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# Pursuing Kingdom Growth by Intentionally Engaging our Culture

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PURSUING KINGDOM GROWTH

BY INTENTIONALLY ENGAGING OUR CULTURE


A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE

IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP


BY

FLORIN DOCEA

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research project was to strengthen the church's ability to effectively engage the culture and expand the kingdom of God. New churches have engaged the culture using a predominately attractional or missional model of ministry. In a rapidly changing cultural environment, these models have produced unexpected results. To address the difficulties new churches have had with engaging the culture, the researcher reviewed relevant literature from five disciplines, examined the parables of Jesus that offered insight into the kingdom of God, explored the two models of ministry mentioned, and scrutinized data collected from five new evangelical churches.

This project affirmed that new churches continue to face difficulties engaging the culture without compromising the mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body. Churches using the attractional or missional models of ministry to engage the culture have struggled with the tension created by some of the specific situations they encountered. In a complex and rapidly changing cultural environment, these models have not provided the flexibility, growth, and autonomy necessary for self-sustaining ministry momentum.

To mitigate these challenges the researcher has proposed a new adaptational model of ministry that has the flexibility to apply both attractional and missional elements to particular circumstances. The adaptational model rests on self-organizing systems and uses a coaching model of leadership. This model of ministry operates in the tension between the church culture, kingdom culture, and world culture and resolves the

tension through explicit actions taken in specific situations. Using the model practitioners iterate through continual feedback, communal reflection, specific action, and effective adjustment.

In proposing a new model of ministry, the researcher has not dismissed the value of the attractional or missional models of ministry. These models continue to be useful for new churches operating in certain cultural contexts. The researcher has affirmed that new churches would benefit from reflecting on the attractional, missional, and adaptational models of ministry when considering how to effectively engage the culture.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

**The Problem and Its Context**

*Statement of the Problem*

The problem this project addressed is the difficulty new churches have with intentionally engaging the culture without compromising the mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body. In response to this problem, the researcher (a) reviewed relevant cultural analysis literature with special attention given to cultural trends in the evangelical church, (b) explored what Jesus said about the kingdom of God as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, (c) explored the attractional and missional cultural paradigms adopted by Milwaukee area church plants, (d) assessed the level of cultural adoption in these paradigms in light of the tension between kingdom culture and world culture, (e) identified patterns of cultural adoption and their effects in producing kingdom growth with special emphasis on the differences between the business of the church, marketplace business, and kingdom business, and (f) presented potential solutions to detect and avoid cultural elements that compromise the mission of the church or disrupt the unity of the body.

*Definition of Terms*

Attractional model of church planting: Under an attractional model of church plating, church ministry is focused on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by creating appealing Sunday morning services and relevant ministry programs that draw in a wide unchurched population.

Culturally relevant church: A church that intentionally evaluates cultural trends and adopts specific cultural elements which enhance the mission of the church while strengthening the unity of the body.

Kingdom culture: Kingdom culture is the national culture of God's realm. This culture is directly influenced by its king, The Lord Jesus Christ, under the loving authority of God the Father, and through the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

Kingdom growth: Kingdom growth is not equivalent to the numerical growth of a church.[1] Kingdom growth is a means of describing the expansion of people's recognition of, and submission to, God's supremacy.

Missional model of church planting: Under a missional model of church plating, church ministry is focused on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by creating ministry groups that "go out" in the community (their circle of influence) and engage individuals that are part of a wider unchurched population.

*Delimitations of the Problem*

The research was limited to new evangelical churches in the Milwaukee area that have started within the last five to eight years. The research will not focus on multi campus churches as the cultural dynamics of these are somewhat different than new church plants.

The research was limited to a study of the nature of the kingdom of God as described in the Synoptic Gospels.

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[1] Richard Blackaby and Henry Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda (*Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011), 126.

The research was limited to a study of the literature pertaining to the identification and development of a group culture, church planting, and cultural trends in the evangelical church in America.

The research did not focus on how the church can influence the culture and society around it.

<center><em>Assumptions</em></center>

The first assumption is that kingdom culture exists and that it is observable. Kingdom culture is embodied in the king, The Lord Jesus Christ.

The second assumption is that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke accurately reflect the teachings of Jesus in their cultural and historical context.

<center>**Setting of Project**</center>

The setting for the research project was among new evangelical church plants in the Milwaukee area. As the largest city in Wisconsin, Milwaukee is the main economic and cultural center in the southeast region of the state. The city is known for its German and Polish roots, Catholic heritage, and beer brewing tradition.

Starting in 2011, media outlets have reported Milwaukee as one of the most segregated cities in the United States. This cultural dynamic is also present in the surrounding suburbs with many communities being over 90 percent white. This racial homogeneity can be observed in the churches regardless of their affiliation. In spite of the racial segregation, Milwaukee, as a community, celebrates cultural diversity through the weekly ethnic festivals that take place in the summer.

Milwaukee's Catholic heritage can be seen in the city's architecture, which is dotted with church steeples. The researcher observed the same deep roots in the way

people identity themselves and their families. As a community, people have a religious identity without spiritual transformation.

These cultural dynamics pose interesting challenges for new evangelical church plants. Because the community sees itself as having enough religion, many residents do not see the need to start another church. New evangelical churches can be looked at with suspicion, as trying to steal members from their original Christian heritage. In spite of these challenges, the Milwaukee area has had several new evangelical church plants in the last ten years. By looking at a representative number of these new churches, the researcher hopes to benefit not only his ministry but other church plants.

Agape Community Church is a new church plant being established in the western suburbs of Milwaukee where the researcher serves as lead planter and senior pastor. The idea for this church started in 2013 when the researcher participated in the Converge Great Lakes church planting assessment and was recommended to move forward. Since that time, the researcher has developed the vision for the church, engaged in ministry support raising, and identified individuals interested in being part of the launch team. In March the researcher and the launch team started the prelaunch phase for Agape. This research has benefited the cultural development of Agape Community Church.

**The Importance of the Project**

*The Importance of the Project to the Researcher*

The researcher was driven by a desire to increase the number of culturally relevant churches by strengthening the church's ability to critically evaluate the world culture in light of kingdom culture. This desire has roots in the researcher's formative years. Growing up in Romania under communist rule, the researcher struggled to

understand which of the communist ideologies and the governing systems were harmless to a life of faith and what needed to be rejected. When arriving in America, the researcher realized how authoritarian the Romanian church was as compared to the American church. The researcher observed that certain cultural elements were adopted by the Romanian church without intention or detection. Engaging in the American church context and having spent over twenty years in business management, the researcher witnessed specific instances when church efficiency and ministry pragmatism were valued above the shepherding and relational needs of individuals. The researcher realized that the American church, like the Romanian church, had adopted certain cultural elements without intention or detection.

The researcher noticed that the church culture was often at odds with the surrounding society it was part of. This is consistent with the experience of the early church. Because church culture is distinct from kingdom culture and often opposed by the surrounding national culture, the researcher observed that churches operate in constant cultural tension. In this tension, the church culture is unavoidably infused with elements from both the world culture and the kingdom culture. Therefore, the researcher has continued to be passionate about detecting the extent of intentional and unintentional cultural adoption and the implications of adoption. The researcher's unique blend of life experiences, skills, and personality traits fueled a personal desire to engage in this cultural dialogue.

The researcher's desire was also fueled by personal experiences that left a lasting impression. In the quest for efficiency, a particular church celebrated the Lord's Supper with a juice and wafer combination that came in an individualized package, which people

grabbed from a brown cardboard box. The communion was an efficient, individualized experience that seemed to violate the depth of significance and abandoned the communal intent of the Lord's Supper.

In a second example, a church's adoption of strategic goals drove the flock toward the objectives as one might force cattle down a path. In the process, gentle guidance and shepherding was replaced by authoritarian rhetoric about the need for submission. With the rhetoric came corporate hierarchical practices which created distance between the leadership and congregation.

In a third example, a church adopted such a customer service model that the Sunday morning church service ended up being a highly produced show that rivaled a Broadway play or a Vegas magic show. The resulting fruitless spirituality was evident in many lives and demonstrated that something about that church experience fell short of the intended mark. These examples are representative of a larger, more complex, and perhaps systemic problem of how churches evaluate cultural alignment and adopt cultural practices.

*The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Context of Ministry*

As a church planter with Converge Great Lakes, the researcher has been in the process of establishing Agape Community Church in the western suburbs of Milwaukee. In this context, the researcher has been working to develop the culture of Agape Community Church as a culturally relevant church in the community. As a culturally relevant church, the researcher has hoped to develop leaders that are willing to reflect on the differences between the business of the church, marketplace business, and kingdom

business. Detecting the differences helps church leaders be more effective in ministry as they are able to interpret, accept, or resist particular influences.

*The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large*

The discussion regarding church and culture has continued to be widespread and complex. There has been a movement among American evangelical churches that focuses on being culturally relevant.[2] The typical objectives are to attract new believers and to infuse the American culture with Christian values. Churches have invested time and resources looking for ways to transform the culture and impact society, but in the process they discovered that society has also transformed the church.

As the visible yet imperfect representative of the people of God, the church has been influenced by the world in which it operates and willingly and unwillingly has adopted certain cultural characteristics that either benefited or damaged the church; however, it is possible that some cultural characteristics adopted by the church are neither beneficial nor damaging. The church has also been influenced by the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit.[3] Because of His guidance, the church willingly and unwillingly adopted certain cultural characteristics that benefited the church. These divinely inspired cultural characteristics have provided a glimpse into the culture of the kingdom of God. Therefore, the church and culture discussion could benefit from reflecting on the American culture, the evangelical church culture, and the culture of the kingdom of God. The relationships between the American, evangelical, and kingdom cultures have a profound influence on how the church operates and engages in ministry.

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[2] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), Kindle location 149.

[3] David P. Seemuth, *Romans: Spirit-Filled Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

Specifically, a church's comparison of its own culture with both the American and the kingdom culture could facilitate valuable conversations regarding cultural characteristics that have or have not been assimilated. A church's decision to adopt and reject specific cultural characteristics will affect not only every church activity but also every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ who is part of that local body.

To explore cultural relevancy, the researcher engaged other church planters and church leaders in discussions that utilized the experiences and creative imagination of each person. The goal of these interactions was to promote honest exchange and cultivate personal and church transformation. Because sustainable transformation must include the church members, the dialogue about intentional cultural engagement expanded beyond the leadership of the church to the wider community of believers.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

**Introduction**

This chapter explores the concept of culture as seen through the point of view of five disciplines: anthropology, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and leadership studies. The anthropology section demonstrates how the concept of culture changed over time. The section shows how culture was affected by the imperialist expansion of the twentieth century as researchers hoped to discover a unifying set of theories that could describe the human experience. The section continues by highlighting the holocultural, neo-evolutionist, and structuralist comparative traditions and concludes by reviewing the Wallerstein's theory of capitalist expansion, orientalism, the continuous transformation model, and the controlled macro comparison model.

The sociology section shows how the concept of culture is explored through two major conversations about social behavior. The first conversation is a debate between culturalists and structuralists. The second conversation is a dialogue between individuals coming from two traditions: anthropology and humanities. The section concludes by exploring institutional syncretism and the canonical theory of cultural assimilation.

The psychology section focuses on social psychology and analyzes five groups of theories identified by the researcher: Single Concept (built on one fundamental idea), Common Needs (based on sets of universal needs), Fundamental Construct (constructed from intrinsic beliefs), Action Orientation (emerged from behavior related studies), and Dynamic Orientation (culture as an ongoing process).

The cultural studies section starts by showing that the primary driver of cultural studies is to improve the human condition through social and cultural change. In this pursuit, cultural studies explores the tension between culture, power, politics, and religion. The section is broken up in four groups of theories: the civil religion theory, dualistic theories (includes the unconventional partners thesis and the culture wars theory), the secularization influence theories (includes the secularization theory and the culture shift thesis), and the market thesis. The section concludes with a discussion on group opinionation.

The leadership studies section starts with a review of the relationship between culture and leadership and moves into an overview of organizational change theories. The section continues by exploring self-organizing systems and concludes with a discussion on church planting as a leadership intensive endeavor.

## Anthropology

### *Approach to Culture*

Anthropology is the science of humanity that opened up the conversation about culture. Gaining understanding through direct observation and firsthand experience of social groups, cultural anthropology seeks to describe how societies work and how individuals influence and are influenced by the world around them.[1] Anthropology looks at the way people act (practices, habits, and rituals), the way they make sense of the world around them (ideas, beliefs, and values), the way they organize themselves (formal and informal relationships, governance, and economic structures), and the resources they

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[1] Marit Melhuus, "Issues of Relevance: Anthropology and the Challenges of Cross-Cultural Comparison," in *Anthropology, by Comparison, eds.* Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox (New York: Routledge, 2002), 72-73.

employ (technologies, geography, and environment).[2] Because of a high sense of civic

responsibility, the goal of anthropology is to study humanity in such a way that the

knowledge will benefit society (i.e., it will be for the public good).[3] This goal is in some

ways similar to the researcher's desire for the church to fulfill its mission of bringing

good news and positively engaging the culture.

In the early part of the twentieth century, imperialist expansion made it easier for

anthropologists to examine other cultures.[4] Cultural anthropologists were primarily

concerned with describing the culture they observed and theorized several cultural

generalizations.[5] The underlying assumption was that although cultures were local and

isolated, they shared a set of common behaviors which could be identified.[6] Culture was

seen as a specific human achievement produced by individuals through repeated and

transmitted behaviors.[7] This underlying assumption about a common set of behaviors

appears to continue in popular culture and seems evident in new churches.

The most repeated and transmitted behaviors emerged as distinct patterns among

a group. These patterns of behaviors served at least two beneficial functions. First, they

guided individuals toward acceptable group behavior. (New members learned how to

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[2] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001) 1-8.

[3] Melhuus, 75-76.

[4] Richard G. Fox and Andre Gingrich, "Introduction" in *Anthropology, by Comparison, eds.* Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

[5] A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Random House, 1952), 114.

[6] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 106.

[7] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 140.

operate in the group by observing these patterns).[8] Second, these patterns allowed

individuals to interpret and anticipate the behaviors of others.[9] The patterns produced

symbols, stories, and cultural artifacts that conveyed meaning. Consistently produced

outputs gave rise to cultural ideas and values, which when transferred to others over time,

shaped into distinct patterns of human expression.[10] Such patterns of expression can be

observed in the religious habits and denominationally distinctive characteristics adopted

by new churches as they form a group identity and engage in their cultural context.

*Comparative Traditions*

There are at least three major comparative traditions that hoped to discover a

unifying set of theories that could be used to describe human experience. First,

anthropologists like George P. Murdock engaged empirical methods to compare people

groups and investigate cultural differences. [11] Murdock used the Human Relations Area

Files (HRAF), the Cross-Cultural Cumulative Coding Center, and related statistical

sampling methods.[12] This method of comparison, called the holocultural approach, was

initially perceived as having scientific objectivity because it focused exclusively on

quantitative research.[13]

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[8] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 51.

[9] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 177, 189.

[10] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 35.

[11] George Peter Murdock, "World Ethnographic Sample," *American Anthropologist, New Series* 59, no. 4 (Aug., 1957): 664.

[12] Ward H. Goodenough, "George Peter Murdock" in *Biographical Memoirs* (Washington D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1994), 311-312.

[13] Fox and Gingrich, 3.

Second, the neo-evolutionist approach used by anthropologists like Leslie White wanted to explain how all cultures evolved over time.[14] Starting with the idea that culture is a type of energy, White envisioned several evolutionary steps in the development of human societies.[15] These steps had a direct correlation to the amount of energy available during the societal formation.[16]

Third, the structuralist approach advocated by Claude Levi-Strauss started from the idea that all cultures at their core have the same set of basic building blocks (structures).[17] By focusing on kinship, Levi-Strauss developed a system that described marriage in relation to the interchange between social groups.[18] He presented a general theory for kinship and marriage systems that had three elementary (kinship) structures which used two forms of (marriage) exchange (ways of acquiring a wife).[19]

Over time, cultural anthropologists like Clifford Geertz moved away from trying to describing culture in the hope of identifying universal theories. Geertz was interested in an interpretive theory of culture that aimed to explain rather than describe the meaning enabled by culture.[20] For example, the researcher spent his childhood and the early part of his teenage years in Romania and experienced both urban and rural life. When he

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[14] Leslie A. White, "Energy and the Evolution of Culture," *American Anthropologist, New Series* 45, no. 3 (July – September, 1943): 339.

[15] White, 340-345.

[16] White, 346.

[17] Simon Clarke, *The Foundations of Structuralism: A Critique of Levi Strauss and the Structuralist Movement* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981), 216.

[18] Clarke, 77.

[19] Claude Levi-Strauss. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 493.

[20] Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 27.

immigrated to the United States from Romania, he observed that at football games in the

United States, just like at soccer games in Romania, fans whistled when they got excited.

A superficial description of this group behavior might conclude that when it comes to

whistling at sporting events, American and Romanian cultures are in some ways similar.

A more detailed description of the meaning of the behavior would show that American

football players and fans interpret loud whistling during the games as a positive

affirmation of performance. In contrast Romanian soccer players and fans interpret the

same action as negative (i.e., similar to booing). Explaining (not just describing) the

meaning of the loud whistling brings additional richness to the conversation. In the

Romanian context, loud whistling is associated with calling the dogs that guard the sheep

while out on the pasture or driving a team of oxen (or a similar animal) behind a cart or a

plow. Calling or implying that someone is a dog, ox, donkey, or any animal is seen as a

personal insult. Therefore, loud whistling at a soccer match (or any public event) implies

that the intended recipient has less than human status equal to farm animals.

In the last twenty years comparative anthropology has come under severe critique

because of the association with universal theories and universal metanarrative.[21] With the

increased significance of cultural context, universal theories have lost ground.

Conceptually, anthropologists seem to reject comparative methodology, but in practice

comparison is widely used.[22] Therefore, cross-cultural comparison continues to play an

important role in empirical anthropology. The comparative traditions mentioned provide

solid foundational thoughts for investigating how new churches intentionally engage the

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[21] Fox and Gingrich, 5.

[22] Melhuus, 82.

culture through attractional and missional approaches in light of the tension between kingdom culture and world culture and the differences between the business of the church, marketplace business, and kingdom business.

*Theories of Culture*

Universal theories and universal metanarrative captured the interest of many anthropologists in the early part of the twentieth century. Aside from theoretical traditions that used comparison methods to deconstruct culture and discover common, basic elements and structures, anthropologists like Immanuel Wallerstein focused on world system theory. Wallerstein's theory of capitalist expansion saw the world economy as a social system.[23] He argued that in an isolated cultural system the economy could be defined as a mini social system with clear divisions of labor.[24] With capitalist expansion and more recently globalization, such systems are rare and may even be extinct.[25] According to Wallerstein, what remains are two types of world systems: world empires and world economies. Since there is a level of constant flux within these world systems, the anthropologist can benefit humankind by comparing the stages and parts of these world systems either within a system or between systems.[26]

Unlike Wallerstein, who focused on western-capitalist expansion, Edward Said focused his attention on the East. In his study of the East, Said defines orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in

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[23] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no.4 (Sept., 1974): 390.

[24] Wallerstein, 390.

[25] Wallerstein, 390.

[26] Wallerstein, 398.

European Western experience."[27] Said strongly opposes identifying the western culture as superior to all others and gives examples of demeaning western references to eastern ideas.[28] Said also shows that western scholars have not used or acknowledged eastern literature.[29] His critique of the western interpretation of the East, although controversial, gave rise to postcolonialism studies.[30] The War on Terror, political instability in the Arab world, interest in Islam, and the increase in emigration make this topic increasingly valuable in our current cultural context. As people enter our churches, it is not unreasonable to assume they will want answers to the universal metanarrative questions cultivated by the current geopolitical unrest.

Some of the new approaches to comparative anthropology have not adopted universalist theories. For example, Christina Toren argues that because humans are both "products and producers" of history, a continuous transformation takes place.[31] She argues that comparison is essential to the transformational process.[32] In her model, Toren uses the term "mind" to describe not only the conscious thought process of an individual but the product of the whole person.[33] Meaning and by extension culture is a historical process built on the intersubjective relations between people living in their specific

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[27] Edward Said. O*rientalism*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003): 2.

[28] Said, 85.

[29] Said, 67, 292.

[30] Said, 350.

[31] Christina Toren. "Comparison and Ontogeny" *Anthropology, by Comparison.* Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2002): 187.

[32] Toren, 188.

[33] Toren, 193.

continually changing environment.[34] For Toren, meaning is not a fixed point, but rather,

it is in a continuous state of becoming.[35] By living in community, individuals "cannot

help but" engage each other in shaping who they are becoming.[36] The concept of

continual transformation is one of the core concepts of Christianity. The researcher sees

potential value in this model, especially as new churches struggle to determine not only

the effects of specific cultural elements on producing kingdom growth but also the effects

of church cultural elements on social systems.

Andre Gingrich's controlled macro comparison model takes anthropology away

from national boundaries and toward a broader regional or global focus.[37] In this model,

Gingrich is primarily interested in the effects of globalization on the human experience.[38]

Acknowledging that globalization is not a recent phenomenon, he sees the current global

trends as part of the most recent stage in a larger globalization era.[39] The current

globalization stage has two unique characteristics. First, capitalist globalization is not

controlled through a democratic process.[40] This can be studied by approaching

anthropology at a macro level.[41] Second, individuals, as compared to institutions,

continue to experience an increase in social risks such as safety, health, economic

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[34] Toren, 200.

[35] Toren, 191.

[36] Toren, 200-201.

[37] Andre Gingrich. "When Ethnic Majorities are 'Dethroned.'" *Anthropology, by Comparison.* Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2002): 225.

[38] Gingrich, 228.

[39] Gingrich, 226.

[40] Gingrich, 227.

[41] Gingrich, 229.

instability, political unrest, and ecological changes.[42] This increase in social risks is

researched by approaching anthropology at a micro level.[43]

Gingrich perceives the macro anthropology research as more significant because

it brings up not only general questions about the human condition, such as human rights,

trafficking, hunger, poverty, migration, and displacement but also specific questions

about the human interactions in a globalized environment.[44] His macro-comparison

model has three distinct elements. First, it favors comparing case studies across

significant geographic distances and time periods.[45] Second, the model is problem-

oriented rather than geographic or national.[46] Third, it is self-reflexive, involving the

anthropologist's experiences in the research process.[47] Gingrich used this model to

investigate the "dethroned majorities" and national uprisings in the Ottoman and

Habsburg empires.[48] He also applied the model to the national conflicts in the former

Yugoslavia with promising success.[49] In a post-Christendom environment, the concept of

a "dethroned majority" is increasingly thought-provoking for the researcher. Equally

thought-provoking is the global characteristics of the kingdom of God. Because new

churches in America affirm their membership in a worldwide movement and at the same

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[42] Gingrich, 227.

[43] Gingrich, 228.

[44] Gingrich, .228, 229

[45] Gingrich, 231, 232.

[46] Gingrich, 232.

[47] Gingrich, 232.

[48] Gingrich, 233.

[49] Gingrich, 241.

time face decreased influence in society, the researcher saw value in the controlled macro comparison model.

## Sociology

### *Conversations on Culture*

Although sociology does not yet have a coherent concept of culture, historically, there have been two major conversations about social behavior.[50] The first major conversation started in the beginning of the twentieth century between culturalists and structuralists.[51] Because culturalists viewed culture as a set of norms that guided behavior, their definition of culture included everything produced through human interaction.[52] The research focused primarily on understanding and distinguishing the cultural norms observed in specific groups.[53] On the other hand, structuralists argued that culture was made up of systems of social relationships that could be identified in all social groups, regardless of the behavioral norms present.[54] Both culturalists and structuralits have tried to assert their position over the other, and since both positions offer compelling arguments, the conversation remains open.[55] The researcher values the debate between structuralists and culturalists because during the early start-up phase, new churches establish not only cultural norms of behavior (e.g., the acceptable Sunday worship dress code) but also define systems of social relationships within the church.

