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DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR
MULTICULTURAL CHURCH PLANTING:
BLESSINGS OR HINDRANCES?

By

GUILLERMO ROBERTO MAC KENZIE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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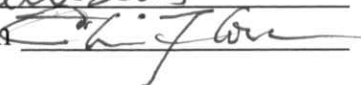
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how church planters in multicultural settings perceive the role of their denomination in enhancing their church-planting venture. The world is becoming increasingly multicultural. This new scenario presents the challenge that most of the new mission fields are and will continue to be multicultural.

Many Christian denominations are trying to adapt to this new reality by developing multicultural congregations. However, their efforts and programs to enhance the ministries of multicultural church planters are often perceived more as a hindrance than as a blessing. This study is intended to initiate a conversation between denominational leaders and multicultural church planters in order to seek the best ways in which denominations can cooperate in building the kingdom of God within multicultural settings.

The literature review identified three main areas of focus that needed to be researched: church-planting, church government, and leadership. These areas of focus were intentionally addressed with the multicultural aspect in mind.

This study utilized a qualitative design through semi-structured interviews with pastors who have faced the multicultural challenge, serving under the authority of a

denomination. The data gathered from the interviews was categorized under different headings: a detailed description of common ministry challenges concerning multicultural church-planting, a recount of denominational programs that were considered to be helpful and others that were hindrances, and finally a number of proposed changes in denominational structure and support that multicultural church planters consider to be beneficial.

The conclusions were categorized within three themes regarding denominational responsibilities towards multicultural communities, towards multicultural church planters, and towards themselves as an organization.

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Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Many denominations are developing renewed efforts towards church revitalization and church-planting. Craig Van Gelder, when he wrote his article entitled “An Ecclesiastical Geno-Project: Unpacking the DNA of Denominations and Denominationalism,” stated, “Continuing efforts are being made to renew the church and transform denominations. But the core genetic code of the denominational church as having an organizational self-understanding around a purposive intent has yet to be sufficiently examined to allow for this.”¹

The world is changing rapidly. J. Russell Crabtree, in his book *The Fly in the Ointment*, suggests, “One of the most important principles for individuals and organizations to flourish in the world is simply to change before you have to.”² In the same sense, In their book *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies*

¹ Craig Van Gelder, "An Ecclesiastical Geno-Project: Unpacking the DNA of Denominations and Denominationalism," in *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 41.

² J. Russell Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment* (New York: Church Publishing, 2008), 6.

for the 21st Century, Philip R. Harris, Robert T. Moran, and Sarah V. Moran state that “the 21st century is dominated by accelerating change, driven by continuing and rapid technological innovation.”³ Those denominations that understand their need for change continue to struggle with updating their strategies. Some of these denominational church-planting processes cover many issues and may be considered very helpful; others may not. Different programs emphasize diverse aspects of church planting and focus on many kinds of concerns.

Many denominations are immersed in a maintenance mindset, struggling to survive or not fully committed to expanding and reproducing. Other denominations become missional organizations, committing to reproduce themselves through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, and commit to make an impact in their context. Those that chose to become missional denominations find that route difficult and full of obstacles. The researcher’s experience, which includes building relationships with many church planters both in Argentina and in the United States of America, attending numerous church planting seminars and conferences, and being part of the leadership in his denomination, led him to realize that many church planters are expressing

³ Philip R. Harris, Robert T. Moran and Sarah V. Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 6th Edition (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004), 99.

dissatisfaction regarding their denominations' efforts to accompany them in their ministry. Some church planters value their denomination's structure, support, and programs, while others consider them more a hindrance than a blessing. Donald Michael, in his article "On the Importance of Feedback and the Resistances to It," develops the value of establishing a system where all voices are heard by the organizations' leadership. He states, "[I]n spite of the centrality of feedback for system adaptation, most human organizations generally use a very low order of feedback under most conditions –indeed, it is often so poor or misleading as to be worse than no feedback at all."⁴

Many organizations tend to listen to the advice of successful leaders or those in authority, but fail to hear quieter voices. However, as Sue Hammond and Andrea Mayfield state from a secular point of view regarding any kind of organization, "...people who are marginal and powerless in organizations may have useful information or opinions they don't express. Even when these people are encouraged to speak, they find it intimidating to contradict a leader's strategy or a group consensus."⁵ One of the

⁴ Donald N. Michael, "On the Importance of Feedback and the Resistances to It," in *The Leader-Manager*, ed. John N. Williamson (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986), 386.

⁵ Sue Annis Hammond and Andrea B. Mayfield, *The Thin Book of Naming Elephants: How to Surface Undiscussables for Greater Organizational Success* (Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Company, 2004), 48.

strengths of this study will be to listen to those silenced voices. Hammond and Mayfield continue, “We rarely see an organization with a disciplined practice of seeking out the ideas of those closest to the customer.”⁶

This challenge for denominations to become missional is increased when we focus on the particular situation of the growing multicultural contexts of global cities. According to Harris and Moran, “[c]ultures worldwide are in the midst of profound change.”⁷ Because the world is changing so much and many different cultures and ethnicities are getting together in global cities, Oscar Romo states, “Denominations seeking to evangelize America and the world, whether yuppies, poor, professionals, ethnics, or the segmentation of other groups, need to focus their programs at the segmented groups. Unfortunately, there is a tendency toward uniformity; to do more of the same when faced with problems and/or decline.”⁸ Later on, he also asserts that “the associational missions development program (Associational Missions Committee) should

⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁷ Harris, Moran and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 123.

⁸ Oscar Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 163-164.

seek to secure the participatory involvement of ethnic/language-culture people.”⁹ In fact, if church planters in general are considered silenced voices within a denomination, it is even worse with church planters among ethnic minorities or working in multicultural contexts.

Tasha Chapman explains a theory of learning which states,

For learning to take place in any system, three factors must be held in healthy tension: “support, structure, and challenge.” If any one area of the three is weak in the system, learning will not take place and healthy progress will not be made. Likewise, if any one area is emphasized too much, learning will not occur. When there is an overemphasis on structure, the learning climate can become inflexible and rigid, limiting creativity to address new challenges. If support is overly stressed, the climate can become smothering and enmeshed. And if challenge dominates, the learner can become performance-driven or discouraged.¹⁰

This concept of holding in healthy tension these three elements (structure, support, and challenge) can be applied to denominational growth, as these same three aspects are needed in order to enhance ministries, churches, and church plants. Many denominations today overemphasize structure. Thus, Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky argue in their book *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing your Organization and the World* that these

⁹ Ibid., 190.

¹⁰ Tasha Chapman, "Creating a Space for Growth and Change" (Lecture, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 2009).

organizations need to face “adaptive challenges”¹¹ to modify their structure and improve the aspects of challenge and support.

A great amount of literature can be found today concerning the transformation of local churches, but there is not much addressing the role of denominations or regional associations. J. Russell Crabtree encourages, “We need to begin a conversation about redeveloping regional associations in much the same way we have learned to speak of redeveloping local congregations... There appears to be little research conducted on attitudes of local church leaders regarding their regional associations.”¹²

Crabtree has developed research on how regional associations can improve their service to local congregations and leaders in their struggle to survive and grow. His dissertation attempted to understand what the lay members and leaders in congregations thought about their denomination. He analyzed the programs and structures implemented by the denominational leadership, and came to the conclusion that the priorities of

¹¹ The concept of “Adaptive Challenges” will be developed in the literature review section. It is a concept explained in Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

¹² Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 5.

members and leaders of congregations were different than the priorities of the denominational leaders. Crabtree concluded,

Transformational regional associations will need to provide the kinds of resources, coaching, and expertise that will bridge this gap in knowledge and insight. This is what church leaders are asking for! Local church leaders will need to develop teachable spirits and renew their trust that these associations have something to offer them.¹³

Crabtree's research was a starting point to begin re-thinking the denominational strategies from the standpoint of members and leaders in existing congregations. However, he did not address the perceptions of church planters and the denominational participation in their ministry and he did not include in his research the specific circumstances of a multicultural ministry.

Affirming also the need of denominations to re-organize their priorities and programs, Ralph Moore suggests, "Denominations do a great job when providing materials and programs for smaller churches that have existed for more than a decade. However, these same tools may restrict a larger church or a new congregation on the cutting edge of evangelism."¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁴ Ralph Moore, *Starting a New Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2002), 135.

Problem Statement

In the particular context of Argentina, many Protestant denominations coming from Europe in the early nineteenth century experienced some growth during the first one hundred years, especially among first and second generation immigrants. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, they all began a process of decline, while the country in general and the city of Buenos Aires in particular was heading towards a cultural mixture. In his book *Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina*, Jean-Pierre Bastian describes three stages in history: “Colonialist Protestantisms” (1492-1808, period of European migration to Latin America), “Protestant Societies and Liberal Modernity” (1808-1959, period of growth and establishment of Protestant groups), and “Transition Crisis?” (1959-?, period in which most Protestant denominations began a process of decline.)¹⁵

The Presbyterian Church in Argentina¹⁶ is one of the denominations that went through these stages. The Church of Scotland started its mission in Argentina in 1829 with the main purpose of ministering to the Scottish immigrants. José Míguez Bonino

¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina* (Mexico: CUPSA, 1990), 24-25.

¹⁶ This study will use the name “Presbyterian Church in Argentina” to the denomination called “St. Andrews Presbyterian Church” to avoid confusion with the “St. Andrews Presbytery” which will be mentioned later.

writes about those churches coming from Europe in two different ways. First, he mentions the “residents’ churches” or “immigration churches.” Míguez Bonino writes, “To speak of these churches as ‘residents’ or ‘immigrant’ seems to suggest that what would characterize these churches is their *external* origin.”¹⁷

Finally, Míguez Bonino goes on to speak of another way of characterizing these churches, which is to call them “ethnic churches.” Regarding this way of describing these Protestant churches coming from Europe to Argentina in the early nineteenth century, he states, “Here one is not just speaking about origin or mode of entry but rather of the very nature of a church, not of a historical accident but of a constitutive characteristic.”¹⁸

Míguez Bonino contrasts these “ethnic churches” (focused on the same social group who brought the tradition from Europe) with “mission churches” (focused on ministering to nationals). The following quote describes very well the reality of the Presbyterian Church in Argentina as an ethnic church with its origins in Scotland:

Frequently there were references that identified them [ethnic churches] as the European Protestantism and Anglicanism, which led to the decision of the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference to exclude Latin America since it was “a Christian continent” and therefore not a “mission field.” Liturgical order, the use of a foreign language, and the unwillingness to

¹⁷ José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, trans. Eugene L. Stockwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

engage in “proselytism” were incomprehensible and scandalous to the missionary and evangelizing mentality of the “evangelicals.”¹⁹

Complementing that reality and including the complexity of a country that was rapidly becoming multicultural, when Girvan McKay summarizes the growth and eclipse of Presbyterian work in Spanish in Argentina, he concludes, “Whenever one of the senior ministers spoke Spanish as his native tongue or felt a personal concern for outreach in Spanish, this work progressed; otherwise it stagnated or was discontinued.”²⁰ His thesis proposal explains very well what was happening in the Presbyterian church in Argentina in 1973:

We shall endeavour to demonstrate that without drastic restructuring (a process amounting to what we might, in biblical terms, describe as a virtual death and resurrection) a religious body showing the characteristics of St. Andrew’s Scots Presbyterian Church in Argentina cannot become an effective instrument of sustained missionary outreach or the basis of an indigenous Reformed Church. A corollary of this is that such an immigrant community church situated in the midst of a “melting pot” society, like that of present-day Argentina, cannot long survive.²¹

Seventeen congregations were founded during the nineteenth century and the first four decades of the twentieth century. In 1941, however, “it was decided to close down or

¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

²⁰ Girvan Christie McKay, *Growth and Eclipse of Presbyterian Missionary Outreach in Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Superior de Estudios Teológicos, 1973), 10.

