the shelter for the privileged and the powerful. And therefore it also became a safe harbor for greed, oppression, occupation, and injustice. ... I continue to believe that peace based on justice is possible in this country. The grassroots are ready, but what about those sleeping in the inn? Are the powers ready? Or are they afraid for their power, and their interests and their economic life? The baby born in Bethlehem asks them not to play with the fate of his followers. Do not play with the dreams of our Palestinian children. Palestinian
and Israeli, Christians, Muslims and Jews, our children want peace, not war! They want to hold their future in their hands, not guns! They want a childhood to remember, not a childhood to survive. They want life and life abundantly. Jesus the child, born in Bethlehem, cries out from the manger to all that seek justice. History will never remember the generals; history will only remember those who speak against the tide to build peace based on justice, guaranteeing a place in the inn, not only for Arab Christians but for Arab religions and Arab nations. We continue to believe that there is a place for us in this region. ... This Christmas, from Bethlehem, Palestinian Christians call on the whole world to answer one question, are you ready? Are you willing to give justice and peace a room in the inn? We ask you, the whole world, to allow a swarm of angels to resound from Bethlehem. Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth for those he favors. We are counting on you to ensure that injustice comes to an end for us today in the Holy Land.

Younan’s sermon was a message of peace and justice to a church full of activists and Bethlehem Christians. He described Bethlehem as the place God entered the world for peace and justice at the time of Jesus’ birth, and he preached that God continues to work in the world through their activism. Younan’s use of place served as a form of rhetoric in the sermon. He connected the location of the church and its ministries to the injustice in Jesus’ birth narrative, harnessing the power of place.

*Palestinian Activist Literature*

Rev. Mitri Raheb gives an in-depth history of the Palestinian people in his book *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eye*. He tells the significance of “place” for the Palestinian Christian identity and explains why resistance is a part of their cultural identity. Raheb tells this history:

Palestinians today stand in historic continuity with biblical Israel. The native people of the land are the Palestinians. The Palestinian people (Muslims, Christians, and Palestinian Jews) are a critical and dynamic continuum from Canaan to biblical times, from Greek, Roman Arab, and Turkish eras up to the present day. They are the native peoples, who survived those empires and occupations, and they are also the remnant of those invading armies and settlers who decided to remain in the land to integrate rather than to return to their
original homelands. The Palestinians are the accumulated outcome of this incredible dynamic history and these massive geo-political developments” (2014: 13).

Raheb explains that, historically, the Palestinians are native to the land and are the byproduct of numerous foreign empires, giving them a unique identity. This identity is also firmly rooted in Christianity. Raheb then connects the Palestinian people with the roots of Christianity explaining, “Jesus says, ‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth’ ” (Matthew 5:5). Raheb points out that the correct translation of “earth” in the original Aramaic is actually meant to be read as “land.” He continues, “When Jesus said that the meek will inherit the land, everyone at the time knew what was meant by the land. He meant Palestine” (Raheb 2014: 97). Israel, in Raheb’s view, is a recent empire in a long line of foreign powers that have occupied Palestine. These empires will not last forever, but the poor and meek will remain, Raheb explains (2014). Believing that empires are destined to fall, he explains, “For Jesus it was imperative that faith was also active in dismantling the empire. Resistance becomes an act of faith” (2014:100). Raheb advocates for Christians to engage in non-violent resistance and explains that there should also be creative forms of resistance. He explains that Palestinian culture, music, art, drama, story telling and poetry are all forms of resistance because they are “an important means of helping oppressed people to articulate their stories into new ways and forms” (2014: 121). This activist leader invests in the cultural expression of his people. He works to expand protest culture because of its significance to liberation movements such as his. The minister then connects the significance of Palestine’s place with the importance of activism. He writes:

I am convinced that war is not destiny. After all, in the midst of the Roman occupation the angels proclaimed peace on earth. Peace in the Holy Land must be
the mandate for all of us. We cannot abandon responsibility for our fellow human beings. Engaged responsibility belongs to mature citizens and is crucial for a civil society to function and thrive (2014: 125).