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[50] Edgar F Borgatta and Rhonda J V Montgomery, eds. *Encyclopedia of sociology.* Vol.1. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2000): 563.

[51] Borgatta and Montgomery, 563.

[52] Borgatta and Montgomery, 563.

[53] Borgatta and Montgomery, 564.

[54] Borgatta and Montgomery, 564.

[55] Borgatta and Montgomery, 565.

The second major conversation started in the middle of the twentieth century, driven in part by the emergence of the mass culture produced by the mass consumption that followed post World War II economic development.[56] Sociologists who believed that mass culture would affect the values of the society advocated for a high culture approach.[57] They engaged the concept of culture from a humanities position and associated a value statement with cultural activities.[58] This implied that cultural elements could be weighed on a continuum from good to bad.[59] Sociologists who engaged the concept of culture from an anthropological position made no value distinction between cultural elements and drove the concept of culture away from an evaluative approach to a purely descriptive process.[60] The researcher is intrigued by the evaluative approach because of the desire to detect and avoid cultural elements that compromise the mission of the church or disrupt the unity of the body.

In the 1990s the culture conversation was reframed. Moving away from a high culture versus mass culture debate, sociologists like Richard Peterson summarized the culture debate into two traditions.[61] The first tradition, having roots in anthropology, defined culture as sets of conduct embedded in a social group.[62] This includes practices, habits, and rituals that are specific to an ethnic people group, a class, a church, a business

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[56] Borgatta and Montgomery, 565.

[57] Borgatta and Montgomery, 565.

[58] Borgatta and Montgomery, 565.

[59] Borgatta and Montgomery, 566.

[60] Borgatta and Montgomery, 566.

[61] Richard A. Peterson "Symbols and Social Life: The Growth of Cultural Studies." *Contemporary Sociology* 19, No. 4 (Jul., 1990): 498.

[62] Peterson, 498.

group, or volunteer organization.[63] The second tradition, having roots in the humanities,

defines culture as the symbolic products, infused with social meaning, that emerge

through all kinds of social interactions and group activity.[64] Individuals that participate in

the creation of symbolic products include artists, scientists, theologians, politicians, and

writers.[65] Linking the concept of culture to symbolic meanings expanded the scope of

cultural research. Responding to the difficulty of articulating cultural theories based on

such a broad and diverse scope, sociologists like John Hall and Mary Jo Neitz identified

five clusters of cultural research: institutional structures, cultural history, production and

distribution of culture, audience effects, and meaning and social action.[66] This

categorization allowed sociologists to focus on and articulate the boundaries of their

cultural research.[67] The two reframed cultural debate traditions provide insight for new

churches. By affirming Christian disciplines like prayer, tithing, regular corporate

worship, and personal devotional time, church culture can be seen as sets of conduct.

Similarly, by affirming discipleship programs, singing of hymns, and religious artistic

expressions, and using parables and illustrations during preaching, church culture is

defined and promoted through symbolic meaning.

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[63] Peterson, 498.

[64] Peterson, 498.

[65] Peterson, 498.

[66] John Hall and Mary Jo Neitz. *Culture: Sociological Perspectives*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993): 17.

[67] Hall and Neitz, 17.

As the interest in cultural research increased in the 21st century, the term "cultural sociology" emerged as the sociological study of culture.[68] One of the major themes that is emerging from current research dialogue includes the ongoing dialogue about the definition of culture in light of an ontological or epistemological perspective. The ontological perspective investigates culture through observable phenomena like relationships or social structures. The epistemological perspective sees culture as the conceptual elements formed in social groups.[69] Other research themes include the cultural effects of globalization, the use of self-reflexive research methods to identify research traditions, and political applications of cultural sociology.[70]

An emergent theme that caught the researcher's attention was Antoine Hennoin's sociological analysis of artistic processes and how these processes relate to reflexivity.[71] Hennoin argues that an individual's taste is much more than the individual's preference for a certain aesthetic feel or attractiveness to an object.[72] Hennoin infuses the term "taste" to mean "a collective technique, whose analysis helps us to understand the way we make ourselves become sensitized to things, to ourselves, to situations and to moments, while simultaneously controlling how those feelings might be shared and discussed with others."[73] For Hennoin, taste is a very complex action that impacts the

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[68] David Inglis, Andrew Blaikie and Robin Wagner-Pacifici. "Editorial: Sociology, Culture, and the 21st Century." *Cultural Sociology* 1, No. 1 (March. 2007): 5, 6.

[69] Inglis, Blaikie and Wagner-Pacifici. 14.

[70] Inglis, Blaikie and Wagner-Pacifici. 11, 17.

[71] Antoine Hennion. "Those Things that Hold Us Together: Taste and Sociology." *Cultural Sociology* 1, No. 1 (March. 2007): 97.

[72] Hennion. 98.

[73] Hennion. 98.

actor, the object of the action, the social signals the actor is willing to share, and the social signals perceived from others.[74] This model is intriguing because it captures not only the pragmatic, behavioral elements of culture but also the relational and symbolic aspects of socially produced features of culture. Social media has changed not only how people discuss issues with others but also the level of comfort people have in sharing their feelings on a topic. As social media-savvy people engage in new churches, it is important to understand not only how they become sensitized to the things around them, to new experiences, and to new thoughts but also to recognize what people are willing to discuss and how they share their sentiments and with others.

<div align="center">

*Syncretism*

</div>

In the process of studying cultures and how they interact with one another, elements from separate cultural traditions could be intentionally or unintentionally imported, giving rise to a new blended culture.[75] This blending of new and old, internal and external, and national and foreign could be described with the term "syncretism."[76] It can be illustrated with the following example. About ten years ago, the researcher played a fiddle in a traditional Irish band. Although loving the traditional music experience, he also experimented with using modern orchestration, harmonies, and counterpoint with the traditional tunes. Some of the traditional Irish listeners did not welcome this musical experimentation since it contaminated the original style. Thankfully, those unbound by

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[74] Hennion. 111.

[75] Dennis Galvan and Rudra Sil, eds. *Reconfiguring Institutions Across Time and Space: Syncretic Responses to Challenges of Political and Economic Transformation*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 4.

[76] Galvan and Sil, 8.

the desire to remain true to the musical tradition appreciated the new "Irish twist" (i.e., the musical syncretism) in the songs the researcher played.

Since this project investigated the difficulty new churches have with intentionally engaging the culture, the researcher was especially interested in institutional syncretism. In the mid-1990s the term "syncretism" carried a strong negative connotation.[77] In the context of the humanities, it implied corrupting an original art, music, language, literature, religion, or philosophical thought.[78] As it was later applied in the social sciences, it described a type of intentional blending of separate processes, structures, values, or norms.[79] The definition offered by Denis Galvan and Rudra Sil was particularly helpful because it projected a positive connotation of the term and took into consideration not only the blended result of syncretism but also the interpretive processes through which the transformation occurred.[80] For Galvan and Sil, institutional syncretism happens as a result of intentional and selective transformation of new elements, blended with some of the preexisting elements (appropriately adapted) to form new and innovative institutional configurations.[81] The researcher was intrigued by Galvan and Sil's emphasis on the creative transformation inherent in institutional syncretism and by the global context in which the model had been successfully applied. The blending of new and old cultural elements implies a conscious metamorphosis that takes place

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[77] Galvan and Sil, 6.

[78] Galvan and Sil, 7.

[79] Galvan and Sil, 7.

[80] Galvan and Sil, 7.

[81] Galvan and Sil, 9.

resulting in stability over time.[82] The challenge of this model is handling unintentional syncretism which could be a product of large cultural movements and trends.

<p align="center">*Cultural Assimilation*</p>

In its earliest stages, globalization was expressed through commerce and immigration. By the end of the 19th century, the United States was beginning to feel the social effects that resulted from an influx of immigrants.[83] American sociologists like Richmond Mayo-Smith were asking questions about what it meant to be an American and what it meant for an immigrant to be assimilated in the American culture.[84] By focusing his research on the social environment, Mayo-Smith identified that education and the exercise of citizenship rights were the two core processes that contributed to assimilation.[85]

In the midst of increased immigration pressures during the first part of the 20th century, Robert E. Park became the key figure associated with the canonical theory of assimilation.[86] The theory stressed that culture, not biology, expressed through social interactions had the primary role in national assimilation.[87] Park did not echo the popular opinion that some national or racial groups were inferior to others, and he separated sociological analysis from moral ideology.[88] He also rejected the idea of a single path

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[82] Galvan and Sil, 11.

[83] Peter Kivisto. "What is the Canonical Theory of Assimilation? Robert E. Park and His Predecessors." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 40, No. 2 (Spring 2004): 150,151.

[84] Kivisto, 151.

[85] Kivisto, 151.

[86] Kivisto, 149.

[87] Kivisto, 161.

[88] Kivisto, 161.

(i.e., straight line) of assimilation and advocated for a more "bumpy-line."[89] Park argued

that the goal of assimilation is the creation of a shared national identity so that diverse

ethnic groups can maintain unique elements of their cultural heritage while living in

cooperation with one another.[90] The researcher found this concept valuable because of

the tension between kingdom culture and world culture. By definition, followers of Jesus

Christ are citizens of the kingdom of God. Since a kingdom possesses a national identity,

it is reasonable to affirm that the kingdom of God has a national identity also. Therefore,

American Christians have two national identities with unique elements of cultural

heritage.

Researching immigrant assimilation fell out of favor after the 1950s; however,

with increased national attention on immigration reform, assimilation research has been

making a comeback in the last decade.[91] The researcher finds the segmented assimilation

theory intriguing because it accounts for urban and suburban assimilation.[92]

Americanization is the healthy relationship between national cultures agreeing to

influence each other and voluntarily co-create a common, American, national identity.

The theory proposes that the path to Americanization follows two major streams. The

first stream leads to middle class success, and the second stream leads to persistent

poverty.[93] The two streams fit into a culturally diverse society that is increasingly

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[89] Kivisto, 161.

[90] Kivisto, 161.

[91] R. Stephen Warner. "The Role of Religion in the Process of Segmented Assimilation." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 612 (July, 2007): 100.

[92] Warner, 103.

[93] Warner, 103.

segregated by race and socioeconomic class.[94] According to Stephen Warner, families

that pursue acculturation strategies (intentionally accepting or rejecting specific cultural

elements) increase their chances of successful cultural assimilation.[95] The segmented

assimilation theory highlights the significant role that Judeo-Christian religion can have

on the path to Americanization.[96] Especially beneficial in the cultural development of

second generation youth, religious institutions provide examples of moral order and

indoctrinate people toward family stability.[97] Religious programs enable participants to

learn and practice social skills and often encourage cross generational relationships.[98]

Therefore, at the very least, religion cannot be ignored by families pursuing acculturation

strategies for successful Americanization. This is a powerful insight for new churches,

especially as suburban communities are becoming more ethnically diverse.

## Psychology

### *Focus on Social Psychology*

Both cultural psychology and social psychology offer insights into the concept of

culture. Cultural psychologists investigate the mutual impact between mind and culture

and generally assume a meaning based view of culture.[99] Like cultural sociology, cultural

psychology uses symbolic terms to describe culture.[100] Like cultural anthropology,

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[94] Warner, 104.

[95] Warner, 103.

[96] Warner, 113.

[97] Warner, 112, 113.

[98] Warner, 112.

[99] Joan G. Miller. "Cultural Psychology: Implications for Basic Psychological Theory." *Psychological Science* 10, No. 2 (Mar., 1999): 85.

[100] Miller, 86.

cultural psychology emphasizes shared meaning systems that are public and explain reality. These shared meaning systems include behavior, knowledge, and artifacts.[101] A key assertion in cultural psychology is that at a fundamental level psychological processes and structures cannot exist outside the cultural context in which they operate.[102]

Social psychologists investigate the mutual impact of people and society. This includes the conscious or unconscious influences that social environments have on individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions and the effect the individuals have on the social structures and dynamics.[103] For this project, the researcher focused his attention on social psychology for two reasons. First, starting with the fundamental assumption that culture exists and is developed in society, it was important to investigate theories that offer insights into the thought processes which shape society. Second, social psychology perspective balanced the conceptual overlap that exists between cultural psychology, cultural anthropology, and cultural sociology.

Although research in social psychology lacks a commonly accepted grand theory,[104] the researcher identified five groups of theories that emerged as important to this project. The Single Concept group includes theories built on one fundamental idea. The Common Needs group includes theories based on sets of universal needs. The Fundamental Construct group includes theories constructed from intrinsic beliefs. The Action Orientation group includes theories that emerged from behaviorism and behavior

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[101] Miller, 86.

[102] Miller, 86, 89, 90.

[103] Paul A. M. Van Lange, Arie W. Kruglanski, and E. Tory Higgins. *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012): 6-7.

[104] Van Lange, Kruglanski, and Higgins, 2-3.

related studies. The Dynamic Orientation group includes theories that see culture as an ongoing process for making sense of the world.

*Single Concept Theories*

The social identity theory developed by Henri Tajfel was built on the fundamental idea that individuals draw at least part of their self-concepts from membership in a social group.[105] An individual's identity is shaped through social interactions within the group and by the significance the individual places on group membership.[106] The psychological processes at work include social categorization (groups an individual is part of), social comparison (differentiating between membership of different groups), and psychological distinctiveness resulting from the perceived (superior or inferior) value of belonging to a group.[107] Because an individual's social reality is not static, people are motivated to maintain their high status or advance in their social standing.[108] Social advancement can be individual or collective. An individual could move up on the social ladder by gaining membership to a superior group without affecting the social status of others.[109] A collective can improve its status through three social change methods: (1) use more favorable dimensions of comparison, (2) include other groups in the comparison process, and (3) redefine what it means to be part of the group.[110] The researcher valued Tajfel's

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[105] Henri Tajfel. "Social identity and intergroup behavior." *Social Science Information* 13, No. 2 (April 1974): 69.

[106] Tajfel, 69.

[107] Tajfel, 69-70.

[108] Tajfel, 72.

[109] Tajfel, 81.

[110] Tajfel, 82.

perspective because Christian groups and churches, especially new churches, have a fluid social standing depending on the cultural trends in society and generally desire to positively influence other social groups.

Like the social identity theory, the self-categorization theory developed by John Turner assumes a continuum of human interactions spanning from interpersonal behavior to group behavior.[111] Therefore, both theories affirm that people have an individual identity and a group identity and that these identities influence each other.[112] Turner asserts that self-categorization can take place at multiple levels of abstraction consecutively depending on the specific situation and the people involved.[113] He argues that the level of variation in the "relative salience" is to be normally expected. (Salience is the result of the interplay between an individual's chosen self-category and how well that category fits the context of the specific situation).[114] This theoretical perspective was valuable to the researcher because self-categorization influences the cultural identity of Christians operating in different situations such as church and the work place. By looking at differences between the business of the church, marketplace business, and kingdom business, the researcher investigated the patterns of cultural adoption and their effects in producing kingdom growth.

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[111] John C. Turner and Katherine J. Reynolds. "Self-Categorization Theory." *Handbook or Theories of Social Psychology* eds. Paul A. M. Van Lange et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012): 400.

[112] Turner and Reynolds, 400.

[113] Turner and Reynolds, 405.

[114] Turner and Reynolds, 405.

*Common Needs Theories*

In her optimal distinctiveness theory, Marilynn Brewer postulates that people are characterized by two needs: to belong to a group and to be different from others.[115] These opposing needs regulate the complex, unique relationships between the self and the groups to which an individual belongs.[116] As inclusion increases and the need to belong is satisfied, there is an increased desire for self-differentiation.[117] Similarly, as inclusion decreases and the need to self-differentiate is satisfied, there is an increased desire for inclusion and belonging.[118] Both needs are satisfied concurrently but not equally through group membership.[119] Brewer rejects the notion that belonging to a group (the in-group) automatically results in a level of animosity toward others (the out-group).[120] The implications for groups seeking to engage with other groups in a particular cultural context is profound. Groups can have positive and neutral relationships if they perceive themselves as having common goals or common enemies; alternatively, groups can develop negative relationships if they perceive they are in competition or pursuing opposing goals.[121] This model provided valuable insight regarding the competition and cooperation among new churches. The model served as a good reminder to focus not only on a single church but to keep in mind the ability of the church universal to produce

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[115] Marilynn B. Brewer. "The Importance of Being We: Human Nature and Intergroup Relations." *American Psychologist* 62, No. 8 (Nov, 2007): 731.

[116] Brewer, 731.

[117] Brewer, 731.

[118] Brewer, 731.

[119] Brewer, 731.

[120] Brewer, 730.

[121] Brewer, 734.

kingdom growth by avoiding cultural elements that compromise the mission or disrupt the unity among churches.

Another common needs theory, self-determination theory (SDT), starts with the assumption that people are motivated to grow and develop.[122] This theory affirms three universal psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[123] Autonomy is being empowered to act as one desires.[124] Competence is facing challenges and achieving a level of mastery over specific environmental elements.[125] Relatedness is having mutually positive social interactions.[126] The SDT also affirms two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.[127] Intrinsically motivated activities are done because of personal interest and satisfaction.[128] Extrinsically motivated activities are done to gain a reward; they can deteriorate into controlled motivation or activities done to avoid punishment.[129] The SDT predicts that experiences satisfying autonomy, competence, and relatedness are likely to cultivate intrinsic motivation.[130] Experiences that lack autonomy, competence, and relatedness are likely to result in extrinsic motivation.[131] Healthy personal

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[122] Marylène Gagné, Edward L. Deci, and Richard M. Ryan. "Self-Determination Theory." *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*. Ed. Eric H. Kessler. Vol. 2. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013): 686.

[123] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 686.

[124] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 687.

[125] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 687.

[126] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 687.

[127] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 686.

[128] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 686.

[129] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 686.

[130] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 688.

[131] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 688.

development and wellbeing happens through intrinsic motivation. [132] Growth,

development, and maturity are fundamental Christian concepts. This research is relevant

for new churches as they look to establish a self-sustaining ministry momentum.

Maureen Miner, Martin Dowson, and Kim Malone researched healthy personal

development in the context of Christian spirituality by asking if God can meet the basic

psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[133] Their research used La

Guardia's Need Satisfaction Scale to measure the satisfaction of basic needs for 225

Australian Christians from different theological traditions.[134] In spite of the limitations of

the study, the data showed promising relationships between God's provision of basic

needs, reduced psychological symptoms of anxiety and depression, and the intrinsic

motivation to pursue spiritual goals.[135] The cultural implications of this research include

the possibility that universal needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness apply not

only cross-culturally but also in spiritual dimensions.

*Fundamental Construct Theories*

The fundamental construct theories interpret the world (i.e., understand culture)

through a set of essential ideas or implicit beliefs. For Michael Bond and Kwok Leung,

culture provides fundamental insights into how people make sense of the world around,

overcome challenges, live together, utilize shared resources, and flourish as social

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[132] Gagné, Deci, and Ryan, 689.

[133] Maureen Miner, Martin Dowson, and Kim Malone. "Spiritual Satisfaction of Basic Psychological Needs and Psychological Health." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 41, no. 4 (Winter, 2013): 298.

[134] Miner, Dowson, and Malone, 289, 304.

[135] Miner, Dowson, and Malone, 312.

beings.[136] Motivated to understand culture, they researched cultural values and beliefs in

cross-cultural settings and developed a model of five social axioms about the world.[137]

These "factors of beliefs" include: (1) social cynicism – the general expectation of

negative outcomes in social settings, (2) social complexity – the number of variables

influencing social outcomes, (3) reward for application – the belief that problems will be

resolved through knowledge, effort, or planning, (4) religiosity – the belief in a supreme

being and positive engagement in religious practice, and (5) fate control – the belief that

impersonal forces which affect life could be anticipated and altered.[138] The social value

of these axioms includes enabling goal realization, protecting self-worth, communicating

people's values, and providing meaning to make sense of the world.[139] These

fundamental constructs of belief provide insight to new churches as they consider

engaging in an attractional and missional cultural paradigm. Rather than relating these

axioms to individuals, the researcher was intrigued by the possibility of applying these

axioms to a new church group.

Implicit theories offer additional insight into how people make sense of the world.

Implicit theorists start with a fundamental belief of human nature, such as that core

human attributes are set and cannot be changed or that they are dynamic and can be

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[136] Michael Harris Bond and Kwok Leung. "Cultural Mapping of Beliefs About the World and Their Application to a Social Psychology Involving Culture." *Understanding Culture: Theory, Research, and Application*. Robert S. Wyer, Chi-yue Chiu, and Ying-yi Hong, eds (New York: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009): 111.

[137] Bond and Leung, 112.

[138] Bond and Leung, 114.

[139] Bond and Leung, 119.

altered.[140] Implicit theories can focus on many aspects of human experience such as a

specific attribute like intelligence, a specific ability like music, negotiation, or leadership

skills, emotions, the concept of self and other, or social dynamics.[141] The main

investigative question is whether individuals have the ability to develop that aspect of

human experience.[142] Recent research findings in cognitive executive function,

intelligence, personality traits, abilities, beliefs, emotional response, identity, and social

dynamics seem to indicate that even core elements can be modified.[143] This does not

mean that implicit theories are without merit. They are particularly useful in challenging

situations that require social judgment.[144] Implicit theories inform intergroup dynamics,

conflict resolutions, leadership, business management practices, volunteerism, clinical

psychology, and counseling.[145] The researcher was intrigued by the implicit theories

because of their potential benefit in church leadership and pastoral counseling, especially

when exploring the differences between the business of the church, marketplace business,

and kingdom business.

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[140] Carol S. Dweck. "Implicit Theories." *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*. Paul A. M. Van Lange, Arie W. Kruglanski, and E. Tory Higgins eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012): 43.

[141] Dweck, 48.

[142] Dweck, 47.

[143] Dweck, 49.

[144] Dweck, 49.

[145] Dweck, 54-57.

*Action Focused Theories*

Communication styles and in particular gestures are "cultural dialects" that can be observed and identified.[146] For example, after moving to United States, the researcher noticed that Americans do not gesture as much as Romains do and when they do, their gestures seemed somehow different. While the mechanics of a particular action (like smiling) are similar across cultures, the meaning could be drastically different.[147] External cues such as gestures, facial expressions, personal space, and appearance are powerful nonverbal, behavior focused cultural elements.[148] Therefore, it was important to explore research that offer insights into the thought processes which shape nonverbal behavior.

According to Susan Goldin-Meadow and Sian Beilock from the University of Chicago, gesture may be the vehicle that connects action to abstract thought.[149] Building on the viewpoint that the mind is more than just an immaterial information supercomputer, Goldin-Meadow and Beilock brought together two research streams.[150] The first has shown that actions influence thought; the second has shown that communication gestures influence thought.[151] Since both actions and gestures influence thought, what is the connection between gesture and action? There are at least three

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[146] Elise J. Wang, Negin R. Toosi, and Nalini Ambady. "Cultural Dialects: Nonverbal Behavior and Person Perception." *Understanding Culture: Theory, Research, and Application*. Robert S. Wyer, Chi-yue Chiu, and Ying-yi Hong, eds (New York: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009): 289.

[147] Wang, Toosi, and Ambady, 290.

[148] Wang, Toosi, and Ambady, 292, 295.

[149] Susan Goldin-Meadow and Sian L. Beilock, "Action's Influence on Thought: The Case of Gesture." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5, no. 6 (2010): 665.

[150] Goldin-Meadow and Beilock, 664.

[151] Goldin-Meadow and Beilock, 665, 666.

insights worth mentioning. First, observed gestures and produced gestures affected the

thought process of the observer and the speaker.[152] Second, gestures that incorporated

specific actions in their form were more impactful.[153] Third, character viewpoint gestures

were effective in grounding thoughts into action. [154] These insights are relevant to church

planters who are interested in connecting the abstract notion of expanding God's

kingdom to the specific actions of starting a local church.