²¹ Ibid., 11-12.

transfer all the missionary activity [in Spanish] of St. Andrew's Church."²² After that, a process of decline began. In 1973, when Girvan McKay writes his thesis, there were only five churches left out of the seventeen that had been established. Five of those seventeen churches were abandoned and seven were given to other denominations.²³ In 1986, the Church of Scotland decided not to continue supporting the mission in Argentina. With only five congregations left and one ordained pastor, the Presbyterian Church in Argentina started a new stage in its life. Some of the churches were revitalized and church-planting efforts were launched. Some of these church-planting efforts succeeded while others failed. With an inherited Presbyterian structure and a Scottish ministry style, the Presbyterian Church in Argentina is learning how to improve its church-planting program.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore how church planters in multicultural settings perceive the role of their denomination in enhancing their church-planting venture. The result of this study will be helpful to understand the best ways in which denominations can serve multicultural church planters in their endeavor.

²² Ibid., 169.

²³ Ibid., 349-350.

Although many denominations perform evaluations and do analysis to explore whether their efforts are producing the desired effects, frequently these evaluations are fictitious or a bureaucratic procedure. Also, experience has shown that church planters are often reluctant to openly express their opinions if these are not positive regarding the denominations' responsibilities. This situation is especially true when the denominational leaders are part of a dominant culture needing to evaluate the church planters' work among a minority culture group. This study will provide multicultural church planters a safe environment where they can openly express their experience, without running the risk of opposing their denomination or denominational leaders.

Primary Research Questions

This study focuses on the multicultural church planters' perspective of the role of their respective denomination in their church-planting ministry. In order to explore how they perceived the efforts made by the denomination to enhance their ministry, the following research questions were used:

1. What are the ministry challenges of multicultural church planters?
2. What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as helpful in their ministry challenges?

3. What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as hindrances in their ministry challenges?

4. What kinds of denominational structure and support do multicultural church planters desire to have for their ministry challenges?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for many reasons. Many denominations are well intentioned in trying to enhance the church-planting programs but fail to listen to the church-planters' opinions. This fact reflects a need for intentional interaction between different denominational leaders and church planters, especially those working within minority groups. A factor that needs to be taken into account is that, according to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, denominational leaders tend to be organizers while church planters tend to be entrepreneurs and relationals. Also, due to the fact that the modern world faces new challenges every day, including growing multicultural challenges, every organization needs to be constantly evaluating its programs and ready to adapt to new circumstances. The strength of this study is not to suggest specific changes to denominations, but to initiate a conversation between monocultural denominational leaders and multicultural church planters. This research can help denominational leaders, who are usually part of the dominant culture, realize that church-planters might have a

different opinion than their own concerning the programs they promote. This research can also help multicultural church planters by providing them with a safe environment where they can openly express their concerns and suggestions. Finally, it can help the church in general to explore new creative ways to serve the Lord and do ministry.

Definition of Terms

Church Planter – For this study, the term “church planter” will be defined as the person who has been called to start a new congregation. This study will not make any general difference based on gender, age, or ordination status.

Core group – In this context, a core group indicates a group of people who have committed to join the church planter in the endeavor of starting a new church.

Mother church – This term refers to a church that has made a commitment to start a new church, usually by sending a group of members together with a church planter to a new area.

Particular church – Presbyterian denominations use this term to designate the status of those missions that no longer need external assistance. Many denominations establish that a mission church needs to be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing to become a particular church.

Pastor – Many names may be used to refer to the clergy of the church. Some of these are: pastor, rector, minister, priest, deacon, elder, vicar, or leader. The Presbyterian denomination that has been researched uses two different ordained roles: Pastor (or Teaching Elder) and Ruling Elder.

Denomination – Association of churches within Christianity identified as a religious body under a common name, doctrine, or form of government. Each denomination may use different names for their regional associations: presbytery, synod, diocese, district, or others. The generic term “denomination” will be preferred here. Although the research will be performed in the context of a Presbyterian church, and the Presbyterian form of government will be taken into consideration when analyzing the data, the results of this study are not limited to this denomination. No particular church polity is assumed in the conclusions of this study.

This first chapter introduced the argumentation for the importance of this research. The purpose of this study and the research questions were outlined, and terms were defined in order to better understand the rest of the report. In the next section, the relevant literature on church planting, church government, and leadership will be reviewed.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore how church planters working in multicultural environments perceive the role of their denomination in enhancing their ministry. The reason for this study is that, due to rapidly changing paradigms, denominations are in need of reviewing their church planting programs and of hearing multicultural church planters' thoughts on their efforts. Regarding how the world is changing and the need for the church to adapt, Alan Roxburgh states, "The shift in frameworks we need is how to imagine Christian life, congregational formation, and leadership in this world of discontinuous change."²⁴ Particularly in Argentina, as the Presbyterian church refocuses its efforts to launch a new church planting program while facing the multicultural challenge of any global city, the need to understand the multicultural church planters' perceptions of their denomination's efforts to enhance their ministry is crucial.

²⁴ Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling - Leaders Lost in Transition: A Proposal for Leadership Communities to Take New Risks for the Reign of God* (Eagle, ID: ACI Publishing, 2006), 53.

A great amount of literature can be found today concerning the transformation of local churches or strategies for church growth, but there is not much addressing the role of denominations or regional associations. Also, a growing amount of literature is addressing the complexities of church-planting and some resources include concepts regarding denominational programs, but no literature was found written from the church planters' perspective addressing the question of whether they perceive their denominations' church-planting programs as a blessing or a hindrance for their ministries. Finally, there are a growing number of books and articles being written on the multicultural challenges that churches are facing, but not much from the denominations' standpoint.

In order to consider and understand how multicultural church planters perceive their denominations' efforts to enhance their ministries, a biblical and theological framework is presented in this chapter, together with three main areas of study related to the denominations' role in church-planting. The literature related to this study has been arranged under three general topics: church-planting, church government, and leadership. In all sections, a special concern for the multicultural aspect of each area will be included.

Biblical and Theological Framework

Because the meaning of the English word church has evolved into many different branches, some considerations need to be made concerning the biblical and theological understanding of God's intentions for the church and what currently is considered as mission and church-planting, together with a biblical perspective on cultural diversity. For this purpose, an outline of the biblical understanding of the church will be presented, along with theological perspectives on the development of the church, its organizational structure, and mission. Due to the fact that this study is focused on qualitative research performed in a Presbyterian denomination, the concept of church will be defined by those who were key players in the development of Reformed theology. Thus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Louis Berkhof, and Charles Hodge, as well as *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, will be highlighted for their significant contributions to the Reformed tradition.

The Hebrew word *עֵדוּת* means assembly, convocation, or congregation. The Septuagint translated that term into the Greek *ἐκκλησία*, although many times it also uses *συναγωγή*. The New Testament writers chose *ἐκκλησία* to refer to the church instead of using the loaded Jewish term *synagogue*. The biblical sense of "church" indicates the fellowship that the people of God enjoy with God and with each other, and is more related to a movement of people with a mission than to an institution. A brief

recount of the New Testament will show that its message can be summarized as the story of Jesus Christ and the subsequent movement started by his disciples who spread the message of the gospel throughout the existing world, planting churches in every town and establishing leaders in them. As Stuart Murray states: “The New Testament can and should be read as a mission document, written primarily to leaders and members of first-generation churches, and addressing issues arising within the church-planting context.”²⁵

Jesus gives the apostles the commission to make disciples, baptizing, and teaching them to observe God’s commandments.²⁶ That commission was entrusted initially to the disciples and meant for the expansion of God’s kingdom. Although the great commission does not explicitly mention the foundation of churches, the way in which the apostles put it into practice, led by the Holy Spirit, is delineated in the book of Acts as they organized believers in church communities.

The book of Acts contains the development of the early church and also sets a pattern for the importance of the church gathering new converts to Christ. Reading Luke’s account, it is evident that the mission of the church is not only to preach the gospel, but also to instruct new believers and gather them for worship and communion.

²⁵ Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1998), 79.

²⁶ Mathew 28:18-20 and parallels.

Throughout the whole book, baptism is mentioned as the incorporation of new believers into a worshipping community with accountability and boundaries. At the very beginning of the book of Acts, Luke states:

...those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.²⁷

After these people began to believe in the message of the gospel, they were supernaturally drawn to gather in communities, sharing the amazing characteristics described in this passage, and subsequently others were attracted to join. For that reason, emphasis should not only be placed on evangelism, but also on founding new communities where believers can exercise their gifts in order to enhance multiplication and to build the kingdom of God. It was God's intention to gather his children in faith communities for mutual edification. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* in chapter

²⁷ Acts 2:41-47

XXVI on the communion of saints develops the double aspect of the saints being united to Jesus Christ as the head of the church but also united to one another in love.

Regarding the way the church ought to function, the Apostle Paul gives some instruction in his epistle to the Ephesians.²⁸ The Holy Spirit has gifted the church with different ministries and Paul clearly states their purpose: “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”²⁹ This passage makes it clear that the church body is not the recipient of the ministry work, but the agent of ministry. The result of the church serving the Lord by building his kingdom is her growth in maturity and unity. The Apostle Paul also taught here the importance of having functional structures in the church, where all members understand and fulfill their responsibilities according to the gifts that God has given each one of them. The ministry of the Apostle Paul is described in Acts as preaching the gospel in different cities, establishing churches with the new converts, and appointing leaders in every town who would continue to preach the gospel.

After many years of growth, the church was organized and had developed into a more complex structure. During the Reformation in the early sixteenth century, the

²⁸ Ephesians 4:11-16.

²⁹ Ephesians 4:12.

structure of the church was one of the issues that caused Martin Luther to manifest his differences with the leadership in the established church. Luther was one of the theologians who brought about the Reformation and his perspective of the church must be explored in order to better understand his way out of the established church. Referring to Luther's book *On the Councils and the Churches*, Martin Brecht explains that "in the second part of his book it was already apparent that for Luther the church was manifested primarily in the congregation and not in the hierarchical organization."³⁰

In his article "Martin Luther on Scripture and Authority and the Church, Ministry and Sacraments," J.H. Johansen explains, "to understand Luther's view of the church we must understand the sense in which he can speak of the church, in one sermon, as the bride of Christ and the mother of all Christians, and, in another, as a wretched assemblage (*coetus miserrimus, armes heufflin*), plagued by the devil and the world."³¹ Luther developed the idea of the two opposing churches as a way of separating himself from the church of Rome. Johansen explains:

In his debate with Rome on the issue of the "true" church, Luther appealed to Christian history. In his own day, he said, two churches could be

³⁰ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: the Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 196.

³¹ J. H. Johansen, "Martin Luther on Scripture and Authority and the Church, Ministry and Sacraments," *Scottish Journal of Theology* XV, no. 4 (1962): 357-358.

distinguished: a persecuting, blood-thirsty church and a suffering church. Although the persecuting church prided itself on being the true and only church, the witness of every age agreed that the true church is that which suffers martyrdom.³²

Luther also insisted on the marks of the true church, which are helpful for our study in order to better understand the whole issue of planting healthy churches. Johansen explains that “the proclamation of the word and the proper celebration of the sacraments, activities which Luther related in the closest possible way, were, as Luther’s commentaries everywhere suggest, both essential to the church’s role in the fulfillment in this life of the eternal purposes of God.”³³

After the Reformation was begun, another landmark theologian for Reformed theology arose. John Calvin assigned such an importance to the church that he devoted most of the fourth book of his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* to explain its nature and aim. He needed to write on the importance of the church mainly because he was expelled from the Roman Catholic church. For that reason, he might have written against the church, or even argued that the church was actually not so necessary for the Christian faith. However, in the first chapter of book four he wrote:

It is by the faith in the gospel that Christ becomes ours and we are made partakers of the salvation and eternal blessedness brought by him. Since,

³² Ibid., 360.