He connects ideas of land, peace, progress, and religious identity all into one, and he ends with the words, “Hope is faith in action in the face of empire” (Raheb 2014). This religious and activist leader thinks of the Holy Land as a distinct and giant “place” that provides Palestine a common historical, cultural, and religious identity, making his theological point that their specific place in the world is constantly under military occupation. He explains that Christians are supposed to partake in non-violent resistance of this injustice. This theological use of place connects the many cultural elements of Palestinian identity to inspire activism.

**DISCUSSION**

Previous literature explains how the networks and relationships between activists and organizations are crucial to differential recruitment. This evidence leads many sociologists to make structural arguments to explain activism. In the Palestinian Liberation Movement, Christian activism does align with many elements of structural explanations as observed in my findings. Interview subjects showed that their biographical availability allowed them to become involved in this movement. Also, all of my subjects have had previous experience in social movements or justice work. Many older subjects have spent much of their lives working on peace and justice issues. Every participant uses the church as the network to engage in activism. In a web of church denominations and NGOs, activists and resources are funneled into Israel and Palestine to
aid efforts for Palestinian liberation. These structural elements are certainly crucial to the movement.

My research has shown that structural explanations, such as McAdam’s arguments, have some limitations. For instance, McAdam downplays the importance of cultural values. He views culture as a factor but not a dominant reason for activism. Structure was perhaps a more significant explanation for Freedom Summers; however, research into the activism in Palestine shows culture is far more important in the recruitment and retention of activists. Thus, McAdam and other structuralists incorrectly downplay the significance of culture as a reason for social activism. Structural arguments acknowledge cognitive liberation as a subjective response to one’s social conditions in society. I found that cognitive liberation plays a more substantial role in Christian activism than McAdam’s model suggests. A form of cognitive liberation was observed as every participant shared stories of intense suffering or experiences of calling that ultimately led them to activism. In the context of faith-based organizations, the majority of these activists see their experiences of cognitive liberation through a Christian lens as a sense of calling or responsibility to work for peace and justice.

As James Jasper notes, structure and culture are both deeply connected to social movements. After analyzing the expansive and complex elements of protest culture in my data, I claim that culture is a primary factor for activist recruitment. Activists are introduced to the movement in various ways, but once involved, they adopt the same “protest culture” that binds them together, international and Palestinian alike. As Jasper explains—and as I found—the culture of activism can be intense, captivating, encompassing, costly, and deeply emotional. It creates a community and collective sense
of identity based on the Palestinian Liberation Movement. For this cause, there are elements of danger, excitement, genuine love, and empathy. The cultural ideas and values within the Christian movement in Palestine have been woven into a unique way of expressing faith. For many, this movement becomes an essential part of how they express their religion. It conveys values, identity, norms, attitudes, and beliefs that parallel themes in Christianity and other non-violent movements. By participating in this effort, activists associate themselves with a higher calling, a higher power, a larger movement, and they consider themselves to be part of an effort for peace and justice beyond their time and context. Members of this culture are willing to sacrifice for the cause, and it is a badge of honor to do so. As Jasper writes, culture within the community shapes actions, attitudes, motivation, and morals, which are at the core of activists’ collective identity and propels them forward (2007). These elements of protest culture were all found in the experiences and identities of my interview subjects. Thus, this protest culture is the major reason for their participation in the Palestinian Liberation Movement.

A crucial element to this protest culture is that it is literally built upon and exists within a unique geographical context. I argue that place is the most important element of Christian Palestinian protest culture because it is what binds the movement with Christianity—a major component of activist’s identities. If this movement were not on the land—or the “place”—where many ancient Bible stories took place, Christian themes would not be as salient in the movement.