*Dynamic Orientation Theories*

Dynamic orientation theories reject the traditional interpretation of culture as a

system of meaning that is shared among individuals. This is in part because the

intergroup cultural variations could not be sufficiently explained by a coherent system of

meaning and because cultural priming research produced results similar to cross-cultural

studies.[155] Cultural priming research showed that bicultural individuals could be set up to

exhibit cultural behavior based on the culture that was most recently accessed in their

mind.[156] The cultural response was different depending on the context and the situation in

which the individual operated.[157] Therefore, culture could now be seen as the process that

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[152] Goldin-Meadow and Beilock, 667.

[153] Goldin-Meadow and Beilock, 669.

[154] Goldin-Meadow and Beilock, 672.

[155] Yosihisa Kashiama. "Culture Comparison and Culture Priming: A Critical Analysis." *Understanding Culture: Theory, Research, and Application*. Robert S. Wyer, Chi-yue Chiu, and Ying-yi Hong, eds (New York: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009): 53.

[156] Kashiama, 53.

[157] Kashiama, 53.

creates meaning rather than a coherent system.[158] This dynamic process uses the cultural

information available to make sense of a particular situation involving specific people.[159]

The dynamic constructivist approach to culture contends that social context

influences the cultural effects on cognition and behavior.[160] Ying-Yi Hong and LeeAnn

Mallorie, borrowing from the social cognitive theory, proposed a "culture x situation

interaction" model for understanding intra-group variations and cultural priming.[161] The

model allows for the existence of multiple meaning systems to be available to an

individual.[162] These meaning systems form a loose network of implicit theories that may

contradict.[163] Therefore, for an individual to operate within a cultural paradigm, the

meaning system has to be cognitively available and accessible enough times to form

learned mental shortcuts for quick response.[164] The availability speaks to having the

implicit theories stored somewhere in the mind; accessibility speaks to the ease of

retrieval at the forefront of a person's mind.[165] The accessibility is also impacted by the

particulars of the social situation.[166] If a readily accessible cultural response is not

appropriate in a given situation, an individual will select either consciously or

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[158] Kashiama, 73.

[159] Kashiama, 73-74.

[160] Ying-Yi Hong and LeeAnn M. Mallorie. "A Dynamic Constructivist Approach to Culture: Lessons Learned from Personality Psychology." *Journal of Research in Personality* 38 (2004): 60.

[161] Hong and Mallorie, 59.

[162] Hong and Mallorie, 62.

[163] Hong and Mallorie, 63.

[164] Hong and Mallorie, 63.

[165] Hong and Mallorie, 64.

[166] Hong and Mallorie, 64.

unconsciously another cultural meaning system to guide the behavior.[167] This approach to culture is intriguing because a large number of American Christians consider themselves not only American citizens but also citizens of heaven or the kingdom of God. This concept is developed further in Chapter 3.

## Cultural Studies

### *Overview*

In comparison to anthropology, sociology, and psychology, cultural studies is a relatively new, multi-disciplinary field of research that investigates "how the world is socially constructed," especially in political matters.[168] In this context, the term culture has been used to describe a way of life, practices, a tool, artifacts, and power. The term has been used as an evaluative criterion of high, low, mass, or popular culture. It has been used as a means of representation and as a means to produce symbolic representations.[169] Therefore, cultural studies explores the tension between power and meaning.[170]

Cultural studies research blurs the lines between many academic fields; investigations generally focus on matters of cultural difference and cultural identity.[171] Cultural studies strives to improve the human condition by developing ways of thinking

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[167] Hong and Mallorie, 65.

[168] "Cultural Studies." *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies.* Chris Barker. London: Sage UK, 2004. Available from: http://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=http://literati.credoreference.com /content/entry/sageukcult/cultural_studies/0 [Accessed 17 July 2015]

[169] "Culture." *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. Chris Barker. London: Sage UK, 2004. Available from: http://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=http://literati.credoreference.com.ezproxy.bethel.edu /content/entry/sageukcult/culture/0 [Accessed 17 July 2015].

[170] "Culture." *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies.*

[171] "Cultural Studies." *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies.*

about culture, power, and politics in such a way as to enable social and cultural change.[172]

The researcher engaged the field of cultural studies because in some ways Christianity

has similar goals; it proposes a way to improve the human condition and describes God's

realm as a political system (a monarchy). Since American churches are facing increased

internal divisions over the right political response to immigration, the redefinition of

marriage, and international geopolitical unrest, and it can be argued that the kingdom of

God is a political system, it is reasonable to explore the relationship between politics and

religion. Although there are many interpretations of the relationship between American

culture, politics, and religion, the researcher assembled four groups of theories that were

particularly helpful: civil religion, dualistic, secularization influence, and market thesis.

### *Civil Religion Theory*

The civil religion theory argues for a relatively vague religious sentiment that cuts

across denominational lines and inspires American patriotism.[173] This civil religion

affirms that God blessed America in a special way and assigned America a unique

international role to bring good in the world.[174] The civil religion is an indefinite national

faith that unites Americans in a common purpose which legitimizes domestic and

international political actions.[175] Although not universal, this patriotic faith is best

observed during times of national stress such as after the September 11 attack and after

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[172] "Cultural Studies." *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies.*

[173] Robert Booth Fowler, Allen D. Hertzke, Laura R. Olson, and Kevin R. Den Dulk. *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014): 301.

[174] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 302.

[175] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 302.

the Boston Marathon bombing.[176] The researcher saw value in this theory because new

churches must determine to what extent the civil religion aligns with (or compromises)

the mission of the church and to what extent it enhances (or disrupts) the unity of the

body.

<div align="center">*Dualistic Theories*</div>

In the dualistic group, the researcher included two theories: the unconventional

partners thesis and the culture wars theory. The unconventional partners thesis upholds

that religion in America sustains the country's political culture and governing institutions

by offering a sense of meaning, moral guidance, and participation in community.[177] In an

increasingly individualistic society, religion plays a stabilizing role, providing people a

place of refuge from the challenges they face in their daily life.[178] In turn, the political

structures sustain religious life by allowing freedom of worship and passing nonprofit tax

laws.[179] The symbiotic partnership is not without conflict, especially since this is not a

formal partnership but rather an unintentional one.[180] The nature of the partnership is

likely to evolve as the numbers of individuals who are involved in organized religion

decreases and the number of people hostile to religion increases.[181] The researcher valued

this theory because new churches must consider this symbiotic, continually changing

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[176] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 303.

[177] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 304.

[178] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 305.

[179] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 304, 305.

[180] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 304, 305.

[181] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 306.

partnership as they reflect on the differences between the business of the church, marketplace business, and kingdom business.

The culture wars theory sees politics and religion engaged in a struggle over the values and lifestyle of American society.[182] The struggle was generally perceived to be between conservatives and progressives.[183] Although expressing the culture wars as a duality may be helpful as a generalization, James Davison Hunter sees the struggle to be more about how pluralism is expressed in society.[184] Unlike pluralistic societies throughout history, Hunter sees the current American pluralism as lacking a dominant culture.[185] Without a dominant culture, "weak hegemonies" look to establish themselves through political maneuvering, new alliances, and extreme public rhetoric.[186] According to Hunter, the current cultural wars are between evangelicals and secularists.[187] He notes that evangelicals have moved from the center to the margins of cultural creation while the secularists are gaining ground in the center.[188] The researcher values this theory because it helps explain cultural trends in the evangelical church. The theory provides insight to new churches as they reflect on how the attractional and missional paradigms could be used to effectively engage the culture especially as the evangelical church is moving from the center to the margins.

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[182] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 307.

[183] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 307.

[184] Hunter, 1309.

[185] Hunter, 1311.

[186] Hunter, 1315.

[187] Hunter, 1318.

[188] Hunter, 1319.

*Secularization Influence Theories*

In the secularization influence group, the researcher included the secularization theory and the culture shift thesis. Secularization theory sees the attitude toward religion changing and predicts that over time religious involvement will diminish and even disappear.[189] While there is some evidence of diminished membership in religious organizations, the critics argue that religion is basic to the human condition and therefore will always exist.[190]

Similar to the secularization theory, the culture shift thesis argues that the general attitude toward religion is changing but not toward extinction.[191] Research indicates an openness toward spirituality but a general criticism of mainstream Christianity.[192] In particular, mainline protestantism seems to be negatively affected while evangelical protestant churches that emphasize expressive, individualistic spiritual experiences seem to experience growth.[193] In spite of the criticism, the researcher sees value in the secularization theory and the culture shift thesis because they provide a foundation for thinking about the religious attitude in America and enable new churches to interpret cultural trends.

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[189] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 310.

[190] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 310.

[191] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 315.

[192] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 316.

[193] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 317.

*Market Thesis*

The market thesis applies economic theory principles to the study of religion and politics.[194] This controversial thesis advocates that competition among religious groups is healthy and that effective marketing will enable churches to thrive and participate in political life.[195] Market theorists promote aggressive, competitive evangelism as a critical element for success.[196] The researcher sees value in this model because it can help mobilize new churches to aggressively pursue the mission of the church and fosters creativity in worship expression among churches. On the other hand, the researcher has concern with an environment of hyper-competition for at least two reasons. First, it may disrupt the unity of the body of believers, and second, it may promote a negative spirit of consumerism among Christians.

Consumerism has been generally viewed with suspicion by Christians.[197] One of the challenges of talking about consumerism is that it cannot be clearly defined as a cultural system nor does it subscribe to a set of shared beliefs.[198] Therefore, consumerism can be described as a culture of conflict where people derive meaning by affirming their individual choices for certain goods and services and rejecting others.[199] A consumerism

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[194] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 314.

[195] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 314.

[196] Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Dulk. 315.

[197] Matthias Zick Varul, "After Heroism: Religion versus Consumerism. Preliminaries for and Investigation of Protestantism and Islam under Consumer Culture," *Islam and Christian – Muslim Relations* 19, no. 2 (April, 2008): 237.

[198] Varul, 243.

[199] Varul, 244.

culture reinforces freedom of opinion,[200] choice, and preference in all aspects of life

including religion.[201] Therefore, spirituality moves from being a matter of life and death

to just a brand identity.[202] In this cultural context, advertising religion carries the risk of

emphasizing the most attractive parts of the religion and downplaying the less acceptable

ones.[203] The researcher sees value in this model because in a consumer culture freedom

of opinion offers even small start-up churches the opportunity to be considered. As new

churches look to market themselves, they will need to do so without compromising the

mission of the church.

*Group Opinionation*

Since freedom of opinion is elevated by a consumer culture, it is important to

understand how opinions take shape. In the context of politics, Paul Djupe uses the term

"group opinionation" to explore how people form opinions about a political action group

before they allow that group to help them make sense of the political landscape.[204] Djupe

sees group opinionation as an important step in the information search process, which

facilitates political choice and leads to political action.[205] The research indicates that the

typical starting point in forming opinion is the individual's relationship network,

especially trusted individuals who are in agreement about the topic.[206] Research has also

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[200] Varul, 244.

[201] Varul, 246.

[202] Varul, 246, 247.

[203] Varul, 250.

[204] Paul A. Djupe, "Political Pluralism and the Information Search: Determinants of Group Opinionation." *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (March 2011): 68.

[205] Djupe, 69.

[206] Djupe, 69.

showed the direct correlation between dialogue and political participation.[207] Even

dialogue that includes disagreement is valuable for group opinionation.[208]

Djupe's conclusions provide insights for political interest groups.[209] First, each

individual member of the group is a critical and potentially valuable point of contact for

the group.[210] Second, groups will have a difficult time connecting with like-minded

closed groups.[211] Third, members of closed groups are unlikely to connect with members

of other like-minded groups.[212] Fourth, incidental information about an interest group

obtained through social discussion diminishes the likelihood of participation in the

group.[213] The researcher sees value in this model because of its applicability to religion,

specifically to the small group dynamics of a church start-up. It is important to

investigate how people form opinions about a new church group before they allow that

group to guide them in their spiritual journey.

**Leadership Studies**

*Culture and Leadership*

One of the most recognized research studies of the relationship between culture

and leadership, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness

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[207] Djupe, 69,70.

[208] Djupe, 73.

[209] Djupe, 78.

[210] Djupe, 78.

[211] Djupe, 78.

[212] Djupe, 78.

[213] Djupe, 78.

(GLOBE) project, examined 62 societies around the world.[214] The GLOBE project rested on the assumption that leadership is culturally dependent.[215] The project investigated leadership attributes, principles, and practices across cultures and identified how effective they are across cultures.[216]

The project defined culture as having two distinct manifestations: (1) a collective agreement between members regarding psychological attributes such as language, ideology, belief systems, history, and ethnic identity and (2) observable patterns of behavior within a group.[217] Therefore, culture was defined as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations."[218] The analysis gives rise to nine cultural attributes:

(1) uncertainty avoidance (the amount of uncertainty a group is comfortable with),

(2) power distance (the level of power stratification concentrated in the top leadership of the organization),

(3) institutional collectivism (the level of collective action and resource distribution),

(4) in-group collectivism (the expressed devotion and pride an individual has toward the organization),

(5) gender egalitarianism (diminishing the differences between gender roles),

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[214] Robert J. House, *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 3.

[215] House, 5.

[216] House, 10.

[217] House, 16.

[218] House, 57.

(6) assertiveness (the level of acceptable confrontational behavior),

(7) future orientation (the amount of planning and investment in the future),

(8) performance orientation (how performance is rewarded), and

(9) humane orientation (the amount of fairness, kindness, and generosity encouraged).[219]

The project defined leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members."[220] In addition to the nine cultural attributes, the project identified six leadership behaviors.[221] First, charismatic, value-based leadership inspires and motivates high performance based on a set of core values.[222] This behavior includes six subscales: visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, integrity, decisive, and performance oriented.[223] Second, team oriented leadership stresses the building of a common identity and group goal among the team members.[224] This behavior includes five subscales: collaborative, integrator, diplomatic, kind, and administration competence.[225] Third, participative leadership involves others in the decision making process.[226] Fourth, humane oriented leadership includes compassion, generosity, and

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[219] House, 11-13.

[220] House, 15.

[221] House, 14.

[222] House, 14.

[223] House, 14.

[224] House, 14.

[225] House, 14.

[226] House, 14.

consideration to others.[227] Fifth, autonomous leadership measures individualism,

independence, and autonomy.[228] Sixth, self-protective leadership focuses on the

individual's status, security, and face-saving.[229] This behavior includes five subscales:

self-centered, status conscious, conflict inducer, face-saver, and procedural.[230] The

researcher found value in the GLOBE definitions and the theoretical approach because

these help inform the differences between leading the business of the church, marketplace

business, and kingdom business.

As a key theory in the GLOBE study, the integrated theory affirms that distinct

cultural attributes can predict which leader behaviors will be widely used and effective.[231]

The theory includes 15 propositions regarding the relationship between culture and

leadership.[232] Cultural norms, values, and practices affect how the leader behaves.[233]

Leadership affects the form, culture, and practices of the organization.[234] Cultural values

and practices affect organizational values and practices.[235] Organization culture and

practices affect how the leader behaves.[236] Culture and practices influence how people

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[227] House, 14.

[228] House, 14.

[229] House, 14.

[230] House, 14.

[231] House, 17.

[232] House, 17.

[233] House, 17.

[234] House, 18.

[235] House, 18.

[236] House, 18.

come to share implicit theories of leadership.[237] Organizational environment, size, and

technologies affect the form, culture, and practices of the organization.[238] Organizational

environment, size, and technologies affect how the leader behaves.[239] Cultural forces

moderate the relationship between (a) the form, culture, and practices of the organization

and (b) organizational environment, size, and technologies.[240] Leader acceptance is

determined by the interaction between (a) the culturally endorsed implicit leadership

theories and (b) the leader's attributes and behaviors.[241] Leader effectiveness is

determined by the interaction between (a) organizational environment, size, and

technologies and (b) the leader's attributes and behaviors.[242] Leader acceptance enables

leader effectiveness.[243] Sustained leader effectiveness increases leader acceptance.[244]

Cultural practices relate to the nation's economic competitiveness.[245] Cultural practices

relate to people's well-being.[246]

Based on the 15 propositions, the researcher observed a relative stratification of

the theoretical elements that make up the integrated theory model. The stratification

helped the researcher to better understand the complexity of this conceptual model. In tier

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[237] House, 18.

[238] House, 18.

[239] House, 18.

[240] House, 18.

[241] House, 19.

[242] House, 19.

[243] House, 19.

[244] House, 19.

[245] House, 19.

[246] House, 19.

one, two base elements serve as the starting point of all other theoretical elements: (1) societal culture, norms, and practices and (2) organizational environment, size, and technologies summarized as the strategic organizational contingencies.[247] In tier two, there are two elements: (1) organizational form, culture and practices and (2) leader attributes and behaviors that are directly affected by both tier one elements and also by each other.[248] In tier three, there are two elements (economic performance and well-being) that are directly affected only by one of the tier one elements (societal culture, norms, and practices).[249] Culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory is the only element in tier four; it is directly affected by a tier one element (societal culture, norms, and practices) and a tier two element (organizational form, culture, and practices).[250] In tier five, there are two elements: leader acceptance and leader effectiveness. Leader acceptance is affected by one of the tier two elements (leader attributes and behaviors), the tier four element, and the other tier five element (leader effectiveness). Leader effectiveness is affected by one of the tier one elements (strategic organizational contingencies), one of the tier two elements (leader attributes and behaviors), and the other tier five element (leader acceptance).

Leader effectiveness can be evaluated based on three divergent approaches.[251] The cultural congruence proposition affirms that a leader will be effective if her behavior aligns with the cultural norms of the group and will face conflict and resistance if her

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[247] House, 18.

[248] House, 18.

[249] House, 18.

[250] House, 18.

[251] House, 64.

behavior disrupts cultural norms.[252] The cultural difference proposition affirms that a leader will be effective if he introduces new cultural norms, values, and practices that enhance task performance in the organization even if these new cultural elements may have a disruptive effect.[253] The near universality of leader behavior proposition affirms that certain leader behaviors are effective regardless of cultural context.[254] Examples of these behaviors include charisma, intellectual stimulation, and consideration toward others.[255] The researcher saw value in these three approaches because new churches that intentionally engage the culture must decide how to evaluate effectiveness. Churches must discern whether cultural engagement means congruence with cultural norms to minimize cultural conflict or synonymous with cultural change and affecting cultural norms.

### *Changing Culture*

To meet the demands and the complexities of a dynamic marketplace, executive leaders have pursued organizational change to ensure the business not only survives but accomplishes its mission.[256] There are four general theories regarding organizational change.[257] All four take into account the historical, social, and cultural elements that impact an organization.[258] First, the life cycle theory sees the process of change as

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[252] House, 64.

[253] House, 65.

[254] House, 65.

[255] House, 65.

[256] Gill Robinson Hickman, *Leading Change in Multiple Contexts* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 35.

[257] Hickman, 43.

[258] Hickman, 29.

mirroring that of a living organism: birth, growth, maturity, decline, and renewal.[259]

Second, the teleological theory believes that change results from unifying the group

members around a common goal or desired outcome.[260] Systems theory helps those who

adopt a teleological approach by highlighting the complexities of cause and effect.[261]

Third, the dialectical theory affirms that change results from uncertainty and conflict.[262]

This approach advocates the need for opposition that is strong enough to challenge the

existing culture and flexible enough to synthesize into a "novel set of values, goals, and

modes of operation."[263] Fourth, the evolutionary theory, like the life-cycle theory,

advocates a gradual and predictable process of change.[264] Unlike the life-cycle theory, it

promotes internal competition for limited resources[265] and experimentation with new

ideas[266].

 In addition to the four theoretical foundations, it is important to consider some of

the organizational change practices available to executive leaders.[267] The literature shows

a tendency toward practical wisdom principles that are expressed as universally

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[259] Hickman, 44.

[260] Hickman, 67-47.

[261] Hickman, 48.

[262] Hickman, 51.

[263] Hickman, 51.

[264] Hickman, 52.

[265] Hickman, 52.

[266] James Collins and Jerry Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 146.

[267] Hickman, 79.

applicable in other change situations.[268] For example, a universal assumption is that

"change practitioners act as members of groups defined by organizational hierarchy."[269]

If this assumption is reinforced in practice, it will limit the identities, motivations, and

actions of participants, especially if the participants separate into those who embrace

change and those who do not.[270]

One reason universal assumptions are attractive to some practitioners may be

because they imply a certain level of control or power over change.[271] Critical of

organizational change models based on universal assumptions, the paradox of

organizational change as practice model (referred to in this document as the paradox of

change model) sees organizational change as the intersection between power, phronesis

(practical wisdom), and conflict.[272] The model acknowledges three perspectives of

organizational change: practices (include rules, processes, and methods for strategic

planning, conflict management, communication, and human resources), praxis (includes

the thoughts behind the actions, expressed opinion, and sense-making), and practitioners

(individuals and their individual and collective identity).[273] Therefore, the paradox of

change model sees power as "hidden in practice, exercised in praxis, and demonstrated

by the practitioners." The model understands praxis to be the social code of the

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[268] Jansson, Noora. "Organizational Change as Practice: A Critical Analysis." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 26, no. 6 (2013): 1008, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1439458338?accountid=8593.

[269] Noora, 1011.

[270] Noora, 1011.

[271] Noora, 1012.

[272] Noora, 1012.

[273] Noora, 1008-1011.

practitioners and predicts conflict to be a necessary component of organizational change.[274] The researcher sees value in the paradox of change model because of at least three reasons. First, organizational change includes engaging the culture. Second, there are times when new churches find themselves in conflict with the popular culture. Third, start-up churches are facing a complex, dynamic world that cannot be controlled. The processes that used to work well in the American culture are no longer effective. New churches need to consider different ways of looking at the world and adopt new ways of interacting and engaging with the culture.

## *Self-Organizing Systems*

While investigating organizational management in a complex and dynamic environment, Margaret Wheatley was struck by the level of effort and stress involved in managing organizations.[275] Rather than finding more efficient ways to increase managerial certainty or enabling more effective methods to control the complexity, she let herself be driven by curiosity, exploration, and wonder.[276] As an alternative to being constrained by (or constraining) the environment, she focused her attention on enablement, autonomy, growth, and flexibility.[277] Instead of mechanistic systems that require an efficient bureaucracy, she was interested in organic systems that operate well in fluid, seamless structures.[278]

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[274] Noora, 1012.

[275] Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006), 3-5.

[276] Wheatley, 8.

[277] Wheatley, 9.

[278] Wheatley, 15.

By observing the natural laws of quantum physics, Wheatley became convinced of the power of individual participation in the life (including management) of the organization.[279] She imagined an organization not bound by the hierarchical structures and role definitions but enabled by the potential and creative energy that results from meaningful interactions between people.[280] For Wheatley, organizations with rigid structures that promote equilibrium and control are similar to machines that break down if left unattended in a natural environment.[281] By contrast, self-organizing systems develop self-knowledge and work with and within the environment.[282] Self-organizing systems are not chaotic; they seek and achieve order through dynamic, adaptive, and creative processes that apply to specific situations.[283]

Inspired by the way living systems interact with their environment, Wheatley proposes a management approach which departs from the "engineering efficient solutions" that deconstructed processes into assembly line tasks performed by unskilled laborers.[284] The new scientific management approach is based on self-organizing systems that learn, adapt, and change.[285] The researcher identified five foundational characteristics of self-organizing systems. First, every member of a self-organizing

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[279] Wheatley, 67-69.

[280] Wheatley, 72.

[281] Wheatley, 77.

[282] Wheatley, 83.

[283] Wheatley, 90.

[284] Wheatley, 159.

[285] Wheatley, 158.

system participates and engages with the environment.[286] Second, self-organizing

systems rely on relationships and networks of relationships.[287] Third, self-organizing

systems are energized by information and meaning making.[288] Fourth, every member of a

self-organizing system is allowed the freedom to act and decide.[289] Fifth, the vitality and

growth of self-organizing systems are dependent on self-reference.[290] The researcher

values this model because new churches, especially in the evangelical tradition, are

usually not part of a command and control structure. New churches looking to

intentionally engage the culture will need to rely on creative, passionate, and adaptive

individuals who in relationship with each other will focus on mission of the church

without disrupting the unity of the body.[291]

## *Church Planting*

The researcher found no shortage of books advocating methods of how to plant

new churches. Reflecting on the material, the researcher identified four general

characteristics. First, the literature conveys a sense of need for more church planting.[292]

New churches are more effective in their outreach efforts than established churches.[293]

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[286] Wheatley, 163.