³³ Ibid., 367-368.

however, in our ignorance and sloth...we need outward helps to beget and increase faith within us, and advance it to its goal, God has also added these aids that he may provide for our weakness. And in order that the preaching of the gospel might flourish, he deposited this treasure in the church.³⁴

Calvin explains how Christians need the church, saying that “into his bosom God is pleased to gather his sons, not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry...but also that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith.”³⁵ In this way, John Calvin states that God is the Christians’ father while the church is their mother. Although being very careful not to attribute the church with salvific power, he admits the important role that the church plays in leading people to salvation. That perspective is the high view of Calvin on the church. It needs to be explained, however, that in this way Calvin refers to the invisible church, which he defines in the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* as “[t]he body and society of believers whom God has predestined to eternal life.”³⁶ In the *Genevan Confession*, Calvin summarizes his notion of the marks of the church, stating that “the proper mark by which rightly to discern the church of Jesus Christ is that his holy gospel be purely and

³⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1011-1012.

³⁵ Ibid., 1012.

³⁶ Jean Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 102.

faithfully preached, proclaimed, heard, and kept, [and] that his sacraments be properly administered.”³⁷ This difference between the visible and the invisible church was crucial to validate the Reformed movement out of the Roman Catholic church. At the same time, this new understanding of the true church stressing its marks, the proclamation of the gospel, and the administration of the sacraments together with a scriptural discipline, provided an opportunity to disassociate the mission of the church from the church structure, clergymen, and church buildings. This new understanding of the mission of the church will be crucial for our modern concept of church-planting and for this study.

As mentioned before, this renewed concept of the church brought a new way of understanding the apostolicity of the church. Michel Grandjean explains this issue by stating that “while the apostolic church is the church which descends from the apostles, it is also in the strictest sense the church that exercises the apostolate. The apostolic church is a missionary church.”³⁸ Erroll Hulse, in his article “John Calvin and His Missionary Enterprise,” exposed that “it is widely believed that the Reformers of the sixteenth

³⁷ Ibid., 31.

³⁸ Michel Grandjean, “The One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church According to John Calvin,” in *One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church*, ed. Hans-Peter Grosshans (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2009), 75.

century were not involved in missionary activity. That is simply not the case.”³⁹ Then the author goes on to describe Calvin’s missionary attempts in Brazil and the important impact that the Geneva church missionaries produced in France. The Geneva church planted thousands of new churches in France during Calvin’s lifetime and many of these missionaries died as martyrs. According to Philip Douglass, “[i]n Geneva, during the last ten years of his life, John Calvin committed himself to training men for evangelism and church planting – especially in France but also throughout Europe.”⁴⁰ Later on, he exposes that “Calvin’s church planting training center in Geneva became a focal point for equipping men for the propagation of the gospel and the establishment of Reformed churches throughout Europe. People came from all over Europe to be trained as missionaries and went back out as ministers of the gospel.”⁴¹

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* describes the church in chapter XXV, 2-3:

The visible church...consists of everyone in the world who professes the true religion together with their children... In order to gather and perfect the saints in this life until the end of the world Christ has given the

³⁹ Erroll Hulse, *Reformed Theology*, 1998, <http://reformed-theology.org/html/issue04/calvin.htm> (03 April 2012).

⁴⁰ Philip D. Douglass, “Grace-Centered Church Planting,” in *All for Jesus: A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Covenant Theological Seminary*, ed. Robert A. Peterson and Sean Michael Lucas (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2006), 317.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

ministry, scriptures, and ordinances of God to this universal visible church, and by his own presence and Spirit he enables the church to function in this way according to his promise.⁴²

In 1903, the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America added two chapters to the original *Westminster Confession of Faith*: “Of the Holy Spirit” (chapter thirty-four) and “Of the Gospel of the Love of God and Missions” (chapter thirty-five).

This last chapter states in paragraph four:

Since there is no other way of salvation than that revealed in the gospel, and since in the divinely established and ordinary method of grace faith cometh by hearing the word of God, Christ hath commissioned his church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations. All believers are, therefore, under obligation to sustain the ordinances of the Christian religion where they are already established, and to contribute by their prayers, gifts, and personal efforts to the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout the whole earth.⁴³

Reformed theologian Charles Hodge also adds to this concept of “church” saying, “Christians are required to associate for public worship, for the administration of the sacraments, for the maintenance and propagation of the truth.”⁴⁴ Especially in these times of individualism, theological foundations need to be in place to understand the role of the church and its mission, considering the growing multicultural encounters in global cities.

⁴² Douglas Kelly, Hugh McClure and Philip B. Rollinson, eds., *The Westminster Confession of Faith: A New Edition* (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, 1979), 44.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, ed. Edward N. Gross (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 407.

Regarding cultural diversity, the Bible is clear in stating that God is the creator of all human beings and desires all nations to come to him. The Tower of Babel, where God causes people to speak different languages, is an example of his desire to prevent them from going astray. The use of different languages is not seen in this passage as a curse, but as a means for God to accomplish his purposes. As Romo states, “The story of the Tower of Babel is important for a theology that considers both our common humanity as creatures of God and the manifold pluralism in the Creator's purpose.”⁴⁵

Right after this chapter in Genesis comes God’s call to Abram in chapter twelve, asking him to leave his kindred and his father’s house and promising him that he would become a great nation and a blessing to all families on the earth. Romo also develops the idea of multiculturalism from Psalms and the gospels. He states, “The Psalms have a ring of universality: the knowledge of God through Israel's mediation shall bring together the nations -the peoples, *ta ethne*- to worship the only God of both the ethnic and the Israelite.”⁴⁶ Additionally, he shares the example of Jesus ministering within a pluralistic society, in “a world profoundly fragmented by all kinds of conflicts – social, economic,

⁴⁵ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

political, racial.”⁴⁷ Finally, the centrality of Pentecost, in Acts 2, cannot be set aside.

Reverting the consequences of the Tower of Babel, the Holy Spirit causes God’s people to speak different languages so that, in spite of their cultural differences, they could worship God in unison and proclaim the good news.

Solomon Kendagor, in his book *Every Tongue and Nation: A Biblical Perspective on Cultural Diversity in Today’s Church*, suggests, “The scripture seems to emphasize edification, unity, glorification and witness as the four goals for Biblical diversity.”⁴⁸ Then, in his ninth chapter, he describes six biblical ingredients for cultural diversity: sacrificial love, acceptance beyond tolerance, purposeful determination, patience, humility, emulating Christ.⁴⁹

Having reviewed the biblical foundation of multicultural church-planting and the theological progression of the understanding of the church and its mission in today’s pluralistic society, the current trends on church-planting will be explored.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

⁴⁸ Solomon Kendagor, *Every Tongue and Nation: A Biblical Perspective on Cultural Diversity in Today’s Church* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2007), 74.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 82-92.

Church-Planting

In the previous section, the biblical and theological framework for multicultural church-planting was discussed. Convinced that God reveals in scripture his desire to use new churches as a means of motivating unbelievers to know him and see their lives transformed, church planters face another big question: How do they do it? During the last two decades, there has been a great amount of literature addressing the need to plant new churches and offering various kinds of models and programs towards that end. The literature also offers many challenges regarding church-planting. Although this study cannot describe in depth all those challenges, those related to the research focus will be explored.

Paul Kooistra includes the biblical and theological framework described in the previous section by pointing out that Mission to the World, the world-focused mission agency of the Presbyterian Church of America, “focuses on church-planting because the church is the corporate body that God has brought into being by his covenant. The saving work of God cannot be reduced to only a personalized salvation between God and individuals.”⁵⁰ And Eckhard Schnabel summarizes Paul’s concept of church, stating:

⁵⁰ Paul D. Kooistra, “Global Missions: Our Theological Foundations,” in *Looking Forward: Voices from Church Leaders on Our Global Mission*, ed. PCA Mission to the World (Enumclaw, WA: Wine Press Pub., 2003), 15.

Paul's missionary work did not end with the oral proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and the conversion of individuals. Paul established churches, communities of men and women who had come to faith in Jesus the Messiah and Savior, and who came together to study the Scriptures, to be instructed in the whole counsel of God, to learn and remember what Jesus Christ had done, to discover the will of God for their lives, and to celebrate God's salvation in Jesus Christ in prayers and in hymns, and spiritual songs.⁵¹

In a similar way, Stuart Murray suggests at least three theological frameworks to be considered for church planting: *missio Dei* (the mission of God, aiming at it from a theocentric perspective, rather than an anthropocentric one); incarnation ("Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, is the one who defines authoritatively the scope and purpose of God's mission and the one through whom this mission will be fulfilled")⁵²; and the kingdom of God (contrasted with the centrality of the church: "The kingdom rather than the church defines the scope of God's mission").⁵³

Finally, regarding the importance of the church in God's plan to build his kingdom, Scot Sherman's article "Why the Church?" comments on Newbigin's perspective: "How important is it for the Church to be engaged in mission (evangelism,

⁵¹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 231-232.

⁵² Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations*, 35.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 43.

church planting, etc.)? For Newbigin, it is of the church's very essence as a sharer of the life of Christ. The mission to seek and save the lost is, after all, Christ's mission!"⁵⁴

Throughout the history of the church, many theological and ecclesiological traditions have been forged and established. When some aspects of those traditions are no longer relevant, the church needs to revise its core values and *modus operandi* in order to refocus on effective ways to continue preaching the same gospel. Ed Stetzer and David Putman explain in their book *Breaking the Missional Code*: "It is amazing but consistent – churches that need to grow think they can do it without change! They think they can break the code by doing the same things they have always done."⁵⁵ They go on to suggest, "As church planters and church-planting leaders, we need constantly to evaluate our methods and ask, 'Is there a better method or model that would reach my community with the unchanging gospel?'"⁵⁶

The task of church-planting requires innovative and bold leaders who are ready to leave the comfort of established churches and accept the challenge to break with the

⁵⁴ Scot Sherman, "Why the Church?," in *Looking Forward: Voices from Church Leaders on Our Global Mission*, ed. PCA Mission to the World (Enumclaw, WA: Wine Press Pub., 2003), 57.

⁵⁵ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 137.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

status quo. Church planters are considered risk-takers, and, as quoted in the introduction, their task requires a great amount, as well as a balance, of support, structure, and challenge.

As church planters continuously interact with a changing culture, they also need to constantly update their studies and strategies. Crabtree suggests in his research: “Collectively, churches often believe that they should be magically exempt from the need to develop their store of knowledge and insight about how to develop healthy, vital congregations.”⁵⁷ If that logic is true about church leaders, it applies much more so in church planters as individuals more consistently exposed to the unbelieving world. It is even more necessary if we bring into consideration the multicultural aspect in global cities.

This new multicultural context challenges church planters to strive to understand this changing world. Romo describes this challenge by stating that “[a] pluralistic society is defined as an aggregation of peoples of different groups characterized by their heritages, cultures, languages, and life-styles.”⁵⁸ But then he develops the idea that these different groups are also changing all the time, so that church planters need to develop

⁵⁷ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 31.

⁵⁸ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 18.

their ability to remain flexible in their ministries. Anderson explains, “Some of the biggest hindrances to multicultural ministry are the structures in place that keep churches from being more flexible.”⁵⁹ Completing this idea, Romo suggests that “[f]lexibility is essential to a successful ministry.”⁶⁰

An important factor that the literature review includes in multicultural church planting is the need to face the issue of reconciliation, not only with God but also among nations. Manuel Ortiz, in his book *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church*, explains, “...the intentional attempts by local ministries to create multiethnic and multi-congregational churches that have been most productive are the ones that move toward reconciliation”⁶¹ He goes on to say, “The Multiethnic Church may grow and have success numerically, but if it has not worked through the issues of division and hostility that have long separated the church, it falls short of being a multiethnic church.”⁶²

⁵⁹ David A. Anderson, “The Building Block of a Multicultural Ministry,” in *Multicultural Ministry Handbook Connecting Creatively to a Diverse World*, ed. David A. Anderson and Margarita R. Cabellon (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 19.

⁶⁰ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 149.

⁶¹ Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 45.

⁶² Ibid., 45-46.