As Jasper points out, place is the foundation of culture. It is a fully subjective experience in which communities create cultural identities that are attached to their land. Gieryn explains that places become a part of culture through history, collective identity,
and memory, and they may hold untold amounts of value, meaning, and power. As both sociologists also mention, this power can actually be used to perpetuate social movements. I contend that place is an element of protest culture, and even the foundation on which it is built. Place is a tool for social activists to interject protest culture into the minds of Palestinian and international people. Places are the areas of gathering, protest, encouragement, and socialization, and most important, they provide an identity for participants. These components give activists something to fight for, which makes culture the reason that individuals engage in protest. When activists gather for demonstrations, they choose the location that will help them carry out their objective, because the place will affect its outcome. For example, places can infer a certain moral code, such as the square at the entrance to the Church of the Nativity—a site commonly associated with nonviolent activism. Here is the place where Jesus, the “prince of peace,” entered the world. With religious significance such as this in their surroundings, activists can reflect the emotions and values that the place exemplifies. This was seen in the efforts of Mark, who chose to protest outside the front door of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during Holy Week, or Bishop Munib Younan’s Christmas Eve sermon that took place only blocks away from Jesus’ birthplace. The bishop’s words emphasized place as he said, “in the place of Jesus’ birth, ministry and death and resurrection, we will continue to be instruments of peace, initiators of dialogue, defenders of human rights.” Another example was the Tent of Nations, which is an olive tree farm outside Bethlehem that works to promote non-violent resistance. The owners invite people from around the world to see the farm and plant a tree there. They leave with an attachment to the land after hearing about its significance to the family that owns it. People leave wanting to fight to protect
that piece of land, because the farm represents the ancient Christian way of life. Activists intentionally use place, in this case a farm, to connect people to Palestinian soil, which ties them to the movement and the desire to save the farm. Gieryn writes, “A place is remarkable, and what makes it so is an unwindable spiral of material form and interpretative understandings or experiences” (2000: 471). As I have stated earlier, these places symbolize a group’s power and generate group emotion. Gieryn argues that places alone are so engrained in the culture of the group that they even spawn collective action.

Places hold memory and identity, and they are the foundation of a people—what Gieryn calls “place attachment.” When people are fighting to protect their land, it is more than soil; it is culture, a way of life, a home, a history, and connection to ancestors. Many will argue the Israel/Palestine conflict is based on religious, racial, or ideological differences. But, I believe these two peoples are fighting over the land—in other words, “place.” As it is commonly remarked, the Holy Land is “the most fought over piece of real estate in the world.” Land is the most important thing to both Israel and Palestine. Thus, the property is the core of the conflict. These two parties are battling for place, because without it, the identity of their people fades away. This connection to the land is the most important element to understand in not only the Palestinian Liberation Movement, but the entire Israel/Palestine conflict.

Future research on the Israel/Palestine conflict should be to further examine the importance of land in major flashpoints of the conflict. Researchers should evaluate various social, political or nationalist movements that use their attachment to land as a reason or justification for their motives. By understanding the significance of land to Israelis and Palestinians, sociologists may better grasp the complexities of the conflict. A
limitation to my study is the lack of a proper method to quantify the influence of place across the region. What places hold the most value? What characteristics of a place are most important to each party? What places are used most frequently for social activism? What places are used in activism for other religious groups? The quantification of place could help sociologists understand the cultural factors that are constantly at work in collective action.

**CONCLUSION**

Sociologist Doug McAdam explores the importance of networking and other structural forces in spurring social activism. He explains that subjective experiences such as cognitive liberation are crucial to such efforts. I saw many of the themes McAdam mentions in his theories in the biographies of participants. James Jasper explicates the elements of protest culture and the many dimensions of a group taking part in a social movement. My research exposes the complexities that exist in Christian protest culture in Palestine. These elements are woven into the religious beliefs of the activists, creating a unique perspective on politics in the region. Perhaps place is just as important as religion to the Christians active in the movement. In the Holy Land’s geographical context, a connection to Gieryn’s ideas about place and the religious, historical, and theological ideas associated with that place are crucial to understanding activism in Palestine.

I argue that in Palestine, cultural factors such as religion and place, are central to the movement far more than the structural elements. My research found that cognitive liberation plays a substantial role in Christian activism. This was observed in all of my participants who shared stories of intense suffering or experiences of calling that
ultimately led to activism. In the context of faith-based organizations, activists see their experiences of cognitive liberation through a Christian lens. Thus, I argue that culture matters—in the context of religion and place—when exploring why Christians engage in activism in Jerusalem and Palestine.
**Interview Participants:**


2. Robert: Anglican deacon, United Church of England, late 50s. No affiliation with activist organization.


5. Kate: Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), Hebron Palestine, from Scotland, elder in the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), mid-60s.


7. Emma: Swedish, ordained minister of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, mid-40s. Christian Peacemaker Team volunteer, active on social media, works in Hebron.
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