[287] Wheatley, 165.

[288] Wheatley, 166.

[289] Wheatley, 166.

[290] Wheatley, 167.

[291] Wheatley, 170.

[292] Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2013) 11-12. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed August 16, 2015), 12.

[293] Aubrey Malphurs,

Second, the literature is prescriptive. For example, a popular model for planting a new church follows a five step process: (1) a vision to start the new church initiates among the leadership of a larger church, (2) a charismatic leader is identified, (3) financial support is secured, (4) a committed and talented launch team is recruited, and (5) momentum building resources (e.g., music equipment, venue, and marketing materials) are secured.[294] Other literature informs the readers about the ten most popular mistakes made during church planting.[295] As the ten mistakes are discussed, the need for leadership is strongly emphasized.[296]

Third, the literature recognizes church planting as a leadership intensive endeavor.[297] Therefore, it is not surprising that church planting literature is heavily influenced by leadership studies. As an organization, the church requires organizational leadership to maintain health.[298] Terms like strategic planning and strategic leadership apply not only to the executive board room but are advocated as necessary ingredients of the 21st century church.[299] Serving as a Converge Great Lakes church planting

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[294] Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Gospel Communities on Mission*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 95.

[295] Jim Griffith and Bill Easum, *Ten Common Mistakes Made by New Church Starts* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2008), Kindle location 59.

[296] Griffith and Easum, Kindle locations 580, 643, 658, 809, 963.

[297] Malphurs, 8.

[298] Dan Kimball, *Adventures in Churchland: Finding Jesus in the Mess of Organized Religion*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 138.

[299] Malphurs, 17.

missionary, the researcher used training materials that emphasize practical

entrepreneurial skills like networking, team development, and strategy definition.[300]

Fourth, the literature agrees that outreach is essential. New churches, responding

to the declining church participation, typically have a strong desire to engage in the

culture and reach out to the community using a variety of strategies.[301] Cultural

considerations are typically focused on marketing effectiveness and alignment with

popular culture trends.[302]

From these four general characteristics of the church planting literature, the

researcher made two observations. First, new churches are likely to be affected

(intentionally or unintentionally) by leadership studies trends. Second, because leadership

studies are usually applied in business management and administration, new churches are

likely to be affected (intentionally or unintentionally) by business management and

administration trends. Third, while church planting literature mentions culture as

something that needs consideration, there is a gap in the literature regarding the difficulty

new churches have with intentionally engaging the culture without compromising the

mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body.

Aside from church planting literature which advocates methods on how to plant

new churches, the researcher found value in literature that encompasses cultural

commentaries on the state of the church. This material includes studies that rely on

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[300] Gary Rothrmayer, *First Steps: for Planting a Missional Church*, (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006), 7.

[301] Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 171.

[302] Searcy and Thomas, 172.

statistical data to show cultural trends and encourages the reader to reflect and take appropriate action.[303] Some literature provides a foundation for thinking about the church, Christ, and cultural engagement.[304] For example, the researcher found it thought-provoking to consider that the church is shifting from an attract culture to an invite culture.[305] Other literature identifies somewhat alarming trends in the church based on comparative methods, personal observations, and ministry experience.[306] For example, most of the cultural commentary affirms that church attendance is on the decline and church impact on the culture is minimal.[307] Some recent studies are starting to question the viability and effectiveness of traditional church planting.[308] Rethinking church apart from the way we live life is not likely to positively engage the culture.[309] This topic is intriguing to the researcher because it resonates with his experience and harmonizes with the ethos of this research project. The researcher is passionate about exploring how new churches intentionally engage the culture in such a way that the mission of the church is accomplished as part of who Christians are as a church and the unity of the body is maintained in spite of the messiness of daily relationships.

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[303] George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless* (Austin, TX: Tyndale Momentum, 2014), 10.

[304] D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 5.

[305] Griffith and Easum, Kindle location 463.

[306] John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Consumer Culture and the Church's Future*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2012), 5.

[307] James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: the Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 91.

[308] James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 87. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed August 19, 2015).

[309] White, 172.

CHAPTER THREE: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

## Introduction

Jesus ministered in a multicultural environment.[1] He ministered to Jews and non-Jews under Roman occupation and proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God.[2] In His teachings, Jesus did not abolish earthly kingdoms and their cultures but rather recognized their earthly coexistence with the kingdom of Heaven.[3] Therefore, the church continually faces the reality of its members living in the cultural tension of belonging to God's heavenly kingdom and also belonging to multiple earthly kingdoms.[4]

The researcher examined the multifaceted characteristics of the kingdom of God. Similar to physicists studying light as both a particle and a wave, the researcher engaged the paradoxical characteristics of the kingdom of God without resolving the perceived tension between them. To understand kingdom culture, the research investigated the theme of the kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels, and examined the system of truth claims, moral obligations, and symbolic values present in the teachings of Jesus. Because Jesus taught about the kingdom of heaven using parables and metaphors, the researcher

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[1] David L. Balch and Adam Pryor, "Jesus' Creation Theology and Multiethnic Practice" *Currents in Theology and Mission 39 no.* 4 (2012): 281.

[2] Balch and Pryor, 280.

[3] Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Matthew and Revelation," *The Kingdom of God* Christopher W. Morgan and Robert Peterson, eds., (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) Kindle location 1927.

[4] Anthony B. Bradley, "The Kingdom Today" *The Kingdom of God,* Christopher W. Morgan and Robert Peterson, eds., (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) Kindle location 4629.

examined the parables of Jesus that start with the indicator phrase "The kingdom of heaven is like."

The researcher separated the parables into three groups. Each group was explored in a separate section of this chapter and rests on two assumptions. First, both expressions, "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven," assume God's sovereignty as king.[5] Therefore, the researcher reviewed parables that used both expressions. Second, the investigation does not question the authorship claims of the Synoptic Gospels or their claim about the teachings and sayings of Jesus.

In the first section, the researcher identified eight parables that offer insight into God as king. Three of the eight parables portray God issuing decrees and making legal judgments based on the evidence presented. These are the parable of the fishing net (Matt. 13:47-50), the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46), and the parable of the king who wanted to settle accounts (Matt. 18:23-35). Five of the eight parables portray God as benefactor, making generous offers to individuals who are in dire need. These are the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), the parable of the king preparing a wedding banquet (Matt. 22:1-14), the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-32), the parable of the tenants (Matt. 21:33-46), and the parable of the man preparing a great banquet (Luke 14:15-24). While each parable offers valuable insight, the research focused on two parables that illustrate the key ideas of all eight. The parable of the king in Matthew 18 illustrates the king's decree, and the parable of workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20 illustrates the king's offer.

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[5] Robert Foster, "Why on Earth Use 'Kingdom of Heaven'?: Matthew's Terminology Revisited", *New Testament Studies* 48, no. 4 (2002): 494.

In the second section, the researcher identified six parables that offer insight about the characteristics of God's kingdom. Three of the six parables portray the worth of God's kingdom. These are the parable of the hidden treasure (Matt. 13:44), the parable of the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45), and the parable of the household treasures (Matt. 13:52). The other three parables portray the growth and expansion of the kingdom of God. These are the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29), the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32), and the parable of the yeast (Matt. 13:33). While each of these parables offer valuable insight, the research focused on two parables that illustrate the key ideas of all six. The parable of the hidden treasure in Matthew 13:44 illustrates the worth of the kingdom, and the parable of the mustard seed in the same chapter of Matthew illustrates the growth of the kingdom.

In the third section, the researcher identified four parables that offer insight into God's kingdom people. The parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matt. 13:24-30) depicts the people of God living in a fallen world (Matt. 13:37-43). The other three parables portray the people of God as they expect the arrival of the king and the full manifestation of the kingdom of God. These are the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), the parable of the bags of gold (Matt. 25:14-30), and the parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:11-26). In this third section, the researcher focused on the parable of the wheat and the weeds in Matthew 13 and the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25.

## God the King

### *The King's Decree*

The researcher approached the parable of the king who wanted to settle his accounts in Matthew 18 as a story in three acts.[6] Act one starts by presenting a king exercising his right to collect what was owed to him.[7] Immediately, the story introduces suspense when a servant is asked during the legal proceeding to repay an astronomical amount of money as per the loan agreement.[8] Since the servant could not repay his debt, the story turns suspense into dread when the king orders that the servant, his household, and all his possessions be sold as a means of repayment.[9] As expected, the servant pleads with the king for leniency and an extension on his loan.[10] Contrary to expectations, the king offers not only leniency but total forgiveness of the loan.[11]

In act two, after this positive tone and happy resolution, the story takes a drastic downward turn when the servant faces the opportunity to forgive one of his debtors who owed a much smaller amount as compared to what the servant owed the king.[12] The

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[6] Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2010) 223-224. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 13, 2015).

[7] Talbert, 223.

[8] Donald Senior. "Matthew 18:21-35." *Interpretation* 41, no. 4 (October 1987): 405. *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 13, 2015).

[9] Senior, 405.

[10] Senior, 405.

[11] Senior, 405.

[12] Curtis Mitch and Edward P. Sri, eds., *The Gospel of Matthew*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 235. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 13, 2015).

servant's debtor pleads for leniency and an extension on his loan.[13] However, the servant does not grant leniency and throws the debtor in prison until the loan is paid.[14]

In act three, the story continues its downward spiral. The events are witnessed by other servants who, in their anger, go and tell the king what the servant has done.[15] The king summons the servant and questions him about his lack of mercy.[16] During this process, the king becomes angry and throws the servant in prison until the astronomical loan is paid.[17] Jesus concludes the story by saying that God will treat people who do not genuinely forgive others in a similar fashion.[18]

The parable of the king who wanted to settle his accounts is part of the answer Jesus offers to Peter concerning his question about how many times an individual should be forgiven (Matt. 18:21). Peter's question seems to interrupt the flow of teaching regarding sin and conflict resolution in the church.[19] Jesus answers Peter's question by instructing His followers to forgive unconditionally and repeatedly without limit.[20] This extremely radical teaching goes above and beyond Peter's suggestion to forgive an

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[13] Mitch and Sri, 235.

[14] Mitch and Sri, 235.

[15] Talbert, 224.

[16] Talbert, 224.

[17] Talbert, 224.

[18] Yarbrough, kindle location 2060.

[19] Susan E. Hylen, "Forgiveness and Life in Community," *Interpretation* 54, no. 2 (2000): 153.

[20] John Muddiman and John Barton, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 867. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 13, 2015).

offender seven times.[21] The answer which Jesus provides also stands in contrast with the accepted rabbinical teaching of forgiving someone four times for the same offense.[22]

Although Jesus instructs His followers to forgive unconditionally and repeatedly without limit, the parable does not illustrate repeated forgiveness as one might expect.[23] Peter's question focuses on a specific rule to be used in all situations, but Jesus redirects his thinking by telling a parable that shows forgiveness as a mindset.[24] The end goal of the forgiving mindset is full reconciliation and restoration of the offender.[25] The implication is that followers of Jesus are to pursue a forgiving mindset as they deal with sin and conflict in the church and restore both the offender and the victim back into the community.[26] Therefore, the process of restoration is a deliberate process that links together human and divine forgiveness.[27]

In recent years, several models have emerged in the field of psychology that depict the process of forgiveness.[28] Although there is no unifying model, the research supports five fundamental elements that are part of the forgiveness process: hurt and anger, God's forgiveness, emotional forgiveness, empathy, and reconciliation.[29] The

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[21] Yarbrough, kindle location 2057.

[22] Senior, 404.

[23] Susan E. Hylen, "Forgiveness and Life in Community," *Interpretation* 54, no. 2 (2000): 153.

[24] Hylen, 153.

[25] Hylen, 152.

[26] Hylen, 153.

[27] Weaver, 167

[28] Donald F. Walker and Richard L. Gorsuch, "Dimensions Underlying Sixteen Models of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32, no. 1 (2004): 13.

[29] Walker and Gorsuch, 19.

findings show that hurt and anger are the starting point in the forgiveness process, and reconciliation is the ending point.[30] Therefore, it is reasonable to expect hurt and anger in the forgiveness process between God and humans.

The researcher observed that the fundamental elements that are part of the forgiveness process can be found in the parable of the king who wants to settle his accounts. In the parable, the forgiveness process starts with hurt and anger when the king orders that the servant, his household, and all his possessions be sold as a means of repayment (Matt. 18:25). Emotional forgiveness and empathy follow as the king has pity on the servant and cancels his debt (Matt. 18:27). The king reconciles with the servant through the deliberate action of letting him go free (Matt. 18:27). Through the release, the servant is restored to the community and rejoins his "fellow servants" (Matt. 18:28).

Hurt and anger are evident three more times in the parable, but the forgiveness process breaks down, and the community does not reach the desired end point of reconciliation and restoration (Matt. 18:30, 31, 34). The servants observing the lack of mercy in Matthew 18:31start the forgiveness process with hurt and anger but do not follow the healthy restoration process described in Matthew 18:15-17.[31] What caused the breakdown? Should the blame rest on one individual alone, the forgiven servant who did not show mercy, or should the community bear some of the responsibility? Although individual responsibility is clear in Matthew 18:15-20 as the offended individual is

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[30] Walker and Gorsuch, 17, 18.

[31] Hylen, 155.

instructed to take specific steps toward reconciliation, the corporate activity is well represented by the plural address in Matthew 18:18.[32]

The parable supports that, as a community, God's people have the responsibility to not only recognize the sin, which the servants did, but to confront the individual as a corrective action, which the servants did not.[33] Corporate forgiveness, based on a forgiving mindset that deals with sin and conflict in a direct and gracious way, is more effective in restoring both the offender and the victim to the community than the easier forgive and forget model.[34] The communal aspect of forgiveness (corporate forgiveness) provides valuable insight for this project because new churches that strive to intentionally reach the culture will also encounter division and hurt that will threaten the unity of the church.

Through the parable Jesus affirms the tension between two sets of competing elements. First, there is tension between the forgiveness mindset that instructs believers to forgive unconditionally and repeatedly and communal reconciliation which limits the conditions of the forgiveness process.[35] This prevents the perpetuation of abusive behavior and benefits the community by cultivating healthy unity.[36] Second, there is tension between individual accountability and communal responsibility.[37] Individual accountability covers the offender (repentance), the offended (both grace and truth), the

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[32] Weaver, 164.

[33] Weaver 159.

[34] Hylen, 148.

[35] Hylen, 154.

[36] Hylen, 156.

[37] Hylen, 157.

victim (safety and protection), and the member of the community (courage to confront sin).[38] Communal responsibility prevents abuse since the intervention power is given to the entire group (Matt. 18:19).[39] The researcher sees value in the concept of maintaining the tension between competing elements because new churches need to assess the level of cultural adoption in light of the tension between kingdom culture and world culture. The researcher sees value in the specific tensions between the forgiveness mindset and communal reconciliation and between individual accountability and communal responsibility because they can generate potential solutions that detect and avoid cultural elements which compromise the mission of the church or disrupt the unity of the body.

*The King's Offer*

The parable of the workers in the vineyard recorded in Matthew 20 can be presented in two sections.[40] Section one sets up an interesting story by presenting a landowner going out "early in the morning" to hire day laborers for his vineyard.[41] Since it was not typical for first century landowners in Judea to engage in the detailed business operations of their vineyards, it is likely that the story caused some intrigue among Matthew's readers and Jesus' listeners.[42] The unusual story develops further as the landowner negotiates directly with the workers and agrees to pay them a full day's

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[38] Hylen, 156.

[39] Hylen, 157.

[40] Talbert, 239.

[41] Mitch and Sri, 253.

[42] Ernest Van Eck and John S. Kloppenborg, "An Unexpected Patron: A Social-Scientific and Realistic Reading of the Parable of the Vineyard Labourers (Mt 20:1–15)," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71(1), Art. #2883 (2015), 4. http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v71i1.2883.

wages.[43] Everyone being satisfied with the agreement, the landowner sends the newly hired workers to work in his vineyard.[44]

Later that morning at nine o'clock, as the landowner was passing through the marketplace, he sees a group of individuals without work.[45] The landowner hires these workers and promises to pay them "whatever is right" when the work day is done.[46] The scene repeats at noon and again at three o'clock in the afternoon.[47] At five o-clock in the afternoon, the landowner finds even more people without work.[48] He instructs them to go and work in his vineyard and similar to all the people who were not hired for a full day's work he promises to pay them "whatever is right" when the work day is done.[49]

Section two intentionally complicates the plot and invites Matthew's readers and Jesus' listeners to wrestle with the story.[50] At the end of the work day, the landowner gives specific instructions to his foreman to pay all the laborers starting with those who were hired last.[51] The introduction of the foreman in the story adds to the complications, especially since the foreman was absent during the hiring process.[52] The landowner keeps

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[43] Mitch and Sri, 253.

[44] Mitch and Sri, 253.

[45] Mitch and Sri, 253.

[46] Mitch and Sri, 254.

[47] Mitch and Sri, 254.

[48] Mitch and Sri, 254.

[49] Mitch and Sri, 254.

[50] Talbert, 239.

[51] Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2006), 176. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 18, 2015).

[52] Kenneth, Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008): kindle location 4285.

his promise to pay "whatever is right" by paying all the workers, including those who

worked only one hour, a full day's wage.[53] Because of this action, the workers who were

hired first and worked a full day expect to be paid more.[54] When they receive a full day's

wage like all the other workers, they are dissatisfied with the owner and point out that he

is being unfair to them.[55] The landowner's defense is swift and overwhelming.[56] First, the

owner argues that he is not cheating them since that is the satisfactory payment they had

agreed to in the morning.[57] Second, he points out that because he owns his wealth, he has

the right to make generous offers to others.[58] Third, he challenges their lack of respect

and questions their moral character.[59] Jesus ends the story with the thought-provoking

statement: "the last will be first, and the first will be last."[60]

Not all theologians agree on the most appropriate interpretation of this parable.[61]

The researcher identified three general clusters of interpretation. The allegoric

interpretations have historical roots that date back to the second century.[62] Several

interpretations focused their attention on the hours when the landowner went to the

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[53] Hauerwas, 176.

[54] Hauerwas, 176.

[55] Hauerwas, 176.

[56] Donald Capps, "The Laborers in the Vineyard: Putting Humor to Work" *Pastoral Psychology* 61, no. 4 (August, 2012): 560.

[57] Capps, 558.

[58] Capps, 558.

[59] Capps, 559.

[60] Talbert, 238.

[61] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 1.

[62] J. M Tevel, "The Labourers in the Vineyard: The Exegesis of Matthew 20,1-7 in the Early Church" *Vigiliae Christianae*, 46, no. 4 (Dec., 1992): 356.

market.[63] The diversity of meanings attributed to these hours included historical events in the life of Christ, periods in world history, the five human senses, God's progressive revelation of himself, and stages in human development.[64] Other allegorical interpretations see the landowner as representing God, the foreman representing Jesus, the vineyard representing God's kingdom on earth, and the workers representing the people of God.[65] A variation on this interpretation proposes two groups of workers. The workers who were hired first and worked a full day represent the Jews, and the workers who were promised to be paid "whatever is right" represent the Christian Gentiles.[66] Under this interpretation the focus of the parable is twofold. On one hand the parable admonishes jealousy, resentment, and unhealthy comparison among the people of God.[67] On the other hand, the parable is an example of God's lavish offer of grace.[68] New churches seeking to intentionally engage the culture may benefit from the metanarrative and cultural symbolism of the allegorical interpretations.

A second cluster of interpretation focuses on socioeconomic elements such as equality among workers, benefactor-client relationships, and the unjust oppression of the poor by the wealthy.[69] In first century Israel, the economics of the agricultural system fostered different forms of reciprocal relationships among individuals, usually based on

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[63] Tevel ,357.

[64] Tevel, 357-359.

[65] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 1.

[66] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 1.

[67] Mitch and Sri, 255.

[68] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

[69] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

self-interest.[70] Balanced reciprocity enabled an equal exchange of goods or services among people with similar socioeconomic status.[71] General reciprocity enabled economic relationships among people with different socioeconomic status such as a benefactor and a client. [72] In a typical benefactor-client relationship, the client is not able to reciprocate in kind, but there is an understood offer of allegiance to the benefactor.[73]

In the economic context of the parable, the relationship between day laborers and vineyard owners was unequal in social status and wealth distribution.[74] Higher in social status, landowners were generally focused on reducing labor costs, often at the expense of the poor.[75] Day laborers endured daily humiliation by standing in the marketplace hoping to be selected for work.[76] Humiliation would turn to disappointment and perhaps life threatening danger if they did not work.[77] Unlike slaves who had protection from both the legal system (protection of property) and their owner (protection of an investment), day laborers lived with significant economic risk.[78]

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[70] Erin K. Vearncombe, "Redistribution and Reciprocity: A Socioeconomic Interpretation of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20.1-15)." *Journal For The Study Of The Historical Jesus* 8, no. 3 (December 2010): 201. *EBSCO MegaFILE*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 19, 2015).

[71] Vearncombe, 202.

[72] Vearncombe, 202.

[73] Vearncombe, 202.

[74] Vearncombe, 201

[75] Vearncombe, 211.

[76] K. Bailey, kindle location 4340.

[77] K. Bailey, kindle location 4341.

[78] Vearncombe, 217-219.

In opposition to the typical practices of other wealthy individuals, the owner in the parable does not oppress the poor and offers generous wages to all workers.[79] The distribution of equal pay has been interpreted as an example of worker solidarity and equality.[80] Equal wages for all workers reduces the economic risk of their families and offers them a chance to live.[81] By promising to pay the workers "whatever is right," the landowner draws attention to the "rights" of workers rather than on justice or social norms.[82] The owner moves beyond his role as a good employer and becomes the patron (benefactor) of the workers (the clients).[83]

Because the newly created equality did not follow the conventional socioeconomic expectations, it introduced conflict between the landowner and laborers.[84] Disputes between landowners and day laborers were not uncommon in first century agriculture.[85] In spite of the existence of conflict, interpretations that focus on socioeconomic elements see the landowner as representing a positive character who should be imitated.[86] Rather than being driven by self-interest, the landowner exemplifies a new kind of countercultural solidarity between people regardless of their

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[79] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

[80] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

[81] Vearncombe, 225.

[82] Capps, 558.

[83] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

[84] Vearncombe, 227.

[85] Vearncombe, 228.

[86] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

socioeconomic status.[87] As new churches look to understand the differences between the

business of the church, marketplace business, and kingdom business, the interpretations

focused on socioeconomic elements may provide valuable insight.

A third cluster of interpretation focuses on the reversal of social norms.[88] The

reversal will be fully realized in the eschatological future.[89] These interpretations see the

parable as an example of the thought-provoking statement that "the last will be first, and

the first will be last."[90] The socially accepted behaviors, expectations, and cultural values

are different in God's kingdom than in human-made social systems.[91] The parable

challenges the human concept of fairness (comparative justice) since the laborers who

worked an entire day receive the same pay as those who did not.[92] From this perspective,

fairness is evaluated by comparing the laborers' effort and production.[93] The value

(payment) of the laborers is dependent on economic yield.[94] From a kingdom of God

perspective, exemplified by the landowner's actions, fairness is evaluated by comparing

the laborers as persons regardless of their economic usefulness.[95] The value (payment) of

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[87] Vearncombe, 235.

[88] Talbert, 239.

[89] Muddiman and Barton, 870.

[90] Nathan Eubank, "What does Matthew Say about Divine Recompense? On the Misuse of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (20.1-16)," *Journal for the Study of New Testament* 35 no. 3 (March, 2013), 249.

[91] Van Eck and Kloppenborg, 2.

[92] Richard Reilly, "Compassion as Justice," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 26, no. 1 (January, 2006), 25.