Another challenge related to the ministry of multicultural church planters is the permanent need of studying the cultures around them and how these cultures may respond to the gospel. For example, in his book *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, Soong-Chan Rah explains that “[g]enuine multicultural ministry requires understanding the potential range of responses that may arise in a particular context and scenario.”⁶³ He suggests, “In order for authentic communication and connection between different cultures to happen, we need to understand and affirm how and why someone from a different culture behaves and responds to a particular situation.”⁶⁴ Simply put, Soong-Chan Rah concludes, “Most will recognize that planting, developing, and nurturing a multiethnic and multicultural church is extraordinarily hard work.”⁶⁵ In a more eloquent way, Harris, Moran and Moran, in their book *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, assert, “The

⁶³ Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 84.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

paradox of culture is the commonalities that exist in the midst of its diffusion or even confusion.”⁶⁶

Reviewing the great variety and amount of literature on church-planting, it is easy to conclude that there is little appreciation of the denominational role in church planters’ ministry. Most church-planting books offer a good, biblical foundation for church-planting, strategies, cultural analysis and practical advice, but not much related to the role that denominations can play to enhance the church-planting process. The small amount of information gleaned from these resources regarding denominational involvement in church-planting is presented in the following section.

Church Government

This study focuses very specifically on the role that denominations play in enhancing the church-planting process. This section of the study includes a literature review of denominational aspects of church government and the challenges related to church-planting and denominational growth.

⁶⁶ Harris, Moran and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 14.

The Purpose of a Denomination

A denomination is described as an association of churches that share certain core values, such as theological and doctrinal positions, and a specific form of government. Although the purpose of each denomination might differ in many aspects from others, there exists a unifying principle: denominations unite certain congregations, enabling them to improve their ministries and extend the kingdom of God on earth. That main purpose statement takes on many different characteristics when denominations try to be specific about their particular aspirations. For the purpose of this study, this section of the literature review will focus on the basic purposes for the existence of denominations, specifically related to the task of extending the kingdom of God through planting new churches. Ichak Adizes suggests, “Systems that serve their purposes are functional and, therefore, effective.”⁶⁷ However, before evaluating if denominations are indeed serving their purposes, their purposes need to be established, communicated, and their fulfillment pursued.

Ralph Moore emphasizes the need for church planters to interact with their denominations, realizing that although not everything that denominations offer will be helpful, there may be valuable contributions that are often overlooked. He says, “A full

⁶⁷ Ichak Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles* (Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 104.

awareness of denominational objectives has helped many church planters discover just how useful denominational functions can be.”⁶⁸ Commenting on the ways in which denominations can be helpful for developing churches, Stetzer and Putman, in their book

Breaking the Missional Code, write:

Four core issues that every denominational entity must consider to be key players in church-planting [are]: how they define the basis for cooperation, how effective will they be at staying out of the headlines for things that do not matter, how effective are they at developing meaningful partnership with churches, networks, and parachurch organizations, and how effective are they at adding value to the mission of the church.⁶⁹

Stetzer and Putman also suggest a list of tasks that denominations should perform to enhance church-planting efforts:

Cast a vision for a new tomorrow, lift up apostolic heroes, conduct relevant research, supplement the local church in equipping apostolic leaders, network learning communities and reporting results, provide financial resources for apostolic leaders and help leaders move beyond their own ethnic, economic model or other ghetto.⁷⁰

All these tasks that have been suggested, and others which will be explored later, have as an underlying precept the need to develop a good communication system with churches and church planters. Stetzer and Putman suggest, “Denominational leaders will need to

⁶⁸ Moore, *Starting a New Church*, 57.

⁶⁹ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 175-176.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 176-178.

ask their churches, ‘How can we help you fulfill the Great Commission?’”⁷¹ Along the same lines, J. Russell Crabtree came to the conclusion that “parish leaders generally do not have time to do the research required to uncover new opportunities [in the region]. They must focus on the visible, namely, the work that is immediately before them, and trust the regional association leader to focus on emerging possibilities.”⁷²

Following that idea, he develops the necessity of having the denominational leaders perform those tasks that the local church leaders cannot do. Following that ideal, a movement of critique has been growing among those who think that many denominations have been turning things upside down, having local churches serving the denomination instead of the other way around. One example is the New Wineskins Association, which started as a group of churches trying to bring about a renewal movement within the Presbyterian Church (USA). Part of the New Wineskins’ vision statement declares that it “[s]erves the ministry and mission of the local congregation,”⁷³ instead of having congregations serving the denomination, and that it “...functions like a

⁷¹ Ibid., 179.

⁷² Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 51.

⁷³ New Wineskins Association, “Vision Statement,” New Wineskins Association, http://www.newwineskinsassociation.com/documents/vision_statement.pdf (accessed January 14, 2010). Note: At the time of publication of this dissertation, the New Wineskins Association of Churches has ceased to exist and their website has been taken down.

missions agency more than a regulatory agency.”⁷⁴ In this same sense, Crabtree asserts:

“One of the most important tasks in redeveloping a regional association is shifting its culture to that of servant leadership.”⁷⁵ Stetzer and Putman also expose this concept very clearly when they state: “Denominations need to serve churches to accomplish their mission.”⁷⁶

In this sense, one of the problems with stagnant organizations is when they do not listen to new, different, or quiet voices and are not interested in receiving feedback from church leaders. In a similar way, Oscar Romo explains the experience of the Southern Baptists who created Ethnic Fellowships. He states that “such meetings provide the opportunities for development of natural leaders and dialogue, which the language-culture persons would not be given the opportunity to do in most meetings.”⁷⁷

Crabtree also states, “Satisfaction levels of church leaders regarding the work of their regional associations is abysmally low, largely because these associations are not providing what they are asking for.”⁷⁸ He also concludes, “there appears to be little

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 112.

⁷⁶ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 179.

⁷⁷ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 136.

⁷⁸ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 3.

research conducted on attitudes of local church leaders regarding their regional associations.”⁷⁹ This dissertation aims at dealing with the attitudes of multicultural church planters regarding their regional associations, for which specific literature and research has not been found.

David Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway mention a study that analyzed the growth and decline of mainline denominations in the United States of America. One of their conclusions was that denominational growth or decline is affected by denominational actions, especially concerning denominational priorities. They propose “mainline denominational growth is related to goal-directed planning... [T]he evidence suggests that they could grow, or at least moderate their declines, by re-emphasizing evangelism and new church development.”⁸⁰ As simple as that might sound, denominations still struggle to set their main concern and get mixed up with other priorities (e.g., ecumenism, social justice, organizational restructuring). Alan Roxburgh presents a similar analysis on the present reality of denominations when he states that

...organizations such as governments or denominations lose legitimacy when they cease to hold sufficient loyalty, commitment, or authority from

⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁰ David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, “Denominational Growth and Decline,” in *Church and Denominational Growth*, ed. David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 45.

people. This loss has been happening across denominational systems: they are confronting a legitimacy crisis and will be unable to become missionally-shaped systems unless they understand the dynamics of this crisis.⁸¹

Following these analyses, Crabtree suggests that “what is required is a deep, systemic change in the bodies that are called to support congregations for their mission in the world: transformational regional associations.”⁸²

In a similar way, Earley, Ang, and Tan suggest the following six-stage process of global leadership:

1. Formulating a global vision: Setting the future direction for the local organization that is aligned with headquarters but adapted to local conditions.
2. Communicating the global vision across cultures: Promoting and garnering buy-in among locals to the new vision.
3. Planning, budgeting, and scheduling of local organizations: Developing a local agenda, timetable, and milestones for meeting the vision.
4. Designing the local organizational structure: Creating an appropriate, local, organizational structure and staffing it with the appropriate individuals.
5. Influencing and motivating locals: Delegating responsibilities, setting goals, building teams, and creating incentive systems appropriate for the locals.
6. Monitoring and controlling locals’ performance: Monitoring results, identifying deviations from plans, and taking corrective actions with feedback that is appropriate for the locals.⁸³

⁸¹ Alan J. Roxburgh, “Reframing Denominations from a Missional Perspective,” in *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 81.

⁸² Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 21.

In terms of serving church-planting efforts, one of the tasks a denomination cannot avoid is providing training and education. The specifics of training will be developed under the section on leadership below, but here the literature's input on the role of the denomination in this concern needs to be mentioned. Earley, Ang, and Tan state, "One of the critical roles of a regional association is to serve as strategic coach for the leaders of their member churches."⁸⁴ Alongside the training, denominations also provide in many cases a process of assessment to help candidates orient their sense of calling and fulfill the unique ministry for which God has gifted them. There are many ways today to perform these kinds of assessments related to church-planting. However, another challenge that the literature review shows is the need to prepare organizational support systems to enhance the training experience. Jay Conger and Beth Benjamin observe that many secular organizations, while trying to train their members, fail to make good use of that effort. They note:

...one of the core dilemmas facing individuals who return from these [leadership development] programs is a lack of reinforcement for the leadership behaviors they have learned... The supervisorial behavior required to support a subordinate's development following training can

⁸³ P. Christopher Earley, Soon Ang and Joo-Seng Tan, *CQ: Developing Cultural Intelligence At Work* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books, 2006), 177.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 65.

take many forms: encouragement, goal-setting activities, modeling, and reinforcement.⁸⁵

Including the multicultural aspect of the denominations' challenge, we find Lyle Schaller establishing what he thinks are the major steps to be taken for a denomination to grow. He states:

To a substantial extent, the growing religious bodies of the next dozen years will be those religious bodies which: (1) affirm the legitimacy of the ethnic church; (2) encourage a bilingual approach to the preaching of the Word; (3) affirm a pluralistic style of church life; (4) are not locked into exclusionary procedures; (5) recognize and accept ethnic congregations; (6) involve the ethnic congregations in the ongoing life of the denomination.⁸⁶

In the previous section, the literature regarding the purpose of a denomination has been discussed. However, one of the main challenges that denominations face is making their structure useful for their purposes. For that reason, the next section will explore the literature on denominational structures.

Organization of a Denomination

Denominations can work under many different kinds of organization. This study will not focus on the specific form of government of a certain denomination. However,

⁸⁵ Jay A. Conger and Beth Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 54.

⁸⁶ Lyle Schaller, *Understanding Tomorrow* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 75.

common factors among any kind of association, including those in secular groups, can be delineated.

In chapter seven (“The Signs of Aging”) of Adizes’s book *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, the author describes some characteristics of organizations that have stopped growing and begun the process of decline. Some of these characteristics are described as transitions from risk-taking to risk-avoidance, from “expectations exceed results” to “results exceed expectations,” from emphasis on function to emphasis on form, from “why” and “what” to “how,” “who,” and “why now,” and from asking forgiveness to asking permission.⁸⁷

These tendencies can be found in many of the denominations struggling to face the new challenges related to church-planting. Church planters are usually those represented in the first part of each duet (risk-takers, “expectations exceed results,” emphasis on function, “why” and “what,” and asking forgiveness), while the organizations will tend over the years toward the second part of those duets (risk-avoidance, “results exceed expectations,” emphasis on form, “how,” “who” and “why now,” and asking permission). Ichak Adizes puts it in interesting words: “Growing

⁸⁷ Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, 115-131.

companies have believers. Aging companies have skeptics.”⁸⁸ Adizes also explains that “energy declines with aging because more and more goes to internal marketing –the struggle to keep the disintegrating pieces together. As energy goes inside, less is available for the outside, and, thus, there is less willingness to take risk.”⁸⁹

Adizes goes on to describe different types of leaders and concludes that “The entrepreneurial type asks, ‘What else can we do?’ The administrative type asks, ‘What less can we do?’”⁹⁰ The latter attitude is very descriptive of denominations that are now more focused on maintaining the status quo rather than working toward the expansion of the kingdom of God. In a similar way, Crabtree suggests that “Regional associations are not able to provide what local churches need because they do not understand organizational-level dynamics and are functioning with values, skills, and time-management that are inappropriate to the regional level.”⁹¹

In his book *What Is Your Church's Personality?* Philip Douglass describes eight different personality types (adventurous, expressive, fellowship, inspirational, relational,

⁸⁸ Ibid., 130.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 119.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 123.

⁹¹ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 3.

entrepreneurial, strategizer, and organizer) that determine four different ministry styles (practical, connectional, innovative, and analytical). As it may be expected, the “organizer” ministry style types tend to get involved in denominational positions of leadership while church planters are usually entrepreneurs and relationals. This differing of ministry styles may lead to conflict if communication and relationship capital is not intentionally built.

Some of the characteristics of “organizer” church leaders, as stated by Philip Douglass include the following:

[t]hey tend to exhibit a composed, unruffled, dispassionate demeanor that critics may interpret as detachment and coldness. This is because they develop deliberate, cautious methodologies to accomplish their goals... Their natural ability to critique with precision and pragmatic intensity sometimes leads to detachment and overcontrol so that a lack of empathy with people’s feelings is communicated... Organizer churches may doubt the effectiveness of highly creative people, fearing that their judgment may be faulty or that their emotions will influence decisions inappropriately. They especially do not value the creative imaginations of more innovative people who may be unstructured in their “go with the flow” approach to ministry.⁹²

On the other hand, Douglass describes the entrepreneurial leaders as follows:

Because they see the needs of the community as an opportunity for trying something different with a positive impact for Christ, they create outreach events that are new, flexible and responsive to the changing culture...

⁹² Philip D. Douglass, *What Is Your Church's Personality?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 261.

They create new ministry systems and models, sometimes putting their institutions at risk for the sake of their vision.⁹³

Finally, regarding the relational ministry type, Douglass states that

[t]hey always take the needs and concerns of people into consideration in their planning, and devise innovative and compassionate solutions for the problems people face. Especially through the lively and energetic ministry teams they develop, these congregations help people solve the problems that burden them in a creative manner and from a scriptural perspective... They are typically active, effervescent churches which conduct spontaneous ministries that adapt well to the rapidly changing environment of urban life. Meticulous work, time limitations, and unnecessary structure drain strength from these churches.⁹⁴

Moore explains these characteristics in similar terms, contrasting church planters'

and denominations' attitudes: "Working within a denominational framework can be tricky for a new pastor. Local problems and opportunities dictate one set of behaviors, while denominational traditions demand another."⁹⁵ This reality can explain the reason why the present study is relevant; due to the fact that church planters and organizations are many times located in opposite positions, a better dialogue needs to be developed. As Conger and Benjamin put it, "[T]he best strategic intervention programs design initiatives that cascade across all levels of the organization."⁹⁶ They expound on this idea:

⁹³ Ibid., 154-157.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 116-130.

⁹⁵ Moore, *Starting a New Church*, 57.

⁹⁶ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 177.

Collective dialogue across functions and between levels is particularly important for developing a common understanding of a firm's larger vision, and in turn a shared interpretation of how that vision can be adapted at the local level... The importance of collective dialogue is perhaps best demonstrated in its absence.⁹⁷

In this way, the power dynamics happening in an organization take relevance.

Soong-Chan Rah explains this fact for multicultural settings:

When a majority culture is dominant, it is that culture that determines how power is used and distributed. The danger in a multicultural church context is that we would repeat the mistakes the early church was making prior to the Jerusalem Council. The dominant group in power was not yet willing to yield its cultural values for the sake of those who were marginalized or alienated from that power.⁹⁸

This fact makes it easy for problems to arise between different cultures while trying to walk together towards the same purpose. But when God is the one leading his church, any Christian denomination should understand that God's plan is applicable for all human beings, regardless of their race. Harris, Moran and Moran use the phrase "multicultural synergy" to describe the action of "building upon the very differences in the world's people for mutual growth and accomplishment by cooperation. Cultural synergy through collaboration emphasizes similarities and common concerns and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 170-171.

⁹⁸ Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, 120.

integrates differences to enrich human activities and systems.”⁹⁹ Later, they go deeper into this concept explaining, “Cultural synergy builds upon similarities and fuses differences, resulting in more effective human activities and systems. The sharing of diverse perceptions and cultural background can be used to enhance problem solving and improve decision making.”¹⁰⁰

According to the concept of corporate lifecycles developed by Adizes, all associations will face, at some point, the necessity to reinforce its structure in order to continue growing. At the same time, that organization will be developing (most likely unconsciously) a certain subculture and establishing certain values. Instead of denying them or just trying to impose written statements, the literature suggests that they need to be faced and intentionally evaluated. In the context of educational ministries, Donald Guthrie develops the importance of evaluating one’s own educational framework: “An educational framework is a theoretical structure that accounts for an author or thinker’s assumptions, worldview, and practices.”¹⁰¹ Denominations have developed a certain

⁹⁹ Harris, Moran and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 26-27.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 144.

¹⁰¹ Donald C. Guthrie, "Christ-centered Educational Ministry: An Overview of Frameworks and Practices," in *All for Jesus: A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Covenant Theological Seminary*, ed. Robert A. Peterson and Sean Michael Lucas (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2006), 209.

framework that also needs to be evaluated and intentionally addressed. As Hammond and Mayfield suggest when writing about naming elephants, “Anecdotal stories become operating facts when told often enough and when an organization does not take the time to question underlying assumptions.”¹⁰²

Change Management

Alan Roxburgh asserts, “change is what happens to us from the outside and over which we usually have no control. Transition is our inner response to the changes we are experiencing and over which we do have some control.”¹⁰³ As mentioned in the first chapter, Crabtree states that “one of the most important principles for individuals and organizations to flourish in the world is simply to change before you have to.”¹⁰⁴ Because culture changes on a daily basis, Alan Roxburgh suggests that organizations need to be more prepared than ever to constantly adapt to new realities. Applying this idea to churches, he states that denominations need to be ready to accept loss. “The loss of identity and coherence... suggests that a missional reframing of denominational life

¹⁰² Hammond and Mayfield, *The Thin Book of Naming Elephants: How to Surface Undiscussables for Greater Organizational Success*, 12.

¹⁰³ Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 6.

today will only come as we live into accepting the loss of our former identity.”¹⁰⁵ Moore refers to the gospels, explaining that “Jesus likened the work of the Spirit to new wine that is stored best in flexible new wineskins.”¹⁰⁶ In this analogy, he was talking about religious systems.”¹⁰⁷ Lyle Schaller is very specific when he warns:

...the denominational systems that were designed to serve the clientele of 1955 and to work in the cultural, social, religious, economic, and demographic context of that era have failed when the unanticipated became the new reality... [T]hey collapsed because they were designed to serve a foreseeable set of circumstances.¹⁰⁸

Roxburgh also develops the idea that there are five phases of change: “stability (and equilibrium), discontinuity, disembedding, transition, reformation.”¹⁰⁹ And he further explains, “reformation happens as the church has negotiated the reinventing of its life through discontinuity, disembedding, and transition, and begins to approach a new period or recreating tradition and finding fresh stability.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Roxburgh, “Reframing Denominations from a Missional Perspective,” 76.

¹⁰⁶ Matthew 9:17.

¹⁰⁷ Moore, *Starting a New Church*, 32.

¹⁰⁸ Lyle E. Schaller, *A Mainline Turnaround: Strategies for Congregations and Denominations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 18.

¹⁰⁹ Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 54.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 66.

Organizations can attempt to foresee different kinds of circumstances and be prepared to address the necessary changes to face the new realities. Many times, those new circumstances are unforeseeable. In both cases, what is needed is flexibility and adaptability. Roxburgh explains, “Most leaders in denominational and congregational positions were trained for a stable, predictable, corporate world of loyal customers/consumers.”¹¹¹ Taking into consideration the multicultural challenge, Harris, Moran and Moran elaborate, “...like individuals, institutions whose cultures are flexible and adaptive usually outperform their counterparts. People can be trained and prepared for a culture of continuing and dynamic change, a constant of human evolution.”¹¹² Schaller further suggests specific ways in which denominations should change, “I am convinced that for denominational systems to produce the desired outcomes in the twenty-first century, and to be able to do what we know must be done, will require radical changes in denominational systems including moving evangelism and missions to the top of the agenda.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ibid., 100.

¹¹² Harris, Moran and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 100.

¹¹³ Schaller, *A mainline turnaround: strategies for congregations and denominations*, 176.

Crabtree states: “Consultants working in the area of change management often refer to the concept of a burning platform.”¹¹⁴ Those who are constantly trying to make fruitful changes always appreciate regular evaluations. Evaluations help organizations better understand their situation and possible steps forward. The lack of evaluation or the lack of willingness to discover needed changes is a major danger. Williamson recounts an experience as follows:

I once asked an executive vice president who was responsible for the future development of a very large corporation, “[W]hat is the thing you worry about most on your job?” His answer was startling. “I worry most about what my people don’t know that they don’t know. What they know that they don’t know, they are able to work on and find the answers to. But they can’t do that if they don’t know that they don’t know.”¹¹⁵

A great danger in organizations is getting trapped attempting to maintain the status quo and succeeding. In an unchanging world, status quo might seem like a safe place and might provide a sense of security. But in the real world, it is healthier to challenge the status quo and keep up to date with the surrounding culture. Crabtree further explains that “creating a burning platform means constructing a concise, compelling, evidence-based,

¹¹⁴ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 9.

¹¹⁵ Stanley M. Davis, “Transforming Organizations: The Key to Strategy is Context,” in *The Leader-manager*, ed. John N. Williamson (New York: Wiley, 1986), 105.

and consistently communicated rationale articulating why an organization cannot stay where it is.”¹¹⁶

In his article “Christ-Centered Missions,” Nelson Jennings, describing the work of Jesus Christ throughout the world, explains:

First-generation Christians are aware that they are on the frontiers of Christianity’s engagement with the world... Christians in succeeding generations then face the challenge of staying on the cutting edge of God’s ongoing redeeming work. In fact, what inevitably seems to occur as the generations go by is a consolidation and protection of systems (including theological ones), structures (including organizations), and monuments (buildings, statutes, and otherwise) that are constructed.¹¹⁷

In terms of the way in which organizations tend to evolve, according to the corporate lifecycles suggested by Adizes, one of the characteristics of an aging group is the tendency to emphasize form over function. He asserts, “The organization’s emphasis on form affects function. Why? Flexibility suffers when form increases, and in a changing environment, decreasing flexibility implies declining functionality.”¹¹⁸

One of the key components to gaining flexibility mentioned in the literature is keeping members of organizations in a constant learning process. In his article “Learning

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁷ Nelson Jennings, “Christ-Centered Missions,” in *All for Jesus: A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Covenant Theological Seminary*, ed. Robert A. Peterson and Sean Michael Lucas (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2006), 256.

¹¹⁸ Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, 124.

in Organizations,” Chris Argyris puts it this way: “Learning is key to effective organization, change and development. Learning is defined as the detection and correction of error.”¹¹⁹ However, the learning programs utilized in companies and organizations need to be accompanied by an intentional focus on evaluating core values and attitudes, not only forms. Dotlich and Noel explain that

...companies today cannot benefit from a training program designed to reinforce prevailing attitudes –there will always be enough people willing to conform and maintain the status quo- but when a business strategy requires it, nurturing individuals’ capacities to act and lead needs to be encouraged and developed.¹²⁰

One of the main problems organizations need to address is the struggle against developing a defensive reasoning mindset. When leaders in organizations start to defend procedures or programs, showing denial toward opposing opinions or demeaning clear signs shown by reality, a status quo defensive mindset develops. Argyris warns about this situation:

Reasoning is defensive when its purpose is to protect actors (groups, organizations) from being embarrassed or threatened. They do not test the validity of their diagnosis and actions in the service of discovering some semblance of truth on which they can base their diagnosis, design

¹¹⁹ Chris Argyris, "Learning in Organizations," in *Handbook of Organization Development*, ed. Thomas G. Cummings (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 53.

¹²⁰ David L. Dotlich and James L. Noel, *Action Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 145.

corrective actions, and evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation.¹²¹

If we bring the multicultural challenge into this theme, we find even more change to be faced. Analyzing America's complex society, Oscar Romo states that “[e]thnic groups in America are not only diverse, but they live in changing cultural and linguistic patterns. Each group continually influences others.”¹²² Later, he also adds that “[c]hanging ethnic patterns in the nation, the increasing migration, and the concern to evangelize rather than to “Americanize” have resulted in a response of ethnic persons unparalleled in Christian history.”¹²³

Dealing successfully with change requires a good understanding of leadership, which is discussed in the next section. As Crabtree expresses, “the most important and radical tasks in redeveloping regional associations into transformational bodies are recruiting, developing, and retaining the right leadership.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Argyris, "Learning in Organizations", 58.