[93] Reilly, 26.

[94] Reilly, 26.

[95] Reilly, 26.

the laborers is dependent on their intrinsic identity as children of God.[96] As a result, it is reasonable to say that the concepts of fairness and justice operate in God's kingdom in such a way that they look and feel like compassion from a human perspective.[97] God's fairness (payment for what is owed) and His offer of grace exceed expectations and are examples of His faithfulness.[98] Therefore, His demonstrations of faithfulness generate and enable hope (faithful trusting) for all those who are part of God's kingdom.[99] As new churches face the tension between kingdom culture and world culture, it is important to understand the reversal of social norms in the kingdom of God.

## God's Kingdom

### *The Worth of the Kingdom*

The parable of the hidden treasure in Matthew 13:44 has been called a one point parable because it contains only one actor.[100] It is one of three parables (the parables of the hidden treasure, the pearl merchant, and the dragnet) that Jesus told only to His disciples.[101] These three parables form a chiastic structure with the previous three parables (the parables of the wheat and seeds, the mustard seed, and the leaven) that Jesus told the crowds.[102] The parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl

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[96] Reilly, 27.

[97] Reilly, 27.

[98] Eubank, 251.

[99] Eubank, 259.

[100] Mark L. Bailey, "The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and of the Pearl Merchant," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 no. 622 (Apr.-Jun. 1999), 176.

[101] Sonia Waters, "Getting More than You Paid For: The Parable of the Treasure and the Pearl as the Experience of Transformation," *Pastoral Psychology* 61, no. 4 (August, 2012), 424.

[102] Waters, 424.

merchant are found only in Matthew's account and focus on the worth of God's

kingdom.[103] The two parables have several similarities: an object of great value is at

stake, the object is found, an intentional pursuit, the selling of all possessions, and

acquisition of the desired object.[104] Compared to the parable of the pearl merchant, the

parable of the treasure includes some unique elements: the treasure is hidden, discovery is

accidental, the man experiences joy, the treasure is hidden a second time, and the verbs

used are in the historic present sense.[105]

The parable of the hidden treasure starts out with the formulaic "The kingdom of

heaven is like." S. M. B. Wilmshurst suggests that a direct comparison between the

kingdom and the treasure (as conveyed by the English translation) may not be what

Matthew intended to communicate.[106] The focal point of the comparison is to draw

attention to the general sense of the parable (with the hidden treasure as a major part in it)

rather than only to the hidden treasure.[107]

Without any explanation, the parable introduces an unidentified man who finds a

hidden treasure in a field.[108] Since the focus of the parable is on the worth of God's

kingdom, and the man finds an unexpected treasure, it is not unreasonable to propose that

the man is a symbol for any individual who is part of God's kingdom.[109] The text does

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[103] Waters, 424.

[104] M. Bailey, 176.

[105] M. Bailey, 176.

[106] S.M.B. Wilmshurst, "The Historic Present in Matthew's Gospel: A Survey and Analysis Focused on Mathew 13.44," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 no. 3 (Mar., 2003), 279.

[107] Wilmshurst, 279.

[108] Wilmshurst, 280.

[109] M. Bailey, 178.

not describe the contents of the treasure and does not provide an explanation for the meaning of the treasure.[110] A very popular interpretation sees the hidden treasure as a symbol of the kingdom of God.[111] Some have also proposed that the treasure can be a symbol for the Jewish people, the land of Israel, Christ, or the Scriptures.[112] Others identified the treasure as a symbol for periods in the history of the kingdom of God: the hidden state (the time between the reign of Rehoboam and the arrival of Christ), the discovery (the earthly ministry of Jesus), the second hiding of the treasure (the kingdom removed from Israel), and the buying of the field (redemption through the death of Jesus).[113] Another interpretation sees the treasure not as the kingdom of God (to be discovered by people) but rather as the kingdom people redeemed (bought with a price) by God.[114] In the context of this interpretation, the man represents God who, in the death of Christ, sold all He had to rescue His people.[115]

The parable does not give any clues as to why the treasure was hidden, who hid it, and in what field.[116] In spite of the lack of details in the text, there is historical evidence that indicates it was common practice to bury treasure in times of uncertainty.[117] The unstable political environment at the time when Jesus told this parable would have driven

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[110] Wilmshurst, 280.

[111] David G. Hamilton, "27th July: Proper 12 Matthew 13:44—52," *The Expository Times* 119 no. 9 (June, 2008), 448.

[112] M. Bailey, 177.

[113] M. Bailey, 180.

[114] M. Bailey, 179.

[115] M. Bailey, 179.

[116] Wilmshurst, 280.

[117] M. Bailey, 177.

people to bury some of their treasured possessions.[118] This practice became part of the

local culture and folklore, so it is reasonable to expect that the concept of hidden treasure

was familiar to Matthew's readers.[119] The text seems to emphasize the concealment and

recovery of something valuable.[120] Since the treasure is not intentionally discovered, but

rather it is discovered seemingly by chance, the treasure in the parable echoes the

fulfillment of the prophecy mentioned in Matthew 13:35 which points to God's hidden

treasures now revealed in Christ.[121]

    The parable implies that after seeing the treasure, the man knows the worth of the

items and understands what must be done to possess them.[122] This is a critical moment

that requires a life changing decision.[123] The man's quiet resolve and purposefulness

point to the immense value of the treasure and the rising excitement at the prospect of

possessing this desired object.[124] In spite of its extraordinary value, at this junction point,

the treasure loses narrative focus as the parable highlights the actions and emotions of the

man.[125]

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[118] M. Bailey, 177.

[119] Waters, 429.

[120] Wilmshurst, 278.

[121] Wilmshurst, 284.

[122] M. Bailey, 180.

[123] Waters, 425.

[124] Wilmshurst, 280.

[125] Wilmshurst, 281.

The parable shows that to acquire the valuables, the man hides the treasure again and departs with the intention of purchasing the field.[126] To a non-first century Jew, the action of hiding the treasure again may seem unethical since the treasure did not belong to him.[127] In an American cultural context, the action of hiding a treasure to prevent others from discovering it and then keeping that information from the owner of the field may be perceived as deceptive or wrong.[128] In this case, the American perspective is not helpful to proper interpretation of the text since the rabbinic law at the time affirmed the actions of the man as both legal and ethical.[129] It is unlikely that Matthew's readers would have had these kinds of ethical concerns.[130]

The parable indicates that after the man leaves, he proceeds to sell all his possessions to buy the field.[131] Through this development in the parable, Jesus is not saying that a person can buy their way into the kingdom.[132] Rather, the man's actions indicate that all his personal possessions, initially considered valuable, become trivial when compared to the treasure.[133] Because of this drastic action, some see the main point of the parable as emphasizing that the man was ready to do whatever was necessary to

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[126] Wilmshurst, 280.

[127] M. Bailey, 178.

[128] Jeffrey Boyd, "Have We Found the Holy Grail? Theory of Mind as a Unifying Construct," *Journal of Religion and Health* 47, no.3 (Sept. 2008), 374.

[129] M. Bailey, 179.

[130] M. Bailey, 179.

[131] Waters, 428.

[132] M. Bailey, 180.

[133] M. Bailey, 180.

have it.[134] This perspective stresses the great value of the treasure.[135] Others see the same action as pointing to the sacrifice required to be part of the kingdom of God.[136] This perspective underscores the need to risk everything to possess the kingdom.[137] A follower of Christ must overcome all obstacles for the sake of the kingdom.[138]

One of the key points of the parable is to underscore the joy of a very profitable transaction.[139] Since the man's actions are done "in joy", the selling of all his possessions is not seen as a sacrifice or a loss.[140] The text indicates that what drives the man's actions is not self-sacrifice but intense joy and excitement over his good fortune.[141] Matthew's use of the historic present seems to emphasize that point as the man shows the right, joyful response to finding God's kingdom.[142] Kirk Bingaman, in his pursuit of the joy of the kingdom evident in the parable, successfully shows that humans have a general bias toward the negative.[143] He argues that the doctrine of original sin prevents people from fully experiencing the right joyful response because the concept of sin reinforces a

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[134] M. Bailey, 182.

[135] M. Bailey, 182.

[136] M. Bailey, 181.

[137] Yarbrough, kindle location 2039.

[138] M. Bailey, 179.

[139] M. Bailey, 182.

[140] M. Bailey, 183.

[141] Wilmshurst, 280.

[142] Wilmshurst, 285.

[143] Kirk A. Bingaman, "Beyond Original Sin: A Paradigm Shift for the Age of Neuroscience," *Pastoral Psychology* 61 no. 4 (August, 2012), 413.

negative bias.[144] Bingaman's proposed solution is to "shift away from a confession of original sinfulness toward a daily engagement with contemplative spiritual practice and mindfulness meditation."[145] His proposal is a departure from the traditional interpretation of Genesis.[146] To ease the challenges of this departure, Bingaman suggests that other religious traditions, such as Zen and Buddhism, could serve as a guide for reinterpreting Christian theology.[147] Rejecting the Adamic myth of original sin, Bingaman argues that humans could experience a lasting transformation of joy by "embracing the original goodness that is the treasure of the kingdom of heaven."[148]

For Sonia Waters lasting transformation comes not from the original goodness inherently present in individuals but from an intense experience with a "transformational object" that changes all aspects of human life, both internal and external.[149] The search for the transformational object is a discovery process that ends with a deep and personal surrender to the transformational power of the object.[150] In the parable of the hidden treasure, the transformational object is the kingdom of God.[151] Rather than being "acquired" for its own sake, the kingdom is experienced and surrendered to.[152] The fruit

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[144] Bingaman, 414.

[145] Bingaman, 416.

[146] Bingaman, 417.

[147] Bingaman, 418.

[148] Bingaman, 418.

[149] Waters, 429.

[150] Waters, 426.

[151] Waters, 424.

[152] Waters, 428.

of that experience and the trust of surrendering to it is an overwhelming joy that satisfies

deep longings continually after the initial encounter.[153] This interpretation is valuable for

new churches because it highlights the characteristics of the kingdom and it informs the

cultural values fostered by the kingdom.

### *The Growth of the Kingdom*

The parable of the mustard seed is a kingdom parable recorded in all three of the

Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-34, and Luke 13:18-19).[154] In Matthew, the

parable starts out with the formulaic "The kingdom of heaven is like" and in Mark and

Luke, Jesus opens with question "What is the kingdom of God like?"[155] To make His

point, Jesus points to the growth of the mustard shrub from a seed to full grown plant.[156]

In the parable, an unidentified man takes the mustard seed and plants it in his garden.[157]

Without additional human intervention, the seed grows into an impressive plant that

serves as a comfortable shelter for birds.[158] The image of birds safely in a tree was

understood not only by those who were familiar with the rich metaphors available in the

psalms (Pss. 91, 104) but by anyone who watched a bird for more than a few minutes.[159]

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[153] Waters, 432.

[154] Mark L. Bailey, "The Kingdom in the Parables of Matthew 13 Part 4: The Parable of the Mustard Seed." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, no. 620 (October 1998): 449. *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 29, 2015).

[155] Bailey, 449.

[156] John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*. (Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2012): 287. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 29, 2015).

[157] Carroll, 287.

[158] Pheme Perkins, "Mark 4:30-34. (Between Text and Sermon)." *Interpretation* 56 no. 3 (July, 2002): 312. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 29 Sept. 2015.

[159] Perkins, 312.

Unlike Luke, both Matthew and Mark highlight the smallness of the seed by pointing out that it is "the smallest."[160] This kind of emphasis can also be seen in Hellenistic and rabbinic literature and helps support the idea that the mustard seed was a metaphor for smallness in some circles.[161] In spite of this evidence, it is difficult to assert that the mustard seed was the defining cultural icon for smallness in the geographical context of the parable.[162] Regardless of the metaphorical power of the mustard seed, the small beginnings may have shocked those who expected God's kingdom to display a lot more power in the world.[163] In contrast to earthly kingdoms, usually represented in the Old Testament by esthetically and commercially valuable trees like cedar (Ezek. 31), the kingdom of God is represented by an annual plant.[164]

Luke seems to focus on the dramatic transformation of a mustard seed that "grew and became" a tree.[165] The growth in the parable is beyond the expected normal size of a mustard plant.[166] Mark renders the resulting transformation less dramatically by stating that the seed grows into a large shrub, and Matthew uses both the image of a shrub and a

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[160] Carroll, 287.

[161] Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011): 84. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 29, 2015).

[162] Ryan S. Schellenberg, "Kingdom as Contaminant? The Role of Repertoire in the Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (July, 2009): 532. *EBSCO MegaFILE*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 29, 2015).

[163] Bailey, 451.

[164] Perkins, 312.

[165] Carroll, 287.

[166] Bailey, 454.

tree.[167] Regardless of the final image used, the parable supports the idea that God's

kingdom will experience great growth.[168]

Because the parable relates the growth of the kingdom to that of a mustard seed, it

is beneficial to explore the growth properties of the mustard plant and its uses in the first

century. There is historical evidence that in the geographical context of the parable,

mustard plants grew wild in grain fields and could establish themselves very quickly

when used as a garden plant.[169] Once the plant germinated, it was very difficult to

completely remove or exterminate it.[170] Because of its hardiness and its ability to spread

quickly, some scholars advocated that in the first century the mustard plant was regarded

as a weed.[171] If these scholars are right, then Jesus deliberately compared the kingdom of

God with an invasive and perhaps dangerous shrub.[172] It is reasonable to expect that an

aggressive and potentially destructive plant would be vilified in ancient literature.

Instead, the evidence points to mustard as a plant that was intentionally cultivated for

medicinal purposes.[173] The health properties of the mustard plant included cures for

"serpent and scorpion bites, toothache, indigestion, asthma, epilepsy, constipation,

dropsy, lethargy, tetanus, leprous sores."[174] The historical evidence shows that in contrast

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[167] Carroll, 287.

[168] Beavis, 84.

[169] Schellenberg, 528.

[170] Schellenberg, 531.

[171] Beavis, 84.

[172] Beavis, 84.

[173] Schellenberg, 532.

[174] Schellenberg, 532.

to modern practice mustard had little use as a condiment.[175] Reflecting on the plant's

tenacity for growth and its wide ranging healing properties provides deeper insight into

the growth of the kingdom of God.[176] The kingdom's expansion will be unstoppable and

the kingdom will bring comfort and healing to many people.[177] The variety of healing

benefits and the diversity of beneficiaries cannot be fully anticipated.[178]

## God's People

### *Living in the World*

In the Synoptic Gospels the parable of the wheat and the weeds appears only in

Matthew 13:24-30.[179] The parable describes the kingdom of God as being similar to a

man who planted good seed in his field.[180] At night, an enemy attempted to destroy the

entire crop by sowing tare seeds in the same field.[181] During the growth process and

particularly when the wheat was near maturity, the man's servants questioned the

presence of the tares and inquired about the owner's plans for eradication.[182] To prevent

damaging the wheat, the owner instructed his servants to let both kinds of plants grow

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[175] Schellenberg, 532.

[176] Beavis, 86.

[177] Beavis, 86.

[178] John J. Vincent, "Outworkings: Urban Mission in Mark 4" *The Expository Times* 122, no. 11 (August, 2011): 538.

[179] Luca Marulli, "The Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:26–30): A Quest for its Original Formulation and its Role in the Preaching of the Historical Jesus," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 no. 2 (May, 2010), 69.

[180] Marulli, 72.

[181] Marulli, 72.

[182] Marulli, 73-74.

until they were fully mature. [183] At harvest time the servants were to first collect the tares, so they can be burned and then gather the wheat for the owner.[184]

The parable of the wheat and the weeds is part of a larger teaching discourse that encompasses the entire chapter.[185] Although presented as one teaching unit, it had two separate audiences.[186] The teachings described in the first 35 verses took place in public on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.[187] The teachings described in the second part of the chapter starting with verse 36 took place in private at the house of one of His disciples.[188] This implies that while the parable was spoken in public, its interpretation was shared in private.[189]

The teaching discourse follows a chiastic structure.[190] The central message of Jesus' teaching is that He was revealing secrets about the kingdom of God to His disciples (the people of God).[191] The revealed mystery of the kingdom describes a slower and more hidden growth process than what was anticipated by many people in Israel.[192]

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[183] Marulli, 73-74.

[184] Marulli, 74.

[185] Stuart K. Weber, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Matthew*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000): 190.

[186] Weber, 209.

[187] Weber, 209.

[188] Weber, 209.

[189] Weber, 209.

[190] Weber, 209.

[191] Weber, 210.

[192] Weber, 210.

The parable offers the people of God two key insights.[193] First, it provides an explanation regarding why the people of God are not sheltered or removed from the evil present on earth.[194] Second, it provides hope for the people of God regarding the ultimate justice and deliverance of God.[195] The parable points to a final judgment in the kingdom of God.[196] The judgment is the culmination of a celestial struggle between the kingdom of God and its enemies.[197] Although cosmic in its magnitude, elements of the struggle can be observed on earth among God's people.[198]

Considering the parable and the interpretation provided by Jesus, there are two broad approaches to understanding the kingdom of God.[199] First, the universalist interpretation sees the kingdom as the "reign" of God in the world.[200] This interpretation rests primarily on the clear explanation provided by Jesus in verse 38 that "the field is the world."[201] The interpretation is also supported by the missiological focus of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew and the concept of God's reign in the Old Testament.[202] One of the key challenges with this interpretation is that it does not align with the central message of

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[193] Weber, 197.

[194] Weber, 197.

[195] Weber, 197.

[196] Marulli, 74.

[197] Marulli, 75.

[198] Marulli, 75.

[199] Robert K. McIver, "The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43) and the Relationship between the Kingdom and the Church as Portrayed in the Gospel of Matthew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 4 (Winter, 1995): 644.

[200] McIver, 644.

[201] McIver, 645.

[202] McIver, 645.

Jesus' discourse: that He was revealing secrets about the kingdom of God.[203] The fact

that there will be both good and evil in the world until the final judgment seems too

trivial of a point and could hardly be seen as a secret.[204] Another difficulty with this

interpretation is the implication that, similar to the tares and the wheat during the growth

process, the people of the kingdom are indistinguishable from non-kingdom people.[205]

This does not align with the rest of the Gospel of Matthew.[206]

Second, the ecclesiological interpretation sees the kingdom as the realm of the

community of the people of God.[207] The concept of "kingdom as the realm of God" fits

well with the idea that some people are included while others are excluded.[208] The

interpretation is supported by the mission of Christ to restore God's authority over the

entire earthly territory.[209] This interpretation sees the field as the space (the world) in

which the church exists.[210] The church, consisting of the people, is represented by the

plants of the field.[211] Therefore, similar to the tares and the wheat during the growth

process, those who falsely claim to be disciples of Jesus are indistinguishable from the

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[203] McIver, 646.

[204] McIver, 646.

[205] McIver, 647.

[206] McIver, 647.

[207] McIver, 654.

[208] McIver, 655.

[209] McIver, 657.

[210] Robert H. Gundry, "In Defense of the Church in Matthew as a Corpus Mixtum," *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 91 no. 3-4 (January, 2000): 161.

[211] Gundry, 161.

authentic people of God.[212] The parable provides an explanation regarding why the people of God are not sheltered or removed from the evil that has infiltrated the church.[213] The interpretation serves as a reminder that any well-meaning attempt to fully cleanse the church of evil could also negatively impact authentic disciples.[214] The reminder fits well with Jesus' interpretation since it was given only to His disciples in private.[215]

Although both universalist and ecclesiological positions provide coherent interpretations of the parable, they are less helpful in understanding the historical and cultural context of the farmer represented in the parable.[216] Given the local agricultural conditions, Jesus listeners were not likely to be surprised at the presence of tares in a field of wheat.[217] In light of historical evidence, the mention of "good seed" in verse 24 becomes important because of how difficult, if not impossible, it was for ancient farmers to prevent tare seeds from intermingling with wheat seeds.[218] Therefore, if the presence of tares is not the surprising factor, it is possible that what alarmed the servants was the sheer volume of tares planted among the wheat. Understanding the botanical

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[212] Gundry, 161.

[213] Gundry, 162.

[214] McIver, 649.

[215] McIver, 650.

[216] McIver, 653.

[217] Marulli, 73.

[218] J. R. C. Cousland, "Toxic Tares: The Poisonous Weeds (ζιζάνια) in Matthew's Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13.24–30, 36–43)," *New Testament Studies* 61 no. 3 (July, 2015): 399.

characteristics of the tare plant provides rich insight not only into this question but also into the interpretation of the parable, the kingdom, and the people of God.[219]

Although limited, paleobotanical evidence from the ancient Middle East points to Lolium temulentum L. as the most likely tare plant mentioned in the parable.[220] The similarity to wheat during its growing process and the distinguishable features emerging in its maturity align with the narrative of the parable.[221] Its seeds look very similar to wheat seeds and are difficult to separate even by hand.[222]

Lolium temulentum L. is detrimental to a wheat field because it lowers crop yield by competing for precious resources, assimilating nutrients more effectively, and being a host for disease.[223] Its fibrous root system has the ability to entangle itself with the wheat plant roots such that if uprooted it will also kill the wheat plants.[224] This characteristic aligns with the narrative of the parable.[225] Lolium temulentum L. is poisonous to both animals and humans.[226] Its most benign negative effect is that it renders bread foul-tasting.[227] In higher concentration it causes severe headaches, vomiting, an irresistible urge to sleep, and even coma.[228] Lolium temulentum L., if consumed, has intoxicating

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[219] Cousland, 396.

[220] Cousland, 405.

[221] Cousland, 397.

[222] Cousland, 399.

[223] Cousland, 400.

[224] Cousland, 400.

[225] Cousland, 400.

[226] Cousland, 401.

[227] Cousland, 401.

[228] Cousland, 402.

effects.[229] It can create perceptual confusion, reduce clear thinking, and produce delirium.[230]

The parable seems to imply that like the tares that can reduce crop yield, poison people, and intoxicate them, evildoers can negatively affect the people of God.[231] Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that in the community of the people of God, authentic disciples will experience negative effects from those who falsely claim to be disciples of Jesus.[232] This interpretation is valuable for new churches as they seek to intentionally engage the culture without compromising the mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body. As new churches live in the tension between kingdom culture and world culture, it would not be surprising to encounter a "fibrous root system" entanglement which manifests itself in the resulting church culture.

*Expecting the Kingdom*

The parable of the ten virgins is unique to the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 25:1-13).[233] In the parable, Jesus introduces ten virgins who have the honor of being the bridesmaids at a wedding.[234] At night time, each one brings an oil lamp and sets out to meet the bridegroom.[235] The text uses "wisdom language" (similar to the wisdom

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[229] Cousland, 402.

[230] Cousland, 402.

[231] Cousland, 407.

[232] Cousland, 408.

[233] Markus Ekkehard Locker, "And who Shaves God? Nature and Role of Paradoxes in 'Science and Religion' Communications: 'A Case of Foolish Virgins'," *Empedocles: European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 1 no. 2 (June, 2010): 196.

[234] Weber, 417.

[235] Locker, 196.

literature in the Old Testament) to categorize five of the bridesmaids as wise and the other five as foolish.[236] In contrast to the foolish bridesmaids, who do not bring oil along with their lamps, the wise bridesmaids bring jars with additional oil.[237] Because the bridegroom does not arrive at the time expected by the bridesmaids, they all feel asleep during their wait.[238] Late at night, the bridesmaids are awakened by a loud announcement regarding the arrival of the bridegroom.[239] As the bridesmaids trim their lamps and prepare to meet the bridegroom, the five foolish bridesmaids realize they do not have the necessary oil.[240] In earnest they ask the wise bridesmaids to share their oil but are refused.[241] The refusal is not malicious because the five wise bridesmaids explain their reason (the uncertainty about the necessary amount of oil for all ten) and offer advice for a potential solution (to go out to those who sell oil and buy what they require).[242] While the five foolish bridesmaids are out looking for oil, the five wise bridesmaids accompany the bridegroom to the wedding banquet.[243] As the wedding feast begins, the door is locked.[244] Upon returning, the foolish bridesmaids are denied entrance by the

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[236] Godfrey Ashby, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 10 (March, 1975): 63.