¹²² Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 123.

¹²³ Ibid., 137.

¹²⁴ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 34.

Leadership

Both sections described above, church-planting and church government, include leadership as a basic component. As Ralph Moore puts it, “Planting a new congregation is all about leadership.”¹²⁵ Not only does a new church plant need a certain kind of leadership to give birth to the new congregation, the denomination also needs leadership with certain characteristics in order to enhance the multicultural church planters’ ministry. As Early, Ang and Tan describe it, “Effective leadership is one of the most powerful competitive advantages an organization can have. Whenever we meet a success or failure of any organization, we automatically think of its leadership.”¹²⁶

We can find a great amount of literature within the secular sphere addressing leadership issues that can also be applied to the realm of churches and denominations in the context of cultural diversity.

In the introduction of their book *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, Conger and Benjamin state that “[s]ince the mid-1980s, interest in leadership has skyrocketed throughout the corporate world.”¹²⁷ Companies

¹²⁵ Moore, *Starting a New Church*, 34.

¹²⁶ Early, Ang and Tan, *CQ: Developing Cultural Intelligence At Work*, 175.

¹²⁷ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 1.

invest great amounts of money in developing the next generation of leaders, constantly trying to adapt to new situations and providing many different opportunities and types of continuing education. The literature review concerning leadership addressed three main lines of concern related to the denomination's role in multicultural church-planting. Thus, this section on leadership will focus on what is found in the literature regarding coaching, life-long learning, and adaptive leadership.

Coaching

The literature regarding leadership consistently addresses the importance of coaching the next generation of leaders within any kind of organization. Peter Lassey defines coaching as “the passing on of the skills and experience of one employee to another, in a way that is non-disruptive to the organization.”¹²⁸

Applying this concept to the context of churches, Robert Burns suggests: “If pastors are going to pass on their knowledge, then it would seem that mentoring relationships should be consciously established and purposefully nurtured.”¹²⁹ In Presbyterian settings, to which Robert Burns belongs and in which this qualitative study

¹²⁸ Peter Lassey, *Developing a Learning Organization* (London: Kogan Page Limited, 1998), 92.

¹²⁹ Robert W. Burns, "Pastoral Learning after Seminary," in *All for Jesus: A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Covenant Theological Seminary*, ed. Robert A. Peterson and Sean Michael Lucas (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2006), 283.

will focus, the roles associated with preparing, evaluating and commissioning leaders usually belong to the regional associations of denominations. In the same way, in his book *Understanding Tomorrow*, Lyle Schaller states, “Increasingly the world is moving from an emphasis on the functional to placing a high priority on the relational dimensions of life.”¹³⁰ However, Crabtree suggests that “the current services provided for church leaders are generally episodic, piecemeal, and strategically ineffective.”¹³¹ Writing on the training needed for transformational leadership, he states that “the redevelopment of regional associations to provide these services will require a major cultural shift in their organizations from a mono-optional perspective to a multi-optional perspective.”¹³²

Offering mentoring programs has become a must in companies that are concerned about their long-term success. Lassey suggests: “Recent surveys have shown that the main method of training is through on-the-job coaching.”¹³³ Charan, Drotter and Noel are also conclusive: “The best way to learn and grow as a leader is through on-the-job

¹³⁰ Schaller, *Understanding Tomorrow*, 41.

¹³¹ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 3.

¹³² Ibid., 3.

¹³³ Lassey, *Developing a Learning Organization*, 90.

‘stretch’ experiences.”¹³⁴ In the case of churches, this fact presents a challenge of how to have candidates for pastoral ministry serving in leadership positions while completing their studies, and at the same time be guided by capable mentors who oversee their performance.

If the regional associations are responsible for preparing leaders of existent and new churches, their leadership development programs need to be evaluated on a regular basis. As the culture changes, programs need to be updated and many different techniques may be used. As Conger and Benjamin suggest, “Multiple learning methods are essential to a well-designed leadership program.”¹³⁵

These authors also state: “If you ask managers where they learned their leadership abilities, they will often tell you that their job experiences and bosses have contributed the most. Rarely will formal training be mentioned.”¹³⁶ Denominations have traditionally focused all their ministerial formation on formal education. The need to develop action-learning programs seems to be unavoidable. One of the most common shortcomings of

¹³⁴ Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter and James Noel, *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership-powered Company* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 217.

¹³⁵ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 42.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 9.

individual development programs mentioned by Conger is that organizations provide limited or no program follow-up.¹³⁷

In his Ph.D. thesis, *The Effect of Leadership Behaviors and Mentoring Styles upon Presbyterian Church Planters in America*,¹³⁸ Philip Douglass developed the importance of coaching in the church planter endeavor. Delving deeper into this concept, Ted Powers continued to develop the idea of implementing a coaching system for church planters in North America in his dissertation *Church-Planting Apprenticeships: Developing Laborers for the Harvest*. Their works were crucial in establishing the assessment process at Mission to North America, the church-planting arm of the Presbyterian Church of America. One of the main focuses of this program is establishing a coaching system to accompany church planters in their struggles. As stated by Ted Powers on their website, after evaluating many statistics on church planters' failures and needs, "[t]he Church Planting staff of Mission to North America is convinced that on-site

¹³⁷ Ibid., 63.

¹³⁸ Philip Douglass, "The Effect of Leadership Behaviors and Mentoring Styles upon Presbyterian Church Planters in America" (Ph.D. Diss., St. Louis University, 1995).

coaching and mentoring of church planters is absolutely critical to the life and health of our church planting ministry and to the church planter and his family as well.”¹³⁹

Another aspect of coaching that denominations need to focus on is motivation.

“One of the biggest challenges of coaching is communicating information in a motivating manner.”¹⁴⁰ Linking this point to the previous section describing the organizational tendency toward the status quo, it seems to be natural for organizations to discourage risk-takers and encourage maintenance-oriented projects. Supporting and encouraging risk-takers (i.e., church planters in the context of denominations) requires intentional decisions and focus. If we consider the additional factors involved in multicultural settings, as Soong-Chan Rah suggests, “It is critical for a multiethnic church to think in terms of creating a new culture that transcends existing norms.”¹⁴¹

Oscar Romo shares the experience of the Southern Baptist Convention creating ethnic fellowships composed of Southern Baptist ethnic/language-culture churches. He states:

¹³⁹ Ted Powers, “Church Planting Coaching,” Mission to North America, Presbyterian Church of America, www.pcamna.org/church-planting/church-planting-resources/coaching (accessed November 08, 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Charan, Drotter and Noel, *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership-powered Company*, 213.

¹⁴¹ Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, 108.

[t]hese fellowships, confraternities, associations, conventions, conferences, and camp meetings have come into existence to: (1) encourage and maintain a spirit of fellowship; (2) meet the individual needs of churches; (3) encourage the churches to undergird and participate in programs of the Southern Baptist Convention, including gifts to world missions through the Cooperative Program; (4) serve as a link with the “Anglo” associations and state conventions, when necessary.”¹⁴²

Leadership in multicultural settings also adds even more anxiety than in monocultural spaces, which produces a greater need for coaching and mentoring. James and Lilian Breckenridge explain this anxiety in these terms:

Individuals from a cultural minority who seek identity in a larger group may suffer at least three problems specifically associated with minority status. First, they may experience “persecutory anxiety,” a condition that is present when the host environment is perceived as “hostile and persecutory.” Second, they may suffer from “depressive anxiety,” a troubled attitude that ensues when one becomes preoccupied with losses experienced in migration. Finally, one may experience “disorienting anxiety,” the result of the encounter with new concepts of being and living.¹⁴³

Finally, as a way of summary, Jay Conger suggests that some of the new objectives for leadership education are:

...creating dialogue, common vision, and shared commitments to facilitate effective organizational change; orientation toward the bottom line; imparting relevant knowledge that can be applied immediately; building teams of leaders and leaders of teams; disseminating leadership throughout the organization; providing mechanisms and opportunities for

¹⁴² Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 135.

¹⁴³ James and Lilian Breckenridge, *What Color is Your God? Multicultural Education in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 73.

self-development; aligning management and support systems to promote and reinforce ongoing leadership development.¹⁴⁴

Life-long Learning

The literature shows that learning cannot be limited to a once-in-a-lifetime period.

Conger and Benjamin describe it as follows: “Leadership development is a continuous, lifelong process rather than a single discrete event.”¹⁴⁵ As Faircloth puts it, “The basic idea is to ‘keep in training.’ The reason is simple: living things change; the local church is a living thing.”¹⁴⁶ Considering the way that the world is changing on a daily basis, successful leaders need to be updating their knowledge constantly. This principle is definitely applicable to pastors and church planters in relation to their time at seminary. One of the most common shortcomings of individual development programs mentioned by Conger and Benjamin is that “organizations provide limited or no program follow-up.”¹⁴⁷ This principle is applicable to denominations in that follow-up programs are so necessary for recently ordained ministers coming out of a long period of time isolated in seminary.

¹⁴⁴ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 23.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴⁶ Samuel D. Faircloth, *Church Planting for Reproduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 174.

¹⁴⁷ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 63.

According to the literature, not only is continuing education important because of the constant development of the world and theology, but also because the training experience becomes much more valuable after pastors have been actively involved in ministry. Concerning professional learning, Robert Burns mentions a qualitative research study he performed with Covenant Theological Seminary graduates who serve as pastors in Presbyterian denominations. One purpose of that study was to identify the non-formal ways in which pastors learn after their time in seminary. One of the conclusions of the study was that, “as the participating pastors reflected on their seminary education, they viewed it with sincere appreciation, but saw it as limited in providing an understanding of what they would truly experience in ministry. Their learning in practice involved a knowledge that developed on the job.”¹⁴⁸

Continuing education can be very applicable to specific circumstances because participants are being trained on issues that are relevant for their daily assignments. Conger and Benjamin state this idea when they write: “Adult learning theory tells us that adults learn best when topics are relevant to what they need and want to know and thus fit their learning style.”¹⁴⁹ Dotlich and Noel describe the importance of action learning,

¹⁴⁸ Burns, "Pastoral Learning after Seminary," 273.

¹⁴⁹ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 27.

stating: “Action learning takes place in an intensive environment where participants must reflect upon their values, challenge their ideas, and take risks with their behaviors.”¹⁵⁰

Another advantage of action learning programs, according to Conger and Benjamin is that they “also reflect another, more general trend in management development: the shift from individual to team-based training.”¹⁵¹ They state: “These formats involve a continuous process of learning and reflection built around working groups of colleagues, more often with the aim of getting work-related initiatives accomplished.”¹⁵² Churches usually send pastoral candidates to seminary to get training. After seminary, those students are ordained and sent to do ministry. Few organizations value the importance of training in active service, while still being mentored, and being prepared in the place and position for which students are being trained.

Finally, the literature shows that learning is best applied when it occurs over a long period of time. Although intensive courses can be beneficial for saving time and money, their outcome is usually not as valuable as long-term learning. Conger and Benjamin explain, “We know from research on the transfer of learning from training that

¹⁵⁰ Dotlich and Noel, *Action Learning*, 10.

¹⁵¹ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 19.