[237] Locker, 196.

[238] Weber, 418.

[239] Locker, 196.

[240] Locker, 196.

[241] Weber, 418.

[242] Locker, 196.

[243] Talbert, 273.

[244] David L. Turner, *Matthew*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008): 596. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCO*host* (accessed October 24, 2015).

bridegroom.[245] Jesus ends the parable with the conclusion that His followers need to be alert because they do not know the future, "the day or the hour".[246]

Similar to the parable of the wheat and the weeds, the parable of the ten virgins is part of a larger teaching section which starts in Matthew 24.[247] Known as the Olivet discourse, the teaching emphasizes not only what the people of God should expect in the future but also what to do in the present.[248] Although the theme of vigilance is recognized as the main point of the parable, not everyone agrees about the object of that vigilance.[249] Some see the parable as a reassurance to wait on God's timing, a warning to always be prepared for God, or a challenge to choose wisdom and recognize Jesus as the Messiah.[250] A commonly accepted interpretation advocates for vigilance regarding the second coming of Christ.[251] This interpretation fits the larger discourse that warns of an upcoming tribulation.[252] In light of the upcoming times of tribulation and the impending judgment, the people of God should be alert, faithful, productive, and focused on serving the needy.[253] Therefore, the parable of the ten virgins emphasizes the need for continual vigilance about the return of Christ.[254]

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[245] Turner, 596.

[246] Turner, 597.

[247] Weber, 416.

[248] Turner, 565.

[249] Ashby, 61.

[250] Ashby, 61.

[251] Turner, 597.

[252] Talbert, 272.

[253] Turner, 566.

[254] Turner, 587.

Considering the constant vigilance while waiting for Christ's return, the parable introduces at least four different pairs of opposites that create tension. First, vigilance requires both earnest expectation in the present and diligent preparation for the future.[255] While all bridesmaids expected the imminent return of the bridegroom, only half of them anticipated his possible delay.[256] Second, although not explicit, there is an implied tension in the relationship between the wise and foolish bridesmaids because the wise bridesmaids refused to share their oil.[257] Third, the refusal of the wise bridesmaids to share their resources, which is a positive action in the parable, can be perceived as a selfish act that goes against the teachings of Jesus to live selflessly.[258] Fourth, if the ten bridesmaids represent the people of God, then, similar to the parable of the wheat and the weeds, the community includes both positive and negative elements, namely wisdom and foolishness.[259]

While waiting for the return of Christ, the people of God, who are the authentic disciples of Jesus, will be in community with those who falsely claim to be disciples of Jesus.[260] As new churches live in the tension between kingdom culture and world culture, it is important to know the teachings of Jesus and wisely navigate the pressures of being ready now and preparing for the future. In the resulting church culture, the people of God will need wisdom to discern between the requests for oil that will drain and the

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[255] Turner, 597.

[256] Turner, 597.

[257] Locker, 197.

[258] Locker, 198.

[259] McIver, 650.

[260] Gundry, 157.

appropriate acts of selfless sharing. They will need resolve to handle the relationship

tensions that may arise.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT RESEARCH METHOD

Due to the qualitative nature of the investigation, the researcher employed the

descriptive method to collect the desired data and applied phenomenology as an

interpretive lens.

## Qualitative Research

### *Descriptive Method*

In 1967, while studying hospital patients, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss did

not follow the traditional research approach of starting with a hypothesis and testing it

against the data.[1] They started by collecting the data and then analyzing the information

gathered to discover the theory.[2] This new approach, which they called the "constant

comparative method," matured and developed into grounded theory, which is

foundational to the descriptive method.[3] The descriptive method aims to uncover the

fundamental nature of human experience through careful, detailed, accurate, and vivid

descriptions of the people and the environment involved.[4] Rather than relying on a

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[1] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Piscataway, NJ: AldineTransaction, 2012), Kindle location 1752.

[2] Glasser and Strauss, Kindle location 1752.

[3] Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 10th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2013), 146.

[4] Melanie Birks and Jane Mills, *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), Kindle location 445.

detached observation, the descriptive method counts on the passionate, personal engagement of the observer.[5]

The descriptive method starts with data collection and follows with four stages of analysis.[6] First, key points are tagged with a series of codes and extracted from the text.[7] Second, the codes are collected in affinity groups to increase usability.[8] Third, the affinity groups are gathered in broad categories that serve as input for the theory generation.[9] Fourth, a theory or theoretical framework is developed that explains the data.[10] The researcher selected the descriptive method because of the nature of the problem investigated by this thesis project. The problem this project researched concerns the difficulty new churches have with intentionally engaging the culture without compromising the mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body. The researcher expected to create a theoretical framework based on the interviews and surveys conducted.[11]

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[5] Birks and Mills, Kindle location 445.

[6] Glaser and Strauss, Kindle location 737.

[7] Glaser and Strauss, Kindle location 737.

[8] Glaser and Strauss, Kindle location 737.

[9] Glaser and Strauss, Kindle location 737.

[10] Glaser and Strauss, Kindle location 737.

[11] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 83.

*Phenomenology Methodology*

The seed of phenomenology germinated in 1874 when Franz Brentano published a book entitled *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*.[12] In his book Brentano asserts that psychology is the study of mental phenomena like ideas, judgments, and emotions rather than physical phenomena.[13] He argues that psychology must use rigorous empirical methods by which he means that data has to be based on direct personal experience.[14] Edmund Husserl and his student Martin Heidegger used Brentano's work as the foundation on which to build a theory that relied on data collected through experience.[15] In other words, the data collection occurred through the senses and thinking.

Phenomenology focuses on observed and experienced evidence.[16] The key tenet of phenomenology is that all explanations must be suspended until the observer has understood, experienced, and personally engaged the phenomena.[17] The experience offers the fullness of reality involved in the phenomena.[18] This "life world" (lebenswelt) includes both people and nature.[19] Phenomenology argues that during a project, a researcher needs to awaken an intuitive knowledge that supports subsequent judgment

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[12] Franz, Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), Kindle location 601.

[13] Brentano, Kindle location 601.

[14] Brentano, Kindle location 601.

[15] Ronnie Lessem and Alexander Schieffer, *Integral Research and Innovation: Transforming Enterprise and Society* (Farnham Surrey, England: Gower Publishing, 2010), Kindle location 2481.

[16] Lessem and Schieffer, Kindle location 2432.

[17] Lessem and Schieffer, Kindle location 2432.

[18] Lessem and Schieffer, Kindle location 2432.

[19] Lessem and Schieffer, Kindle location 2432.

and reasoning processes.[20] Because the researcher is a church planter with Converge Great Lakes and is in the process of establishing Agape Community Church in the western suburbs of Milwaukee, he had the opportunity to understand intuitively and experientially the information gathered through the interviews and the surveys.

## Overview of the Research Process

### *Data Collection*

First, the researcher determined what information would be gathered to satisfy the goals of the research project. The project investigated how new churches pursue kingdom growth by engaging the culture and by actively participating in their community. Therefore, the researcher collected data about the ministry model adopted by the church, the cultural elements observed in the church, and the community focused activities that furthered the mission of the church.

Second, the researcher decided how the data would be collected. The researcher selected to conduct field interviews with lead church planters and to survey members of their congregations. Drawing from the cultural understanding covered in the literature review, the researcher developed an initial list of twenty questions. From this list, the researcher selected ten questions and created an interview questionnaire. The questionnaire (Appendix A) was emailed in advance to the interview participants to allow them to reflect on the topics prior to the dialogue. Using the interview questions as a starting point, the researcher created an anonymous survey (Appendix B) which was distributed via email and social media to all the members of the congregations that participated in the project.

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[20] Lessem and Schieffer, Kindle location 2432.

Third, the researcher selected project participants. The researcher used his personal contacts as a church planter and member of Converge Great Lakes to identify evangelical churches started in the last five years. From the initial list the researcher contacted ten church planters based on geographical location closest to the researcher. Schedule conflicts prevented five of the individuals from participating in the project. The remaining five participants had at least three similarities. First, their statements of faith were the same or very similar to those subscribed to by Converge Worldwide. Second, the church planters professed their intention to engage the culture or be relevant in the culture. Third, they were all willing to volunteer their time to the project and to encourage their congregation to participate in the survey.

Finally, the researcher conducted the interviews and administered the anonymous surveys. Due to logistical restrictions, four interviews were conducted by phone and one interview was done in person. Each interview lasted about one hour and the researcher received permission to audio record the conversations. During the interview, the researcher asked the questions using the exact wording documented in Appendix A. The researcher answered any clarifying questions from the participants and allowed each church planter to add any final comments at the end of the interview. To capture survey results the researcher used Qualtrics, an online survey tool and provided each church planter a direct link to the survey. The church planters used their established methods of electronic communication to share the link with their church and to encourage voluntary participation in the survey.

*Data Analysis and Interpretation*

The researcher took several steps to analyze and interpret the data collected. In the first step the researcher identified the tools necessary to analyze the data collected through the interviews and the surveys. Because of its availability, affordability, and functionality, the researcher decided to use the Dedoose online system to analyze the interview audio files and Qualtrics Survey Software to analyze the survey data. The researcher supplemented these tools by creating custom Excel workbooks, tag clouds, word counts, and creative display of information. The researcher used these tools to move between a macro and a micro perspective of the data as a means to better understand the information.

In the second step the researcher used the open coding functionality in Dedoose to tag the detailed concepts and ideas discussed by the church planters. This process resulted in over 200 distinct codes. By combining the codes that described identical concepts using synonymous words, the researcher produced around one hundred detailed codes. The researcher clustered the codes in affinity groups and reviewed the audio files to verify the final nine categories.

In the third step the researcher analyzed the categories against the interview and survey data. The analysis looked for patterns, changes, unexpected insights, and relationships in the data. The analysis relied primarily on the author's finite abilities and was limited by the academic restrictions necessary for project completion. In spite of these constraints, the research project is valuable to church practitioners because it offers direct data and insights from the five interviews and seventy-seven survey responses,

twenty of which did not answer all the questions. In this report, the five participating churches are identified as A1, A2, M1, M2, and M3.

In the fourth and final step, the researcher engaged the data as a fellow church planter. Drawing on his personal experiences with planting Agape Community Church, the researcher reviewed the data and sought to understand the fullness of reality involved in each of the five churches investigated. The researcher used his intuitive knowledge to support his subsequent judgment and reasoning processes. These insights were integrated in the proposed theory and discussion presented in chapter six of this thesis project.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

**Overview**

The researcher used some unconventional research tools such as tag clouds, word counts, and creative display of information to reflect on the data collected. These methods were used primarily to help the researcher internalize the information gathered and to facilitate moving between a macro and a micro perspective of the data. At the macro level the researcher made six observations about the data collected. First, more women participated in the survey (39 percent male, 61 percent female). The five pastors interviewed were men.

Second, the data showed the age of the survey participants approximated a standard distribution. No individuals under the age of 15 or over the age of 76 participated in the survey, 7 percent were between 16 to 25, 27 percent were between 26 to 35, 31 percent were between 36 to 49, 31 percent were between 50 to 65, and 5 percent were between 66 to 75 years of age.

The following table shows the age distribution for all five churches.

**Table 1. Survey Participants Age Distribution**

|           | Under 15 | 16-25 | 26-35 | 36-49 | 50-65 | 66-75 | Over 76 |
|-----------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| A1        |          | 8%    | 46%   | 8%    | 31%   | 8%    |         |
| A2        |          | 10%   | 40%   | 30%   | 20%   |       |         |
| M1        |          |       | 29%   | 29%   | 29%   | 12%   |         |
| M2        |          | 7%    | 11%   | 41%   | 37%   | 4%    |         |
| M3        |          | 13%   | 25%   | 38%   | 25%   |       |         |
| All Data  |          | 7%    | 27%   | 31%   | 31%   | 5%    |         |

Third, the majority of survey participants, 80 percent, identified themselves as having been Christian for over sixteen years. No participants identified themselves as having been Christian for less than one year, 8 percent identified themselves as having been Christian for one to three years, 3 percent identified themselves as having been Christian for four to seven years, and 9 percent identified themselves as having been Christian for eight to fifteen years. These findings do not seem to align with a popular church planting assumption that new churches attract new believers. The findings imply the data collected by this project are skewed toward the perspectives of seasoned Christians.

Fourth, only about a third of the survey participants (36 percent) were members of the launch team during the start-up phase of their church. Fifth, less than a quarter of the survey participants (24 percent) were relatively new members of their church. More than 75 percent of the participants attended their church for more than two years, and 42 percent of these individuals attended their church for more than four years. Sixth, church sizes clustered in two groups. The first group was made up of two churches with membership ranging from fifty to one hundred adults and their families. In this project,

the researcher identified these as small churches. The second group was made up of three

churches with membership ranging from 200 to 250 adults and their families. In this

project the researcher identified these as large churches.

Moving between the macro and micro perspectives, the researcher identified three

broad themes that emerged from the data. The first theme focused on church ministry,

especially with regard to ministry models, contextualization, and the importance of

relationships. The second theme focused on community engagement and included

cultural discernment, participation in healing ministries, and the presence of a prophetic

voice in the community. The third theme focused on kingdom expansion and included

focusing outward, emphasizing discipleship, and affirming the priesthood of the

believers.

## Church Ministry

### *Ministry Models*

**The Tension**

The data indicate that all five churches adopted elements from both attractional

and missional models of ministry. The interview and survey data indicate that two of the

five churches generally leaned toward the attractional model of ministry and the other

three churches generally leaned toward the missional model. In this report the two

attractional churches are identified as A1 and A2, and the three missional churches are

identified as M1, M2, and M3.

During the interviews all pastors affirmed that both attractional and missional

models of ministry were biblically based and not mutually exclusive. The interview data

affirmed that both models could be effective in expanding the kingdom of God based on

the cultural context of the church. Three of the five pastors indicated that their church had gone through or were currently going through an intentional shift from an attractional to a missional model of ministry. The three pastors cited being more effective in discipleship as the primary reason for moving toward the missional model. A secondary reason for shifting toward the missional model was to increase involvement in the mission of the church and decrease the spectator mentality observed as a general trend in the community. This implies that rather than choosing between an attractional or missional model of ministry, new churches expand the kingdom by adopting the most effective elements from both.

**Attractional Model**

The ministry model data collected through pastor interviews was corroborated by the data collected through the surveys. Survey participants were asked to evaluate the level of engagement in the attractional model of ministry in their church by indicating their agreement or disagreement with the statement, "our church ministry is currently focused on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by creating appealing Sunday morning services and relevant ministry programs that draw in a wide unchurched population." Church A1 had 13 participants, A2 had ten participants, M1 had 17 participants, M2 had 27 participants, and M3 had eight participants. Considering the responses from the two attractional churches, at least half of the participants strongly agreed, and an average of 36 percent of participants agreed with the statement. Considering the responses from the three missional churches, only around a quarter of the participants strongly agreed, and an average of 28 percent of participants agreed with the statement. Although there were no participants that strongly disagreed with the statement, more participants from

missional churches disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement. The following

table shows the answer percentage for all five churches.

**Table 2. Attractional model by church**

|                    | A1   | A2   | M1   | M2   | M3   |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Strongly agree     | 54%  | 50%  | 25%  | 27%  | 25%  |
| Agree              | 31%  | 40%  | 38%  | 46%  | 0%   |
| Somewhat agree     | 0%   | 10%  | 25%  | 19%  | 50%  |
| Somewhat disagree  | 15%  | 0%   | 6%   | 0%   | 25%  |
| Disagree           | 0%   | 0%   | 6%   | 8%   | 0%   |
| Strongly disagree  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   |

**Missional Model**

Survey participants were asked to evaluate the level of engagement in the

missional model of ministry in their church by indicating their agreement or disagreement

with the statement, "our church ministry is currently focused on spreading the gospel of

Jesus Christ by creating ministry groups that 'go out' in the community and engage

individuals that are part of a wider unchurched population." Church A1 had 13

participants, A2 had ten participants, M1 had 17 participants, M2 had 27 participants, and

M3 had eight participants. The following table shows the answer percentage for all five

churches.

**Table 3. Missional model by church**

|                    | A1   | A2   | M1   | M2   | M3   |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Strongly agree     | 15%  | 30%  | 50%  | 70%  | 75%  |
| Agree              | 46%  | 50%  | 31%  | 22%  | 25%  |
| Somewhat agree     | 31%  | 20%  | 13%  | 7%   | 0%   |
| Somewhat disagree  | 0%   | 0%   | 6%   | 0%   | 0%   |
| Disagree           | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   |
| Strongly disagree  | 8%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   |

**Imagination and Innovation**

The researcher observed a general sense of dissatisfaction among all the pastors regarding the effectiveness of the American church in making committed disciples of Jesus Christ. The pastors expressed the need for new churches that were willing to challenge some of the existing assumptions behind popular ministry models. Without the weight of established practices, these new churches had the opportunity to experiment with new innovative ideas. For example, one of the churches participating in the project went beyond the typical large group worship gatherings and small group Bible studies to introduce midsize groups. These midsize groups functioned as extended families in the church that took care of one another and encouraged its members in their discipleship journey. The researcher observed that creativity and innovation were fundamental ingredients that drove the ministry expressions evident in the five churches that participated in the project.

In the process of defining their ministry models, four of the five interviewed pastors mentioned the importance of engaging the imagination and pursuing innovation. Based on their knowledge of the community, the pastors affirmed that people were interested in spirituality but were dissatisfied with their church experience. These individuals wanted to avoid negative church practices they had personally encountered, observed, or heard about. Church attendees expected their participation to cultivate a new, refreshing, and ultimately better kind of everyday life that went beyond the Sunday morning worship gathering. Therefore, the pastors believed that many in their community were searching for new spiritual expressions, and the church had a responsibility to engage the community in new, creative, and effective ways. These findings suggest that

new churches are ideally suited to experiment with new models of ministry. In doing so, they position themselves as ministry innovation leaders ready to take on the current challenges of engaging the culture.

*Contextualization*

**Just Like You**

A consistent theme among all five churches was their desire to intentionally create an informal atmosphere that was casual, contemporary, and convivial. All five pastors mentioned they intentionally dressed casually during the worship gatherings as a means to connect with the congregation. One pastor mentioned that he dressed in jeans and tee-shirt because he wanted to "look normal." When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, 15 out of 75 individuals did not provide any answer. From those who answered the question, 77 percent (46 individuals) directly supported the idea of an informal and casual atmosphere. The following table shows the percentage of individuals that mentioned casual, contemporary, or convivial atmosphere by ministry model.

**Table 4. Contextualization by ministry model**

|  | Casual | Contemporary | Convivial |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attractional | 87% | 53% | 87% |
| Missional | 73% | 49% | 89% |

Regarding the liturgical style, all churches intentionally selected contemporary music and a laidback order of worship. The desired outcome for all churches was a worship gathering experience that resonated with the average individual in the community. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, 50 percent (30 individuals) mentioned contemporary music and modern

worship style specifically. All five pastors talked about intentionally cultivating a welcoming and familial environment in the church. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, 88 percent (53 individuals) mentioned friendliness, acceptance, and a relational atmosphere. These findings show that new churches follow the cultural trend favoring casual and informal engagement that can be observed in American society. The researcher observed that all churches limited their definition of contextualization to these cultural trends.

**Resources Utilization**

When talking about resources, all pastors discussed the worship gathering location as a strategic consideration, but there were differences regarding whether having a building was a liability or an asset. Two pastors operating in a missional model of ministry expressed the concern that owning a building could detract individuals and resources from the mission of the church to make disciples. One pastor operating in an attractional model of ministry saw the church building and its unique location as an asset to be used for ministry. Two pastors, one operating in a missional model and the other operating in an attractional model, stated that having a building brought the church a sense of legitimacy and permanence in the eyes of the surrounding community.

The differences of opinion were also evident in the survey data. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, nine individuals mentioned the church building. Three of the responses aligned with the positive view of having a building and came from individuals engaged in attractional churches. Six of the responses aligned with the negative view of owning a building and came from individuals engaged in missional churches.

During the interviews all pastors acknowledged their church used technology strategically to enable ministry. All churches had a public website, but there were differences in how the churches viewed and used other technologies such as social media and mobile devices. Participation in social media varied among churches. Two pastors mentioned using social media to intentionally engage with individuals in the church community and the community at large. Two pastors downplayed the value and usage of social media in favor of personal relationships. One pastor used Facebook not only to connect with individuals but also as an effective marketing channel in his local community. Engaging mobile device technologies for ministry purposes was not widespread. Only one church provided a mobile app for their members.

The survey data revealed similar divergence regarding the perception of technology as a church resource. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, nine individuals mentioned technology such as social media, websites, email, and online tools. Four responses viewed technology as an asset to ministry, three responses viewed technology as both an asset and a liability to ministry, and two responses viewed technology in a negative light. The negative comments toward technology revolved around the concern that electronic communications were damaging personal relationships. In these responses, the researcher observed that in person and phone communication were viewed more favorably than texting, emailing, or connecting through social media. In spite of the mixed responses about technology, the findings demonstrate that new churches are finding creative ways to maximize their resources.

**Management Practices**

The researcher observed that two consistent themes emerged from the interview data. First, as church planters, the pastors operated not only as spiritual leaders but also as business professionals. All pastors developed an organizational structure that was required to operate in society as a legal entity with rights and responsibilities. All pastors used American business management concepts and terminology to describe entrepreneurial aspects of starting a church. As church planters they understood the need for marketing, capital management, strategic planning, asset acquisition, and leadership development. All five pastors described their role in terms that could be summarized as the chief business executive of the church.

Second, all pastors acknowledged a tension between organizational growth and expanding the kingdom of God. The challenge was in clearly articulating the nature of that tension. In some ways the expansion of the kingdom of God could, at least in part, be fueled by organizational growth. All pastors relied on some kind of organizational growth metric to gauge kingdom expansion. One pastor operating in an attractional model of ministry counted attendees at the Sunday morning worship service with the assumption that more participants would likely translate in more individuals impacted by the Holy Spirit toward kingdom expansion. One pastor operating in a missional model of ministry counted missional groups with the assumption that more groups would translate in more opportunities for individuals to be impacted by the Holy Spirit toward kingdom expansion.

The survey data revealed that church members had similar challenges when articulating how starting a church was similar or different than starting a business or a

nonprofit. From the 45 individuals who provided an answer, the researcher identified five

organizational growth considerations that emerged from the data. First, based on their

involvement in church planting, 42 percent of participants believed that new churches

were dependent on appropriate financial investment. Second, 42 percent of participants

affirmed that new churches required a strong marketing program. Third, 33 percent of

participants indicated that new churches relied on good leadership. Fourth, 33 percent of

participants commented that new churches depended on people's hard work and

commitment. Fifth, 20 percent of participants maintained that new churches should exist

to serve the needs of the people. Because most of the comments talked about people in

general, the researcher could not determine if the participants were focused on the people

in the church or the people in the community.

These five considerations stand in tension with the spiritual aspects of starting a

church. Almost half of the survey participants (47 percent) explicitly brought up God's

direct involvement in the start-up process and provision for funding, leadership,

marketing, and dedicated people. An interesting data distribution emerges when isolating

the survey information based on the dominant ministry model of the church. The

following table shows the data distribution for the five organizational growth

considerations and the spiritual aspect of starting a church.

**Table 5. Organizational growth considerations by ministry model**

|  | Financial Investment | Marketing | Leadership | Hard Work | For People | God's Involvement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attractional | 54% | 8% | 0% | 23% | 23% | 15% |
| Missional | 38% | 56% | 47% | 38% | 19% | 59% |

The data supports the more outward focus of the missional churches. More than half of the participants attending missional churches mentioned the need for marketing, as compared with 8 percent of participants attending attractional churches. Equally interesting is that almost half of the participants attending missional churches mentioned relying on good leadership, as compared with no mention of leadership from the participants attending attractional churches. These findings show that the relational emphasis in the missional churches has highlighted the importance of good leadership. The data supports the interview comments that the attractional model requires higher upstart costs and is resource intensive. More than half of the participants attending attractional churches mentioned the need for financial investment, as comparted to 38 percent of participants attending missional churches.

The researcher observed that management practices were not generally perceived as an important area of contextualization. The findings demonstrate that regardless of the ministry model favored by each church, the leadership and management practices were similar among the five churches and followed traditional hierarchical structures. This means that new churches saw a weak relationship between the effectiveness of a particular ministry model and the associated management practices. The researcher observed that missing from the data was any mention of recent management trends such as agile methodologies and self-organizing systems.

*Focus on Relationships*

All pastors emphasized the importance of relationships. In the interview recordings the researcher tagged 75 instances that discussed relationships in a positive way. If these instances were evenly distributed throughout the dialogue it would mean that relationships were brought up every two minutes. Pastors leading missional churches

talked about relationships much more than their colleagues serving in attractional churches. The data showed that more than 80 percent of the discussion about relationships was with missional pastors.

Aside from the church having a relationship with God, the data uncovered two other relationships common to all churches. The first was an internal relationship that identified individuals as adopted members in the family of God and therefore, part of an extended family unit. The second was an external relationship the church had corporately with its neighbors and other organizations in the community.

**Extended Family**

In the interviews the idea of an extended family was brought up at least 41 times. The researcher observed that four themes emerged in the context of these discussions. First, as an extended family, the church spent time having fun together, often sharing a meal. Second, as an extended family, the church loved each other even during difficult times and disagreements. Third, as an extended family, the church desired to be involved in each other's daily events. This was often presented as doing life together. Fourth, as an extended family, the church wanted to invest in each other's lives. Although the investments varied, all had an element of benefiting the other person in some specific way, whether spiritually, physically, emotionally, or relationally. The researcher observed a fifth theme that emerged in two of the three missional churches. As extended families, they saw community outreach as a group activity not as an individual task. The emphasis was not on bringing a friend to church but rather on a family adopting others so they can belong.

The survey data corroborated with the interview findings regarding the importance of family relationship to all five churches. When church attendees were asked

about the distinctive characteristics of their church, 47 percent of the individuals mentioned family and relationships. Within this group some individuals commented on being careful not to form cliques. When isolating the survey information based on the dominant ministry model of the church, the data show that 33 percent of participants attending attractional churches and 51 percent of participants attending missional churches mentioned family and relationships. These findings suggest that while the church members desire to have strong relationships with each other, they will likely face personality conflicts, political disagreements, and incompatible priorities.

**Trusted Neighbor**

The idea of being a trusted neighbor and reaching out to the community was brought up at least 35 times. The researcher observed the emergence of three themes in the context of these discussions. First, as a member of the community, the church invested in building trust as a good neighbor. Second, as a trusted neighbor, the church took the time to serve the community in some specific way. The acts of service varied among the five churches, but all were intended to benefit the community in which they resided. Third, as a trusted neighbor, the church desired to function as a bridge to engaging in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The survey data highlighted the importance of engaging the community for all five churches. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, 43 percent of the individuals mentioned community outreach. Within this group some participants warned about possible burnout and only going through the motions of outreach. When isolating the survey information based on the dominant ministry model of the church, the data show that 20 percent of participants attending

attractional churches and 51 percent of participants attending missional churches mentioned engaging the community in service and outreach. These findings imply that while the church members desire to engage the community, they are likely to face time pressures due to busy schedules and a loss of momentum due to monotony.

**Genuine Love**

All pastors asserted that the driving force behind the emphasis on relationships was a genuine selfless love fueled by a relationship with God. The researcher observed during the interviews that each pastor spoke with deep passion, conviction, and caring about the people in the church, the ministry of the church, and the community in which they lived. A similar sentiment was evident in the survey data. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church, 40 percent of the individuals mentioned love and caring for people. The percentage remained unchanged when isolating the data based on the dominant ministry model of the church (40 percent of participants attending attractional churches and 40 percent of participants attending missional churches mentioned love). Isolating the data based on gender or age did not result in material differences. These findings imply that new churches must cultivate genuine love to maintain outreach momentum.

## Community Engagement

### *Cultural Discernment*

All pastors were asked to consider the relationship between the church and the secular culture in which the church operates. The interview data showed differences in attitude and approach toward cultural analysis and discernment. In the interview recordings the researcher observed that there were at least 88 instances that discussed the

topic of cultural analysis and discernment. In these instances the pastors were challenged to discern which cultural elements had the potential to benefit the mission of the church and which elements were in danger of compromising it (refer to questions 4 – 8 in Appendix A). Pastors leading small churches talked about topics related to cultural discernment more than their colleagues serving in large churches. The data showed that more than 70 percent of the cultural discernment discussion took place with pastors leading small churches.

The researcher made three observations from the interviews. First, the researcher observed that the pastors intentionally engaged in discovering the cultural elements in the community. Four of the five pastors mentioned specific actions their churches took to be able to understand the surrounding community, but the approaches differed significantly. One of the five churches created a noncritical atmosphere during their gatherings to foster mutual understanding and cultural discovery. A second church engaged in discovery by speaking boldly about divisive issues in the community. Their goal was to understand the community's reaction and then to speak out as a prophetic voice. A third church took time to observe the aesthetic elements in the community such as signage, architecture, and colors. This cultural analysis was instrumental in the development of their brand identity. This finding shows that cultural analysis is possible and useful to new churches.

Second, the researcher observed differences in attitude toward the culture. One pastor perceived culture as being neither good nor bad, and his desire was to embrace it as much as possible while pursuing the mission of the church. At least two pastors, citing consumerism as a trend that negatively impacted the church culture, looked with skepticism toward culture. One of the pastors did not engage culture as an abstract

concept but rather focused on the community of individuals and the context of each situation. At least three of the pastors had a desire to change the negative aspects of culture by fulfilling the mission of the church. These findings suggest that cultural analysis conversations are likely to be difficult without a common framework for dialogue.

The survey data aligned with this observation. When church attendees were asked to rank statements about the relationship between church and culture, there were differences of opinion (see question 13 in Appendix A). In spite of divergent answers, a relative order emerged from the data. The statement that resonated the most was "our church is influencing the culture around it; the current cultural systems are being changed to conform to our church values" followed by "our church and the culture around it are working toward a common goal of morality and faith; our church aligns with the current cultural systems to promote unity and acceptance." In third and fourth place were "our church and the culture around it promote opposing views and actions; the current cultural systems put church members in difficult (paradoxical) situations of choosing between church and culture" and "our church and the culture around it are at odds with each other; the current cultural systems oppose and are sometimes hostile to our church" respectively. The statement that resonated the least was "our church wants to be segregated from the culture; we resist the negative influence of popular culture by not participating in the current cultural systems."

The following table isolates the data based on the dominant ministry model and shows the relative ranking of the statements.

**Table 6. Relationship between church and culture by ministry model**

|  | At odds with each other | Church influences culture | Promote opposing views | Working toward common goal | Church segregated from culture |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attractional | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Missional | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 |

Third, the researcher observed that some pastors could not easily engage in cultural analysis. Particularly difficult was identifying cultural elements that were unintentionally adopted by the church (see question 8 in Appendix A). One of the five pastors was able to engage the question by conceptually stepping outside his own cultural viewpoint. From that perspective he was able to identify how the church mission tagline created unintended cultural consequences. Two other pastors were able to wrestle with the question through directed dialogue with the researcher. One pastor asserted that unintended cultural elements could not enter his church because all church activities aligned with the mission. These findings demonstrate the need for cultural training and cultural reflection.

The survey data aligned with this observation. When asked about popular culture elements that help to expand the kingdom of God, 61 percent of the church members gave an answer, 12 percent indicated they were not able to answer, and 27 percent provided no answer at all. By contrast, when asked about popular culture elements that could compromise the mission of the church, only 36 percent of the church members gave an answer, 31 percent indicated they were not able to answer, and 32 percent

provided no answer at all. An interesting data distribution emerges when eliminating the data from participants who did not provide an answer. The following table shows the data from the individuals who answered the question.

**Table 7. Individuals who answered cultural discernment questions**

|  | Individuals who gave an answer | Individuals who indicated they were not able to answer |
|---|---|---|
| Elements that help to expand the kingdom | 84% | 16% |
| Elements that could compromise the mission | 54% | 46% |

*Healing and Wholeness*

In the interview recordings the researcher identified 71 instances that covered topics related to the need for healing and wholeness in the community. All pastors mentioned their local communities face difficult problems such as illegal drugs, alcohol addictions, poverty, homelessness, broken families, deep relational issues, and an insalubrious self-focus. Each pastor talked about ways their church has engaged the community to bring physical, emotional and spiritual healing to those in need. The researcher identified two general themes that emerged from these conversations. To promote healing and wholeness in the community, all churches engaged in service oriented acts of kindness and cooperated with community leaders and other organizations.

**Acts of Kindness**

The five churches actively engaged in the community by serving in some tangible way. The interview data highlighted the diversity of ideas and variety of community service actions. To encourage acts of service, one pastor promoted the idea of generosity

to such sacrificial level that the church would be the first to be solicited for new community projects. Aligning with that sentiment, when a local school district did not have the budget to purchase teaching equipment, one of the churches helped provide the additional funds.

The interview data revealed that one of the significant drivers behind the identity of a serving church was the pastor's commitment to continually ask how the church could be even more helpful to the community. This continual focus and encouragement empowered both groups and individuals to serve at food shelters, participate in coat drives, and gladly give of their time to do household chores for the elderly. At least three churches mentioned providing thank you gifts and organizing appreciation events for local teachers, firefighters, and other public servants. One church had an active ministry to the homeless and others joined the school mentoring programs already established in their community.

There was a general consensus among the five pastors that one of the benefits of engaging in acts of kindness was an increased level of trust between the community and the church. The survey data supported the value of engaging in acts of kindness. When church attendees were asked about the distinctive characteristics of their church or cultural elements that enable the mission of the church, 53 percent mentioned serving the community and engaging with it in some tangible and beneficial way. These findings show that serving in tangible ways increases community engagement, and as healing actions they are transformative for all involved.

**Cooperation**

All pastors advocated the value of being active and visible in the community and desired their church to be a long lasting, redeeming presence unafraid to tackle the difficult problems already mentioned above. There was general agreement that no church could face these challenges alone. During the interviews, every pastor mentioned intentionally engaging with community leaders and public officials to understand how to serve the community together. The data show that pastors had cultivated mutually beneficial relationships with mayors, town board members, school district superintendents, school board members, police officers, and fire chiefs. One of the pastors actively encouraged his church leaders to develop similar personal relationships with leaders in the community.

The interview data revealed that cooperative relationships were not limited to individuals. To pursue healing and wholeness in the community, the pastors and their churches built mutually beneficial relationships with schools, local government committees, food pantries, nonprofit organizations, and other churches. At least three pastors mentioned the need for wisdom on how to partner with other organizations without compromising theological convictions, damaging the mission of the church, or disrupting the unity of the church.

*Prophetic Voice*

During the interviews all pastors talked about the church having the mission of proclaiming God's message and being a prophetic voice to the community. In spite of this agreement, the data revealed fundamental differences in how that was practiced by each church. The researcher identified that churches adopted one of two general

approaches. The first approach was countercultural and focused on the courage to speak out against sin. One of the five pastors was passionate about engaging popular issues such as the definition of marriage, sexual liberties, homosexuality and cohabitation. He advocated that evangelical churches need to engage the community by speaking out against the cultural trends that empower people to go against God's plan. His approach was to have a strong Sunday sermon that clearly articulated God position on these culturally contested topics, based on his theological conviction. This approach was, in part, adopted by at least one other church that was part of this study. Under this approach, new churches engage the culture by taking a countercultural position. The cultural engagement in this case is in some ways similar to a military engagement. The church engages the culture but sees it as an unfriendly force.

The second approach focused on inviting people to participate in a community of believers. Under this model, the prophetic voice was an invitation from God to connect with Him. The interview data show that three of the five pastors favored this approach. Participation in a community of believers allowed individuals new to the Christian faith to learn what God's message was based on the theological convictions of the group. Participation also encouraged individuals to apply what they have learned in daily life. The pastors affirmed that during this discipleship process, the Holy Spirit convicted individuals of sin and enabled them to live a transformed life. The cultural engagement in this case is in some ways similar to a wedding engagement between a man and a woman. The church engages the culture with the intention to deepen the relationship. The researcher observed that in specific situations neither approach can be followed 100 percent of the time.

**Kingdom Expansion**

*Discipleship*

All pastors were focused on expanding the kingdom of God through outreach. Regardless of their dominant ministry model, they affirmed their church's commitment to engaging non-Christians and helping them to become disciples of Christ. One of the pastors defined a disciple of Christ as "someone who hears God's word and does what God says." The pastors stressed that discipleship was one of the most effective ways to expand the kingdom of God. In the interview recordings the researcher identified 76 instances that covered topics related to discipleship.

One of the pastors described discipleship in the setting of small groups. In his ministry context discipleship groups could be as small as two individuals or as large as ten. In these groups, discipleship happened through dialogue and relationships. Three of the five pastors talked about discipleship as information exchange through dialogue, as imitation enabled by relationships, and as innovation pursued by taking personal ownership over the process. Aligning with the definition of a disciple as someone who hears God's word and does what God says, two pastors asserted the value of the sermon in the process of discipleship. In their ministry context discipleship took place not only in small groups but also as an integral part of the Sunday morning church service. Through a challenging message, the pastors delivered not only information about what God says but also challenged listeners to follow through with actions of obedience.

Building on the biblical principle that Gods people are engaged in a spiritual battle, one of the pastors affirmed that discipleship was a good offensive strategy. He believed that when churches focus most of their ministry on internal matters, they take a

defensive posture. During this dialogue, the researcher proposed that in a defensive

church, discipleship gets reduced to information exchange, spiritual fruitfulness is

replaced by spiritual growth, and going out into the world is abandoned in favor of

church convenience and comfort.

When church members were asked how long they had been a Christian, only 6 out

of the 77 survey participants indicated they had been a Christian for less than four years.

Since none of the churches participating in the project were older than 5 years, and in

light of the pastors' commitment to outreach and discipleship, this finding did not align

with the interview data. The pastors affirmed that the primary focus of the church was

engaging new believers and making new disciples. The survey data seems to indicate that

in spite of the community outreach efforts, the relationships cultivated by the missional

churches, and the resources invested in the Sunday worship experience by the attractional

churches, the majority of the members in the five churches that participated in this project

are not new Christians.

The following table shows the data distribution for how long survey participants

had been Christian.

**Table 8. Data distribution of how long individuals had been Christian**

|  | Less than 1 year | 1 – 3 years | 4 – 7 years | 8 – 15 years | More than 16 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All participants | 0% | 8% | 3% | 9% | 81% |
| Participants in attractional churches | 0% | 17% | 4% | 9% | 70% |
| Participants in missional churches | 0% | 4% | 2% | 9% | 85% |

While discussing the expansion of the kingdom of God, one of the pastors operating in an attractional model of ministry expressed concern over a possible unintentional adoption of a popular culture element. His church has used the attractional model to expand the kingdom of God by creating appealing Sunday morning services. Although this approach has appealed to the unchurched population in his ministry context, the pastor observed that the relaxed atmosphere and the appealing worship services have unintentionally fueled a spectator mentality in the church. Therefore, in some ways, the ministry strategy worked against the message of getting involved in discipleship activities.

Given the definition of a disciple already mentioned, the researcher observed that discipleship programs have concentrated on the first part of the definition and ignored the second. The project findings show that the primary focus of discipleship programs has been the dissemination of correct doctrine. Group discussions helped reinforce the correct understanding but had little effect on "doing what God says."

*Priesthood of the Believer*

Each pastor affirmed the value of the priesthood of the believer in the expansion of the kingdom of God. In the interview recordings the researcher identified 76 instances that discussed this biblical concept that followers of Christ have the ability and the responsibility to intercede between God and people. Through analysis, the researcher identified five subtopics that highlighted important characteristics of a priestly believer. First, all pastors affirmed that priestly believers had to have a strong loyalty and commitment to Jesus Christ. This commitment was the result of understanding that Jesus was king and that their church was part of broader kingdom. The pastors used kingdom

language to describe this concept using words like king, kingdom, servants, authority, and realm.

Second, four of the five pastors challenged their church members toward sacrificial living. The pastors affirmed that the kingdom of God is expanded by the power of the Holy Spirit working through individuals willing to give of their time, talents, and resources. The interview data surfaced two impediments that impacted the priesthood of the believers. The first impediment was a general sentiment toward experiencing church as a comfortable and convenient activity. The pastors observed that many families and individuals have overbooked their schedules with work and children's activities like participation in sports teams, music lessons, and theatre productions. When aspects of the Christian life, such as worship gatherings, prayer meetings, or Bible studies, were interfering with the life rhythms of families and individuals, the Christian activities would be cut out from the schedule. The second impediment was a general sentiment toward materialism that prevented sacrificial generosity. The pastors observed that many of the activities that crowded the schedules of families in their church required additional financial commitment.

Third, four of the five pastors encouraged their church members to live lives that accurately represented Jesus in the community. The pastors asserted that the kingdom of God expanded when, as good ambassadors, believers enhanced the king's reputation in the community rather than when they brought Him shame. While discussing their community outreach efforts, all pastors affirmed the value of a good reputation in the community and stated that their church was seen in a positive light. When asked about the reasons behind their good reputation, the pastors mentioned genuine love for people,

meaningful service in the community, acceptance of all people at worship gatherings, and speaking God's message.

Fourth, all pastors affirmed that to expand the kingdom of God, all believers had a mission to go out in the community and communicate God's good news. The interview data surfaced at least two impediments to this mission. Believers do not feel equipped to speak about God's good news, or they are apprehensive to speak out for fear of offending or being marginalized. In at least two churches, communicating the good news was seen not just as an individual mission but as a communal responsibility. Rather than expecting an individual to go out in the community as a lone missionary, one pastor described an extended family model. Under this model, a group of around 20 adults and their families would engage together in community outreach. Therefore, the priesthood of the believer was seen as a group identity cultivated by the group's relationship with God, interactions within the group, and the connections with individuals and organizations from the community at large.

Fifth, during the interviews, three of the five pastors described formal and informal leadership development activities in their church. To expand the kingdom of God, the pastors affirmed the need for qualified church leadership at all levels. One pastor noted that his leadership development efforts relied on the input provided by the church's process of constant reevaluation of church health. Dissatisfied with the health of the church and the success of fulfilling its mission, the church leadership adopted a new ministry model and refocused leadership development actions on missional rather than attractional leadership qualities. These findings demonstrate that believers face the tension of living sacrificially in genuine devotion to the king, Jesus Christ, and living

busy lives devoted to personal interests. New churches are not likely to develop priestly

believers unless there is a deep transformation that compels total commitment and joyful

sacrifice.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

**Introduction**

The problem this project addressed was the difficulty new churches have with intentionally engaging the culture without compromising the mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body. In response to this problem, the researcher reviewed relevant literature dealing with cultural analysis and explored what Jesus said about the kingdom of God as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The researcher explored the attractional and missional ministry models adopted by new evangelical churches in southeast Wisconsin, assessed the level of cultural adoption in these churches, and identified patterns of cultural adoption. The researcher examined the cultural adoption and looked for its effects in producing kingdom growth.

**Discoveries of Chapter 2**

In the anthropology section the researcher demonstrated how the concept of culture was affected by the imperialist expansion of the twentieth century and discussed the holocultural, neo-evolutionist, and structuralist comparative traditions. The section reviewed the Wallerstein's theory of capitalist expansion, orientalism, the continuous transformation model, and the controlled macro comparison model. The sociology section explored the concept of culture through the conversations that took place between culturalists and structuralists and between individuals coming from anthropology and humanities traditions. The section explored institutional syncretism and the canonical theory of cultural assimilation. In the psychology section the researcher identified five

groups of theories: single concept (built on one fundamental idea), common needs (based on sets of universal needs), fundamental construct (constructed from intrinsic beliefs), action orientation (emerged from behavior related studies), and dynamic orientation (culture as an ongoing process). The cultural studies section was broken up in four groups of theories: the civil religion theory, dualistic theories (includes the unconventional partners thesis and the culture wars theory), the secularization influence theories (includes the secularization theory and the culture shift thesis), and the market thesis. The section concluded with a discussion on group opinionation. The leadership studies section reviewed the relationship between culture and leadership, and highlighted organizational change theories. The section explored self-organizing systems and discussed church planting as a leadership intensive endeavor.

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*The Concept of Culture*

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The researcher observed that the multiple ways of defining culture provided insight about what it meant for new churches to engage the culture. In spite of the multiple definitions of culture, the five churches that participated in this study approached culture as a set of norms, values, and behaviors. As these new churches established themselves, they formed communities which interacted with people and organizations in their areas. During this formation process, distinct patterns of human expression emerged to form a predominant culture. By examining the culture as a set of norms, the churches gained insights about how to minister effectively in their community. Although valuable, these insights are limited in their perspective.

Seeing culture as systems of social relationships informs dynamics within the church and between the church and its neighbors. Culture could also be defined as the

symbolic products such as art, science, theology, political structures, and writings that emerge through social interactions and group activities. Under these definitions, culture is not just a set of norms, values, and activities but operates as a creative and transformational process that adapts to specific situations. This is particularly helpful for new churches because discipleship is transformational. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to consider that culture is an important element in the discipleship process.

The researcher has shown that based on the dynamic orientation theories, culture could be seen as a process that creates meaning. Under this model, meaning is created from the knowledge available to an individual, the details of the specific situation, and how quickly the individual can produce a culturally appropriate response. Action focused theories have shown that actions and communication gestures influence thought. This discovery is significant for discipleship programs as the process of transformation should consider not only the transfer of biblical information but also engagement in right actions. Therefore, new churches that are looking to establish discipleship as a transformational process must consider how their discipleship programs adapt to model right actions in social settings in addition to transferring biblical knowledge through small group studies.

*Cultural Transformation*

Building on the idea that culture is an important element in the discipleship process, the researcher observed that the concept of continual transformation in sociology could inform the attractional and missional ministry models that are usually regarded as the means to produce kingdom growth. The literature review has shown that in community individuals engage each other and through continual transformation shape who they are becoming. This becoming produces cultural patterns which in turn produce cultural elements that have the potential to enhance or to detract from the mission of the

church. Therefore, it can be said that continual transformation is a fundamental process that has the potential to produce kingdom growth.

The concept of creative transformation that is part of institutional syncretism could benefit new churches that desire to intentionally engage the culture. Because institutional syncretism promotes stability by intentionally blending cultural elements, it can be the means to create a shared identity in such a way that diverse individuals maintain their uniqueness while living in cooperation with one another. Creative transformation combined with cultural assimilation could inform new churches how to live in the world but not be part of the world.

The concepts of continual transformation and creative transformation are particularly helpful to new churches because they consider not only the blended result of syncretism but also the interpretive processes through which the transformation occurs. While the traditional models for attractional and missional churches assume there is a most appropriate path to transformation, the concepts of continual transformation and creative transformation are free to adapt to specific situations. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect kingdom growth to take place outside the boundaries of the attractional and missional models of ministry.

*Sustainability*

The attractional and missional ministry models offered little guidance for establishing self-sustaining ministry momentum. This research has shown that new churches have employed traditional management methods to achieve ministry sustainability with mixed results. As new churches face ever changing cultural dynamics, they need a model of ministry that is flexible enough to engage unique circumstances.

The literature review showed that self-organizing systems offered insights regarding how to establish self-sustaining ministries in new churches. These systems learn, adapt, and change to meet situational challenges. Rather than having a command and control structure, every member of the system is a participant who is allowed the freedom to act and to make decisions.