¹⁵² Ibid., 212.

information learned under distributed periods of training is generally retained longer than in a one-time program.”¹⁵³

Adaptive Leadership

In his book *The Fly in the Ointment*, Crabtree quotes Charles Fulton, director of congregational development for the Episcopal Church:

[Fulton] responds to the 30-year numeric decline in his denomination by pondering the depths of the water: “If it’s related to one event, that can be dealt with and we’ll get beyond it. If it’s a systemic, life cycle issue, it will be harder to turn it around, and it will require a kind of radical leadership that we don’t really encourage right now. Resurrection follows death – it does not follow denial.”¹⁵⁴

In a similar way, Adizes states that “as flexibility declines, the organization mellows.”¹⁵⁵ Denial cannot bring about change; it only preserves the status quo. Crabtree also quotes Einstein: “In order to solve a problem, you have to think in a different way than what created the problem in the first place.”¹⁵⁶ These changes in perspective enable leadership to evolve in many different ways.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 52.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Fulton, “Q&A: Context, Analysis on Church Membership Statistics,” Episcopal News Service Archive, www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_55181_ENG_HTML.htm (accessed 2004), quoted in J. Russell Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment* (New York: Church Publishing, 2008), 10.

¹⁵⁵ Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, 110.

¹⁵⁶ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 15.

Following the idea of adaptive leadership introduced by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky in their book *Leadership on the Line*, Alan Roxburgh states: “The challenge for the reframing of denominational systems is more complex; it requires more than a technical change. It requires an adaptive change.”¹⁵⁷ As Heifetz and Linsky describe it, “Adaptive change stimulates resistance because it challenges people’s habits, beliefs, and values.”¹⁵⁸ They define adaptive leadership as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.”¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Ichak Adizes states that “the challenge of leadership on any level –individual, family, organization and society- is to change continuously and, nevertheless, always remain together.”¹⁶⁰ Also, John Root, in his book *Building Multi-racial Churches*, describes the Church of England’s struggle to develop multiracial parishes and explains that “we need to recognise that a multi-racial church will change us... Such readiness for change must always mark those who would minister cross-culturally.”¹⁶¹ Harris, Moran, and Moran assert that “[e]ffective global

¹⁵⁷ Roxburgh, “Reframing Denominations from a Missional Perspective,” 77.

¹⁵⁸ Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 30.

¹⁵⁹ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 14.

¹⁶⁰ Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, 9.

¹⁶¹ John Root, *Building Multi-Racial Churches* (Oxford: Latimer House, 1994), 27.

leaders believe that cultural differences, if well managed, are resources, not handicaps.”¹⁶² Finally, describing the flexibility needed in a multicultural leader, Earley, Ang, and Tan state:

Among the twenty-first century skills frequently talked about are the ability to adapt constantly to different people from diverse cultures and the ability to manage the interconnectedness of today's world. Interactions in the global workplace require individuals to be sensitive to different cultures, capable of analyzing them as they are encountered, identifying what is required of people from other cultures, and engaging in appropriate interactions with them.¹⁶³

The concept of leadership is changing, and leaders and organizations are now required to develop adaptive characteristics in order to survive and face new challenges. Various writers, including Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, have introduced a provocative issue today related to the power to lead even without formal authority. Adaptive organizations challenge their members to go beyond the authority given to them. Moss Kanter explains, “In organizations that support a culture of pride and change, people are more innovative when they are not told exactly what to do and they do not have full authority to do it anyway.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Harris, Moran and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 37.

¹⁶³ Earley, Ang and Tan, *CQ: Developing Cultural Intelligence At Work*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “Empowerment,” in *The Leader-Manager*, ed. John N. Williamson, 479-504 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986), 479.

This concept is challenging both to members, employees, and to organizations as well. Dotlich and Noel describe it as follows:

One of the imperatives of modern leadership is the ability to think and act independently based on the needs of the situation and the direction of the business. The bureaucratic leader who thinks and acts as she is told or as she expects the organization wants her to act is outdated... Numerous forces conspire to keep the bureaucratic mindset in place and discourage independent and interdependent thinking and action.¹⁶⁵

Now, this concept constantly challenges organizations to re-think positions, functions, and job descriptions. The capacity to function well at one particular level of an organization does not guarantee success in another level. In the context of churches and denominations, a pastor may have a great experience within a congregation, but serving in a regional association or at the denominational level requires another set of skills. This concept also leads us to think about the importance of denominations understanding and valuing the different gifts of their leaders. A good example of this is the need for denominational leaders to better understand the church planters' role, skills, gifts, and attitudes, as well as the role of denominational leaders in charge of the church-planting programs.

When writing on the redevelopment of regional associations to be more effective for church development, Crabtree states:

¹⁶⁵ Dotlich and Noel, *Action Learning*, 135.

The goal of this redevelopment effort would be to create transformational regional associations... [I]t will require a total realignment of the system including organizational culture and structure, redefining what leaders value and do, restructuring revenue streams, reallocating resources, reshaping communication process and content... I am proposing a zero-based recreation of the system, starting with a blank sheet of paper.¹⁶⁶

“For a church to be healthy, it needs healthy leadership,”¹⁶⁷ asserts pastor and church consultant Donald MacNair. In the words of Warren Bennis, “Managers are people who do things right. Leaders are people who do the right thing.”¹⁶⁸ Leadership of good quality that is ready to adapt to new circumstances is a crucial element for the success of any organization or program.

Summary of Literature Review

In light of the literature examined, there are three primary themes that need to be addressed in order to understand how denominations can better serve multicultural church planters. The first theme focuses on the importance and particular challenges of planting a church in a multicultural environment. The second theme examines the role of a denomination and its challenges to come alongside multicultural church planters in their

¹⁶⁶ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Donald J. MacNair, *The Practices of a Healthy Church: Biblical Strategies for Vibrant Church Life and Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1999), 107.

¹⁶⁸ Warren Bennis, “Four Traits of Leadership,” in *The Leader-Manager*, ed. John N. Williamson (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986), 81.

ministry. The third theme explores the leadership skills that are needed in order to enable the transformation of a denomination so that it might become a blessing to multicultural church planters.

These concepts drawn from the literature review will later be compared with the findings of the qualitative research developed for this study. In the next chapter, the methodology procedure will be explained in order to better attest the results of this qualitative research.

Chapter Three

Project Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how church planters in multicultural settings perceive the role of their denomination in enhancing their church-planting venture. The assumption of this study was that denominations are intentionally trying to enhance church-planting efforts and that church planters are willing to receive support and help from their denominations. In order to address the purpose of this study, the researcher identified three main areas of focus that are central in the process. These include the areas of church-planting, church government, and leadership. These areas of focus were intentionally addressed with the multicultural aspect in mind. To examine these areas more closely, the following research questions served as the intended focus for this study:

1. What are the ministry challenges of multicultural church planters?
2. What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as helpful in their ministry challenges?
3. What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as

hindrances in their ministry challenges?

4. What kinds of denominational structure and support do multicultural church planters desire to have for their ministry challenges?

Design of the Study

For this study, the researcher interviewed six pastors who have served as church planters in the Presbyterian Church in Argentina in the past ten years with a multicultural aspect in their ministry. Two of these church plants have become particular churches, two of them have failed to be established, and the other two are still in process. One of the assumptions in this research is that one can learn from positive and negative experiences. Most of the interviewed pastors are still active in the denomination, while two of them have left it. Size of membership, style of worship, location, and other church characteristics were not taken into consideration. The focus of the research was on the multicultural church planters' experience in their relation to the denomination.

This study was conducted through the method of a qualitative research. Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, describes qualitative research as being “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they

have in the world.”¹⁶⁹ Merriam identifies four key characteristics regarding the nature of qualitative research: “[T]he focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive.”¹⁷⁰ The difference with quantitative research can be described as follows:

Quantitative research is effective when studying large groups or samples and making generalizations about relationships among variables to a broader group or population; while qualitative research is effective at examining in-depth understandings about a given phenomenon by a particular group of individuals at the expense of generalizability.¹⁷¹

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data-gathering. This qualitative method provided for the discovery of the most comprehensive and descriptive data from participant perspectives. This study used participant criteria in order to minimize variables for this in-depth research. Therefore, all of the participants share the same institutional structure and were involved in similar ministries. All of them are part of the St. Andrews presbytery in the Presbyterian Church in Argentina and have served in church plants in Argentina within the last ten years.

¹⁶⁹ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 13.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 14.

¹⁷¹ Donna H. Redmann, Judith J. Lambrecht and Wanda L. Stitt-Gohdes, “The Critical Incident Technique: A Tool for Qualitative Research,” *Delta Pi Epsilon* XXXXII, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 132.

Because the variables involved in the data analysis are more focused, this narrow criterion for participants provided avenues for enhanced exploration of the intricacies of multicultural church-planting issues. As an additional advantage, the study's analysis work provided a fuller understanding of the single context of multicultural church-planting in the context of a Presbyterian denomination in Argentina. Thus, the study enabled the researcher to gain a more complete, emic perspective of those involved in multicultural church-planting.

Proposed Design Tools

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. According to Jessica Schluter, Philippa Seaton, and Wendy Chapoyer, "The individual interview format is seen as an appropriate method of data collection because it allows for greater opportunity for discussion than other methods."¹⁷² The open-ended nature of interview questions facilitated the ability to build upon participant responses to complex issues in order to explore them more thoroughly. As Merriam explains, "Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways."¹⁷³

¹⁷² Jessica Schluter, Philippa Seaton and Wendy Chapoyer, "Critical Incident Technique: A User's Guide for Nurse Researchers," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 61, no. 1 (2008): 109.

¹⁷³ Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 90.

Ultimately, these methods enabled the researcher to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants in this study.

A pilot test of the interview protocol was performed to help evaluate the questions for clarity and usefulness in eliciting relevant data. Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but open to evolve around the explanations and descriptions emerging from doing constant comparison work during the interview process.

Prior to the interview, each pastor received a letter explaining the purpose of the research, the consent form, and the protocol questions to be asked. Because the native language of Argentina is Spanish, the interviews were performed in Spanish, as were the transcriptions and the analysis in order to stay with the emic perspective. Findings were then reported in English and direct quotes translated by the researcher.

The interviews were audiotaped with a digital recorder. By conducting one interview every week, the researcher completed the data gathering in the course of six weeks. After each interview, field notes with descriptive and reflective observations were written. As soon as possible and always within one week of each meeting, the researcher personally transcribed each interview by playing back the digital recording on a computer and typing out each transcript. In this study, the researcher utilized the constant

comparative method of routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process. As Merriam explains, “The constant comparative method [of data analysis] involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences.”¹⁷⁴ Coding and categorizing the data while continuing the process of interviewing also allowed for the emergence of new sources of data. When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed. The analysis focused on discovering and identifying common themes, patterns, and experiences across the variation of participants, as well as congruence or discrepancy among the participants’ perceptions of the role of the denomination in their ministry.

Interview Guide

The interview protocol contained the following pre-prepared questions:

Warm-up questions:

1. How did you get involved in ministry within the Presbyterian church of Argentina?
2. What kind of ministries were you involved in that included multicultural challenges?

RQ1: What are the ministry challenges of multicultural church planters?

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 30.

1. Tell me some of the challenges you experienced in your multicultural ministry.
2. Can you remember a major incident that you had to face in your multicultural ministry?

RQ2: What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as helpful in their ministry challenges?

1. In what ways did you feel the denomination was a blessing to your ministry when facing multicultural challenges?
2. Tell me about a time when you said, “Thank you God for the denomination!”

RQ3: What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as hindrances in their ministry challenges?

1. In what ways did you feel the denomination was an obstacle to your ministry in facing multicultural challenges?
2. Tell me about a time when you thought, “I wish I was working with another denomination!”

RQ4: What kinds of denominational structure and support do multicultural church planters desire to have for their ministry challenges?

1. If you could have asked anything of the denomination, in what ways would you envision the denomination enhancing your multicultural efforts?
2. If you were on the committee of church development, what initiatives would be most critical for you to pursue to help church leaders facing the multicultural challenge?

Sampling Criteria

This research required participants who were able to communicate in depth about the process of multicultural church-planting while working under the authority of a denomination. Participants were purposefully chosen to provide variation in the results of their church-planting efforts. The study was conducted through personal interviews with six pastors who have been involved in church-planting with the Presbyterian Church in Argentina within the last ten years. Although this study did not assume any particular polity, it was important that all the interviewees were from the same denomination in order to compare their perceptions of the same organization and structure. Two of these church planters have achieved success in their ministry and the congregations that resulted from their church-planting effort are still part of the denomination. Three participants have had a more difficult experience and those church plants were discontinued. The remaining church planter who was interviewed is still in the process of

planting a church. They all were invited to participate in these interviews via an introductory letter, followed by a personal phone call. All expressed interest and gave written informed consent to participate.