Because self-organizing systems rely on relationships, it is reasonable to propose that individuals be coached toward adaptability, creativity, and productivity. A coaching model of management is likely to foster enablement, autonomy, growth, and flexibility. Therefore, self-sustaining ministry momentum is achieved through self-organizing ministry teams with each one guided by a ministry coach. The researcher reflected that applying this sustainability approach to new churches infuses them with a new level of creativity and adaptability. The resulting ministry is empowered to rest comfortably outside the boundaries of the traditional models for attractional and missional churches.

**Discoveries of Chapter 3**

In the first section, the researcher explored two parables that offered insight into God as king. The parable of the king in Matthew 18 illustrated the king's decree of forgiveness. The lesson for the followers of Jesus is that they must pursue a forgiving mindset when dealing with sin and conflict in the church, and they are to restore both the offender and the victim back into the community. The parable of workers in the vineyard showed that from a kingdom of God perspective the value of the laborers was based on their intrinsic identity as children of God rather than dependent on their economic yield. In the second section, the researcher discussed two parables that offer insight about the characteristics of God's kingdom. The parable of the hidden treasure showed that an encounter with the kingdom of God changed all aspects of human life, both internal and

external. The parable of the mustard seed illustrated the growth of the kingdom. A key

lesson from the parable was that the kingdom's expansion will be unstoppable and its

healing benefits cannot be fully anticipated. In the third section, the researcher identified

two parables that offer insight into God's people. The parable of the wheat and the weeds

showed that authentic disciples of Jesus will experience duress from those who falsely

claim to be His disciples. The parable of the ten virgins showed that while waiting for the

return of Christ, the people of God must exercise wisdom to distinguish between

appropriate selflessness and inappropriate drain.

### *Valued as Children of God*

Chapter three has shown that in the kingdom of God people are rewarded based

on their intrinsic worth as children of God. With their personal value established, it is

reasonable to consider that kingdom people experience a certain autonomy and

flexibility. Because they are not motivated by external economic forces, they have the

freedom to pursue activities that promote personal growth and satisfaction. Such pursuits

are likely to promote self-sustaining momentum. New churches need to reach self-

sustaining ministry momentum to establish themselves as viable organizations in the

community.

The researcher observed that new churches used organizational leadership models

adopted from business management. These models are fundamentally based on economic

principles which reward individuals based on economic yield not on their intrinsic value.

The researcher considered that a self-organizing system is not externally motivated or

controlled. It is internally motivated to grow, adapt, and achieve a level of autonomy.

This is not unlike an athlete who is self-motivated to pursue a goal under the direction of

a coach. Therefore, applying a coaching model of management to new churches is likely to promote a healthy sense of worth that will continue even when facing difficult challenges.

*Unstoppable Growth*

The researcher observed that unstoppable growth did not necessarily imply fast growth. Chapter three showed that the growth of the mustard plant was imperceptible, yet the result was undeniable. The slow-growing characteristic of the kingdom ran countercultural to our fast, instant gratification contemporary society. The unstoppable growth of the kingdom has not always followed a predictable path and at times found itself at odds with the organizational goals of church institutions. To facilitate growth, new churches have engaged the culture using a predominately attractional or missional model of ministry. In a rapidly changing cultural environment, these models produced unexpected results. The attractional model unintentionally stimulated a consumerism mentality in the American church culture. The missional model unintentionally motivated community action devoid of genuine love for people.

Adapting to new cultural movements, churches have tried to adopt a more balanced approach between attractional and missional models. Based on the findings in chapter three, the researcher observed that, like the growth of the mustard plant, kingdom growth is organic and adaptive by nature. New churches could benefit from an organic growth model that enables churches to explore ecclesiological models that fit the local missional expression. The concept of organic growth and adaptability are at the core of self-organizing systems. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that kingdom growth could flourish in self-organizing systems.

**Discoveries of the Field Research**

In the first section, the researcher explored the ministry of the church. Although new churches emphasized either an attractional or missional model of ministry, they blended elements of both. In the second section, the researcher explored community engagement. Churches focused on healing and wholeness ministries, but there was disagreement about the tone of the prophetic voice of the church. In the third section, the researcher explored kingdom expansion. The primary focus was on discipleship and the priesthood of the believer.

*An Adaptational Model*

In chapter five the researcher showed that a significant number of individuals in the church had difficulty interpreting and analyzing their cultural context. This means that because new churches have continued to struggle with understanding cultural trends, they are not likely to engage their community effectively. Reacting to the cultural uncertainty, churches have embraced different community engagement models. For example, in addition to the attractional and missional models, churches have adopted either a confrontational or relational model of being the prophetic voice. The researcher observed that churches followed their selected ministry model even when it did not benefit specific situations. Therefore, churches that have adopted the community engagement models mentioned were not flexible enough to adapt quickly to specific situations.

The researcher has shown that self-organizing systems are flexible enough to adapt and even thrive in their environment. A ministry model based on the concept of self-organizing systems is likely to utilize continual feedback and rely on communal

reflection to interpret and analyze the cultural context. Combining self-organizing teams with a coaching model of management creates a new model of community engagement that is focused on sustainable transformation by adapting to specific situations.

This new adaptational model of ministry would have the flexibility to apply both attractional and missional elements to specific situations. The adaptational model would allow the freedom to tailor a church's prophetic voice to align with the culture or be countercultural. Rather than dismissing or oversimplifying the tension between the church culture, kingdom culture, and world culture, the new model would operate in that tension and resolve the tension through explicit actions taken in specific situations. The adaptational model would review the outcome of these actions through continual feedback and, after reflection, would adjust to be more effective. Therefore, the adaptational model of ministry would iterate through continual feedback, communal reflection, specific action, and effective adjustment.

*Apprenticeship*

In chapter five the researcher showed that discipleship was instrumental in the expansion of the kingdom of God and that discipleship programs in new churches were primarily focused on small group discussions. The researcher observed that in his native tongue, Romanian, the word "ucenic" translated both "disciple" and "apprentice." This is significant because, like an apprentice, a disciple of Christ needs to learn a new way of operating based on new knowledge and new life skills. An apprentice learns a specific craft not only by acquiring information but by observing the master. An apprentice learns by imitating the master under his supervision and then doing the craft with minimal or no supervision.

During this process, it is likely that the apprentice benefited from continual feedback from the master. The apprentice was probably encouraged by the master to take specific action and reflect on the results. It is reasonable to expect that the apprentice and the master would then make adjustments and the apprentice would try again. The apprenticeship process aligns with the adaptational model of ministry which iterates through continual feedback, communal reflection, specific action, and effective adjustment. The adaptational model of ministry benefits all participants in the discipleship process. Because the model emphasizes the importance of every individual of a self-organizing team, both student and teacher have the opportunity to engage in the iterative process. In new churches, the adaptational model cultivates the priesthood of the believer since everyone is encouraged to be engaged in the mission. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the adaptational model of ministry would effectively engage the culture and expand the kingdom of God.

## Conclusions

The researcher has shown that the attractional and missional models of engaging the culture have been challenged to adapt fast enough to the cultural complexity faced by new churches. These two models have had difficulty to effectively address all specific situations that new churches encountered. The data has shown that, in a complex and rapidly changing cultural environment, the hierarchical church management models have not provided the flexibility, growth, and autonomy necessary for self-sustaining ministry momentum. As a result, new churches have had difficulty engaging the culture without compromising the mission of the church or disrupting the unity of the body.

The researcher has demonstrated that the adaptational model of ministry can enable new churches to effectively engage in their local community within the specific cultural context. In proposing a new model of ministry, the researcher's intent was not to replace the attractional and missional models of ministry. These models are valid and useful for new churches given certain cultural contexts. The researcher's hope was that new churches would reflect on the attractional, missional, and adaptational models of ministry as they consider engaging their local culture.

*Implementing an Adaptational Model*

To help new churches implement a sustainable adaptational model of cultural engagement, the researcher identified four propositions from the research findings that characterize adaptational models. First, the church is an extended family eager to adopt new family members. This proposition rests on the connections between the self-determination theory, the forgiveness mindset, communal reconciliation, and the importance of relationships. Defining church as an extended family moves away from identifying the church as a particular location or a building. This definition emphasizes that church is a collection of individuals bound by familial relationships and who gather together to worship God. God adopted His people to be part of His family. Therefore, following His example, the church engages the community to find other members of God's family and include them in their joyful gatherings.

Second, the church promotes self-organizing systems. This proposition rests on the connections between the self-determination theory, self-organizing systems, the priesthood of the believer, and the creative pursuit of innovation. Operating through self-organizing ministry teams increases the engagement level of church members. Since their

input is valued and impacts the actions of the church, members see a direct link between their participation and ministry outcomes. The researcher recognizes that new churches promoting self-organizing systems need to work through specific implementation considerations in their context. One consideration is that not all church operations and ministry functions are well suited for a standard implementation of self-operating teams. A second consideration is that self-organizing teams require coordination and communication for the system to operate well. A third consideration is that operating in self-organizing systems may require a transition and acclamation period of six to twelve months.

Third, church leaders function as coaches. This proposition rests on the connections between the self-determination theory, cultural discernment, the paradox of change, and the priesthood of the believer. Self-organizing teams diminish in effectiveness when led through the traditional hierarchical models of management. Defining ministry leaders as coaches changes the leadership emphasis from directing to enabling a ministry team. Enablement allows the team to understand and partner in the desired ministry outcomes. Enablement gives the team the freedom to continually evaluate and adjust in the pursuit of those outcomes. The researcher recognizes that new churches implementing a coaching model of leadership need to work through specific implementation considerations in their context. The first consideration is resisting the desire to control and manage how the team implements the ministry outcome. Since the team is self-organizing, the coach may suggest but not dictate. The second consideration is knowing the right implementation parameters to give the team. The implementation parameters are beneficial boundaries that focus the team to meet a specific challenge. The

third consideration is developing a rhythm of effective ministry that iterates through continual feedback, communal reflection, specific action, and effective adjustment.

Fourth, community engagement is an act of worship. This proposition rests on the connections between transformational object theory, unstoppable growth, healing ministries, and discipleship process. Defining community engagement as an act of worship moves away from identifying outreach as an extra activity done as a result of worship. This proposition emphasizes that worship has a broader definition than participation in Sunday morning songs, prayer, and sermon. As worship, community engagement highlights the relational aspect between God, the church, and the community. As worship, community engagement focuses on the transformational nature of the encounter and recalibrates the motivation for engaging in outreach activities.

## Strengths of Research

One of the strengths of this thesis project is the biblical research that augmented the literature review and the field research. The researcher connected the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God to the definitions of culture found in the literature review. These connections provided additional insights into the project findings and strengthened the conclusions of the project. For followers of Jesus Christ, these connections served to strengthen the validity of the concepts of culture discussed in the literature review. Therefore, the biblical research is valuable to new churches as they operate in constant cultural tension.

The biblical research was supported by a variety of academic writings from different Christian traditions. This diversity of materials and theological thought enhanced the validity of the argumentation. Because of its subject matter, the value of the

biblical research was not limited to academic settings. This investigation into the theme of the kingdom of God in Matthew, Mark, and Luke can enhance sermon preparation and small group Bible studies.

A second strength of this thesis project is the profile of the churches that participated in the field research. The researcher engaged in interviews and surveys with churches that had similar profiles. These churches matched the researcher's current ministry profile as a church planter with Converge Great Lakes. Like the researcher, all church planters ministered to churches in Wisconsin. Living in the Midwest, all churches shared a certain cultural homogeneity. All churches had similar statements of faith, and all but one was affiliated with Converge Great Lakes.

**Weakness of Research**

The researcher recognized that the thesis project was limited by the constraints of the seminary program regarding scope and duration of the research. As such, the project limited participation to five churches and relied on the participants' willingness to share their experiences. Because the interviews and the surveys relied on personal assessments, the data collected had the intrinsic limitations common to self-disclosure. These limitations include the lack of scoring consistency between the participants and the natural tendency to overstate. The number of survey participants was not evenly distributed across all five churches, so the overall findings were influenced by the churches with more participation. The analysis relied on the researcher's finite ability to categorize and interpret the data in the time devoted to this effort. In spite of these limitations, the project provided valuable insights regarding cultural engagement.

**Further Research**

The researcher suggests there are at least two areas of further research. First, one area is to investigate the unintended cultural consequences of the adaptational model of ministry. Like the attractional model unintentionally stimulating a consumerism mentality and the missional model unintentionally motivating community action devoid of genuine love, the researcher believes that the adaptational model will generate unintentional negative consequences. Investigating these early would allow the churches using the model to adapt quickly.

The second area of further research is to compare the effectiveness of the attractional, missional, and adaptational models of ministry in producing kingdom growth and maintaining ministry momentum. This area of research could focus on three topics: (1) the effectiveness of each model in making new followers of Christ, (2) the effectiveness of each model in enabling the apprenticeship process, and (3) the effectiveness of each model in enabling the priesthood of the believer.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

**Personal Objective**

One of my objectives for going through the doctor of ministry (DMin) process was to experience a deeper spiritual transformation. At the start of the program, I reflected that spiritual transformation was not the result of knowledge alone; it required experiences that capture the imagination. During the DMin process I observed that taking time for personal reflection and intimacy with God enabled me to be more self-aware. The times of reflection required intentional observation to see my true self with all my limitations and not build defense mechanisms to compensate.

During the DMin process I had the opportunity to practice a humble attitude of brokenness before God as I wrestled with research projects and reading materials. I had the opportunity to practice confession and to reject idolatry in its many forms. I had the opportunity to practice submission as I intentionally and voluntarily placed myself under the authority of my advisors and fellow students. Anticipating the graduation day, I had the opportunity to practice secrecy and to reject personal grandiosity. Throughout this academic journey these opportunities enabled personal transformation.

**Initial Perspectives**

One of the most noticeable changes I observed during the DMin journey is the shift in my perspective. I moved from an activist mindset toward a research mindset. The change was not a total replacement of perspectives but rather a gradual movement toward research while maintaining an activist predisposition. It seems that my research mindset

grew out of a need to accomplish at least three objectives during the class projects. First, I had to read and understand the relevant literature. Second, I had to gather direct data about the topic. Third, I had to reflect on how the research project would apply to my personal ministry context and how it could benefit others. I believe the constant reflection on the relationship between project activities and the research goals was instrumental in shifting my perspective. Equally valuable was iterating between data gathering, analysis, interpretation, and articulating the results in a narrative that relates to the research goals.

Aside from my new perspective regarding a research mindset, other people who participated in my class projects seemed to have benefited from new perspectives and insights. One of my class projects introduced 32 research participants to the cumulative case approach as a means to engage in spiritual conversations. All participants indicated the cumulative case approach was a new and valuable way of thinking about spiritual truth. They indicated a continued desire to carry on spiritual conversations as part of their normal daily interactions. Almost all participants noted a drastic change in attitude from the beginning of the project. Many reported a renewed humility in their spiritual self-perception and a willingness to be more transparent about how the time pressures of over commitment got in the way of meaningful dialogue.

### New Rhythm

The rigors of completing the DMin process while starting a new church as a bi-vocational pastor provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the rhythm of effectively responding to life's challenges. There are at least five iteration steps I have consistently gone through in this rhythm. These five iterations are based on Allender's model described in his book, *Leading with a Limp.* First, it is critical for me to face the current

truth regardless of its difficulty. Second, I need to understand the truth in the context of its complexity. Third, this understanding has to move me into appropriate action that transforms the core of my being as a person. Fourth, my heart transformation occurs in community not isolation. Fifth, I have to find creative ways to form habits that sustain the newfound transformation.

During the DMin process I have reevaluated the rhythm of my cycle of work and rest. I have benefited from reflecting that God revealed a life rhythm through His creation. He exemplified this rhythm by working for six days and resting on the seventh (Gen. 2:2-3). Although work was God-given, it was not meant to go on nonstop. Rest must interrupt my work. I observed the same six plus one rhythm in the laws concerning Sabbath and the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8; Deut. 15). Therefore, my ongoing reflection in the rhythm of work and rest is knowing when and how to move from work to rest and from rest to work.

During the DMin process I have reevaluated the cycle of solitude and community. I have benefited from reflecting that spiritual transformation thrives in a community that understands sin yet practices grace. I believe that the community must practice a healthy cycle of movement between group discussions and times of reflection. At this point, I am convinced that spiritual formation does not flourish through authoritarian control but through intentional coaching. In this cycle of solitude and community, each human being is to radiate the uniqueness of what it means to display the image of Christ in them and to engage others in the community to do the same.

**Rekindled Desires**

The DMin process has rekindled my desire to be aware of God's presence and to sense the movement of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, I have recognized that in every moment the divine plan is unfolding perfectly. In that awareness, I have desired to accurately perceive the community around me. I have pursued a quiet satisfaction that the Holy Spirit is working to engage the culture around me and have looked for the opportunity to join in His work.

The DMin process has rekindled my desire is to anchor my soul in God's divine plan and to know in my heart that I am part of His mission. I have reflected that His plan of engaging the world is unfolding perfectly right now with purposeful precision. In that anchoring, I have desired to see cultural trends without being swept away by my enthusiasm and to be fully engaged in the reality of the moment.

The DMin process has rekindled my desire to enter in God's adventure and to consciously participate in the miraculous unfolding of that reality. In that adventure, I have desired to take pleasure in the journey itself even if I do not know all the details of my destination. The DMin process has rekindled my desire to abide in gratitude and to live in the joy of the miracle of life. By God's grace, I have more than my share of blessings, and I am grateful for them.

**The Beginning**

As a church planter with Converge Great Lakes, I was able to use the findings of this project to start implementing an adaptational model of ministry at Agape Community Church. Using my knowledge of agile development and my experience as a scrum

master, I have intentionally facilitated the church planning meetings using fundamental principles of self-organizing systems.

With the intention to implement an adaptational model of ministry at Agape, I have defined six areas of ministry which were refined as a launch team. Corporate worship is how we worship God as a church body. Community engagement is how we interact with people and organizations in our cultural context. Discipleship is how we encourage one another to learn God word and do what God says. Prayer is how we intercede before God for ourselves and others. Shepherding is how we lead and guide the church, and administration is how we ensure good order.

Following the four propositions that characterizes an adaptational model, I have coached the launch team to establish several distinctive implementations. First, we adopted the concept of family groups as midsize groups of around twenty adults and their families. These family groups focus on reinforcing the familiar bonds between individuals and engage the community through acts of service, getting the word out about the church, and evangelism. The groups are coached to understand community engagement as an act of worship. Second, the family groups as well as other ministry groups are structured as self-organizing teams. For example, there is a worship service team that plans out the worship gatherings based on the guidance I provide regarding sermon topic, overall theme, and specific biblical text. The team is diverse based on skill, experience, age, and gender.

Third, the ministry teams are led by a ministry coach that functions as a servant leader for the team. For example, the worship service coach is a servant leader who guides the worship service team and ensures the team operates well at their highest level

of excellence. The worship service coach models and guides the team toward what it means to worship God and what it means to lead worship. At this time, the ministry coaches report directly to me as the pastor.

Fourth, to reinforce the concept that community engagement is an act of worship, Agape follows a monthly rhythm. In a four week month, the first Sunday of the month is dedicated to a fellowship brunch where everyone is encouraged to invite friends and neighbors to get to know one another. This brunch takes place in the context of each the family groups and is an act of worship for us as a church. On the second and fourth Sundays of the month, the entire body of believers at Agape gathers for corporate worship. This is not unlike other traditional evangelical services with the exception that the feel is more conversational rather than presentational. For example, worship through music feels more communal with the musicians seated among the congregation rather than up front on a stage. The third Sunday of the month is dedicated to Acts of Kindness (AOK). This is the time when each family group extends an invitation to friends and neighbors to come along and serve the community in a meaningful way. We see AOK as an act of worship.

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX A

**Interview Questions**

1. When was the church launched? What is the relative size of the church?
2. Can you discuss the unique elements in your church from the following four perspectives: (a) practices, habits, and rituals, (b) ideas, beliefs, and values, (c) formal and informal organizational-relationship structures (d) use of technologies, social media, geography, and environment?
3. Does the church lean toward attractional or missional models of ministry?
4. How would you describe the relationship between your church and the (secular) culture in which it operates?
5. What is the perceived "social standing" of the church in the area in which it ministers?
6. Have you intentionally "blended in" popular culture elements in the DNA of the church?
7. Can you identify the top cultural elements in our society that are influencing your church and have the potential to enhance or compromise the mission of the church and the unity of the body?
8. Have you discovered in your church any unintentional adoption of popular culture elements?
9. Based on your church planting experience, can you discuss the similarities and differences between (a) leading the internal operations of the church, (b) leading the church as a "legal entity" that is part of the marketplace, and (c) leading the expansion of the kingdom of God?
10. Which of these four general theories resonate with your church planting experience?
    a. The life-cycle theory sees the process of change as mirroring that of a living organism: birth, growth, maturity, decline, and renewal.
    b. The teleological theory believes that change results from unifying the group members around a common goal or desired outcome.
    c. The dialectical theory affirms that change results from uncertainty and conflict that is strong enough to challenge the existing culture and flexible enough to synthesize into a "novel set of values, goals, and modes of operation."
    d. The evolutionary theory promotes internal competition for limited resources and experimentation with new ideas.

APPENDIX B:

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

APPENDIX B

**Participant Survey**

<u>**SECTION 1 of 4:**</u> Demographical Information (5 questions)

1. How long have you attended the church?
    a. Less than 6 months
    b. 1 – 2 years
    c. 2 – 4 years
    d. More than 4 years


2. Were you part of the launch team?
    a. Yes
    b. No


3. What is your age?
    a. Under 15
    b. 16 – 25
    c. 26 – 35
    d. 36 – 49
    e. 50 – 65
    f. 66 – 75
    g. Above 76


4. Gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female


5. How long have you been a Christian?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. 1 – 3 years
    c. 4 – 7 years

    d.  8 – 15 years
    e.  More than 16 years

**SECTION 2 of 4:** For the next 2 questions, please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with the statements about your church.

6. Our church ministry is currently focused on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by creating appealing Sunday morning services and relevant ministry programs that draw in a wide unchurched population.
   a. Strongly agree.
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree.
   d. Somewhat disagree.
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly disagree.

7. Our church ministry is currently focused on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by creating ministry groups that "go out" in the community and engage individuals that are part of a wider unchurched population.
   a. Strongly agree.
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree.
   d. Somewhat disagree.
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly disagree.

**SECTION 3 of 4:** The following 4 questions are VERY important. Please write down the first things that come to your mind. There is no "wrong answer", and your individual perspective is very valuable. If a question is no applicable to your experience, please write in "n/a."

8. What are the top three distinctive characteristics of your church?

9. What popular-culture elements are currently part of the DNA of the church that are helping you expand the kingdom of God?

10. What are the top popular-culture elements that are present in your church today and have the potential to compromise the mission of the church or disrupt the unity of the body?

**11.** How is starting a new church similar or different than starting a business or nonprofit?

### SECTION 4 of 4: (2 questions)

12. Considering your church and local context, please rank (drag and drop) the statements below with the statement that best fits your ministry situation at the top.
    a. Our church and the culture around it are at odds with each other; the current cultural systems oppose and are sometimes hostile to our church.
    b. Our church is influencing the culture around it; the current cultural systems are being changed to conform to our church values.
    c. Our church and the culture around it promote opposing views and actions; the current cultural systems put church members in difficult (paradoxical) situations of choosing between church and culture.
    d. Our church and the culture around it are working toward a common goal of morality and faith; our church aligns with the current cultural systems to promote unity and acceptance.
    e. Our church wants to be segregated from the culture; we resist the negative influence of popular culture by not participating in the current cultural systems.

13. Considering your church and local context, please rank (drag and drop) the statements below with the statement that best fits your ministry situation at the top.
    a. Establishing a church mirrors a living organism: birth, growth, maturity, decline, and renewal.
    b. Establishing a church is the result of unifying the group members around a common goal or desired outcome.
    c. Establishing a church is the result of uncertainty and struggle that was strong enough to challenge the existing (church) culture and flexible enough to synthesize into a "novel set of values, goals, and modes of operation."
    d. Establishing a church requires internal competition for limited resources and experimentation with new ideas.

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