Each participant was asked to complete a one-page, biographic questionnaire before the interview. The questionnaire asked for information concerning the selection criteria above, including number of years in ministry, in the denomination, and in this particular church plant; age; family; theological education degree; part-time or full-time ministry; and ministry supervision.

Limitations of the Study

Due to limited time and resources, only the six pastors mentioned above were interviewed for this study, and participants were limited to those serving in the Presbyterian Church in Argentina. Because all are male, as no female pastors matched the criteria, this study presents the limitation of an absence of female considerations. Some of the study's findings may be generalized to relate to other similar multicultural challenges and church-planting settings in other denominations. Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions on the relationship between multicultural church planters and their denominations should test those aspects in their particular context. As with all qualitative studies, the readers bear the responsibility to

determine what can be appropriately applied to their context. Lincoln and Guba developed the concept of transferability, in which “the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought.”¹⁷⁵ The results of this study may also have implications for pastors and leaders serving in different capacities in the context of a denomination.

Researcher Position

There are at least three areas or biases that affect the researcher’s stance. The first area is that the researcher himself is a pastor in the same denomination that is being studied. The study is, thus, written from the perspective of an insider-outsider. On the one hand, this fact may appear as a counterproductive bias, but the researcher’s deeper knowledge of the denomination allows him to get a better insider perspective. On the other hand, the researcher has had a lot of experience serving with non-denominational organizations, and he has also worked within other denominations. In addition, being from the same denomination allowed for a closer relationship between the researcher and the participants, which also provided for a better context for the interviews. As Schluter,

¹⁷⁵ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1985), 298.

Seaton, and Chapoyer assert, “Developing a supportive relationship with participants is imperative in CIT [Critical Incident Technique] interviews that have the declared intention of eliciting ‘best’ and ‘worst’ events.”¹⁷⁶

Additionally, the researcher is also from Argentina and a native Spanish speaker, thus sharing the same language as the interviewees. Finally, the researcher is also a multicultural church planter and is very much involved in the denomination.

Summary of the Project Methodology

This chapter described the qualitative research approach that allowed for a deeper, emic analysis of the multicultural church planters perspective on the role of denominations in their ministry. The next chapter will present the interview findings.

¹⁷⁶ Schluter, Seaton and Chapoyer, “Critical Incident Technique: A User's Guide for Nurse Researchers,” 110.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which denominations can serve multicultural church planters in their ministry. To that end, this chapter utilizes the findings from six pastoral interviews and reports on common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions for this study. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish because it is the common native language of both the researcher and the interviewees. The collected data were also transcribed and analyzed in Spanish to maintain a close relationship with the emic perspectives. The researcher translated into English only those phrases that were quoted in the report.

Introduction of Pastors Interviewed During This Study

Six pastors were selected to participate in this study. All of these pastors were men. In the following section, each participant will be briefly introduced. All the participants' names and identifiable information have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Pastor Jack has been ordained for ten years with the Presbyterian church and has served six years as a missionary in a multicultural setting. He is forty-six years old, married, and the father of one daughter. Jack completed a two-year Master of Arts degree with an emphasis in theology. He is currently the pastor of a small, particular church. During his years as a multicultural church planter, he served as a full-time missionary, and the session of his mother church supervised his ministry. The church Jack planted focused on a very poor and peripheral community that included many South American immigrants. After six years planting that church, there were too many conflicts in the congregation, and the church plant was discontinued.

Pastor Erik is a recently ordained minister who served as a ruling elder for seven years in a multicultural church plant with many South American immigrants. Since his ordination six months ago, he has served as a church planter. He is thirty-six years old, married, and has three children. Erik completed a four-year bachelor's degree in theology. He is currently serving part-time and under the supervision of the presbytery's missions committee.

Pastor Bob has served the Lord as an ordained minister for eighteen years in the Presbyterian Church in Argentina as a church planter and now as lead pastor of the church that he planted. He is forty-eight years old. He earned a Master of Divinity and is

also a Certified Public Accountant. Bob served mostly as a full-time church planter, although he is now a part-time pastor. People from many different backgrounds form the church he planted. Many members are immigrants from different countries within South America. Most of them are middle to low class. This church was the first plant in the presbytery that was not focused on reaching the middle to high-class community. While Bob planted the church, the presbytery supervised his work.

Pastor Ben is fifty-four years old. He is married with three sons and one daughter. He was ordained twenty-four years ago in the Presbyterian Church in Argentina. Previously, Ben ministered within a Pentecostal community. Ben's first ministry in the presbytery was to revitalize a dying Scottish congregation. Even though he is not Scottish and did not speak the English language well, he served at that community for fourteen years and God blessed his ministry by revitalizing the congregation. When Ben left, the vibrant congregation included many Scots, as well as many others from different cultures. He earned a four-year bachelor's degree in theology while he served as a full-time minister. The local session of that church supervised his work.

Pastor Joseph has been ordained for eleven years and served within the Presbyterian Church in Argentina as a missionary for five years. He was born and reared in a foreign country and came to Argentina to serve as a church planter in a different

culture than the denomination's majority culture. Pastor Joseph is forty-one years old and married with two children. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in theology and is currently serving as a full-time professor in a theological seminary.

Pastor Sam is a church planter, originally from another country, who came to serve God within the Presbyterian Church in Argentina fourteen years ago. He has been ordained for twenty-eight years. Eleven of those years Sam served as a church planter in a different culture than the denomination's majority culture. Pastor Sam is now fifty-three years old and married. He and his wife have three children and one grandson. Sam has always served as a full-time pastor. The church that he planted is still in the process of growing, but it has left the denomination and is now an independent congregation. Pastor Sam has also served in a para-church multicultural ministry, developing a Hispanic congregation within an Anglo church.

As the researcher interviewed each of these men about their multicultural ministry experience, common themes emerged. Those themes will now be explored.

Common Ministry Challenges of Multicultural Church Planters

The first research question asked what specific ministry challenges multicultural church planters face. As described in the interviewees' introductions, a multicultural church leader may serve in a congregation formed by multiple cultures, a mono-cultural

congregation while belonging to another culture, a congregation with a different culture than the majority culture in its denomination, or a combination of these aspects. The researcher will highlight and address challenges mentioned by three or more interviewees under section headings and other less frequent but helpful answers will be included at the end of this section under a general heading.

Communication

Five of the interviewees referred to difficulties in communication as one of the most easily recognized challenges faced by multicultural church planters and leaders. Some of the interviewees faced the challenge of working with a different language than their own. A majority referred to communication problems that arose among people who were from different countries but used the same language, problems such as using different accents and arriving at contrasted conclusions based on the same information.

Joseph faced the language challenge as a missionary learning a new language. Jack faced a different language challenge while serving a congregation that included people groups from different areas of South America. Even though his congregants shared the Spanish language, Jack perceived a significant difference in the way that each congregant processed the information that was communicated. Ben, a Spanish-speaking pastor who was called to serve in an Anglo church, expressed his effort to learn the

English language, even though he was living in a Spanish-speaking country. He also shared, “I felt despised by some English-speaking people because even though they all knew Spanish, they kept insisting on talking to me in English and making me feel frustrated.” For Bob, communication as the transmission of concepts was the major challenge. Regarding the need for good communication, he stated, “Nothing should be taken for granted, and we cannot assume that all that we say is correctly understood. Not only do we have to make sure we are giving out a correct message, but also that the receptor is understanding what we are saying.” Finally, Sam shared his experience of planting a church in another country and expressed that many people did not understand some words or illustrations he used in sermons.

Time

Five interviewees referred to time as another major challenge. They expressed two unique challenges connected to time. Some shared their experience of the congregation as a whole taking more time achieving goals, making decisions, and seeing growth in multicultural contexts than in mono-cultural ministries. Other pastors expressed how they personally needed more time to adjust to working in a multicultural environment.

Joseph shared that adjusting to a foreigner's context is in itself a disadvantage; time is required to understand the new environment. He explained, "You need time to discover new things that you thought you had understood, but then realize you had not." Jack also shared how he needed a lot of time to learn another culture. Regarding time, he said, "The best way of learning their cultures was just spending time with them."

Ben understood from the first moment that his multicultural ministry would take time. When someone in his congregation was impatient about the slow pace of change, he answered, "Changes take time...I need the sausages to be well cooked, not burned." Bob agreed, "We need to [understand] that in a multicultural context, we always make progress more slowly, but the slower process may end up being more valuable and creating a more permanent result."

Sam had a different experience. His multicultural ministry was growing faster than the mono-cultural mother church. In his experience, the time factor was also a challenge but for a different reason: everything went too fast. In addition, their mother church could not adapt to their new reality as fast as they needed.

Training

Four interviewees addressed the need for better training. These pastors confessed their need for deeper theological, ministerial, or cultural training before being involved in a multicultural ministry.

Joseph, as a missionary, expressed the disadvantage of going to an unknown culture: “As a foreigner, you know that there are many things that you do not know. But there are also many things that you think you have understood and very soon you find out you haven’t.” Joseph added that people did not tell him what they really thought and would not correct him when he was making cultural mistakes. Later in the interview he reiterated, “At the beginning, I was very well disposed but I didn’t know exactly what I was going to do. Being there, I didn’t have the necessary filters to understand priorities and needs of the culture where I was serving.” Joseph confessed, “It would have been good to have a close and honest helper to instruct me.”

Like Joseph, Sam confessed his lack of preparation. He acknowledged, “At the beginning, I did not know all these challenges. Nobody instructed me on these issues. I was very concerned [about being] theologically instructed and [adhering to] good doctrine, but did not realize the importance of being trained in human relations.”

Jack explained how he spent time learning about different cultures: “One of my challenges as a multicultural missionary was to get to know the different cultures, being from another culture myself.” Ben also shared that he had been raised in a multicultural environment. He had grown up in a church where most people were from a culture different than his own and parts of the worship service were held in a language he did not know. Ben stated, “...good training in handling cultural differences is of great help.”

Liturgy

Four interviewees struggled to reconcile important cultural differences within their church’s liturgy. Jack, for example, expressed it this way: “My first temptation was to project the characteristics of my mother church into the new target area. I was completely wrong and it took some time to realize it.” Later he explained, “We had to face some conflicts due to the use of time and forms of worship. We had to learn to create our own worship style, different from our own preferences.”

Ben shared, “Liturgy, music and culture are very close to each other. Liturgies have an important amount of flavor of the culture it represents.” Ben and his wife, as musicians, spoke into the liturgy of their church by singing hymns of the original culture of the church but also proposing some changes. He stated, “To develop a liturgy that is new to that group is a wonderful work.” In the same sense, Erik explained that the

worship style was a big challenge, especially selecting the most appropriate music for that multicultural environment. He stated that he always tried to prevent "...the music from being a place of dispute and of preeminence of one culture over the others." Finally, Sam also shared that he had many discussions regarding the use of different instruments.

Racial Reconciliation

Four pastors mentioned racial conflict as a challenge within their multicultural congregations. Ben experienced many struggles related to racial tension and reconciliation. As a young, Hispanic, senior pastor serving a Scottish church, Ben stretched many members of his congregation. His church struggled to survive because it insisted on continuing as a mono-cultural church, and it refused to open its doors to other cultures. He remembers, "Other pastors who had come before me were treated with much disdain." Ben told how difficult it was for him to keep the doors of the church open, because the church leaders were always locking all the doors trying not to lose control. He called it "[t]he war of the keys: nobody could come to church without their permission." He remembered that he came to the conclusion that "losing control was less dangerous than losing the life of the church." Ben felt like he could bear the congregants' disdain, but as a pastor, he could not tolerate the church treating new members that way. He remembered a phrase that expressed how session members thought about Argentinean

leaders: “What can you expect? Argentinean Railways...these people can’t do things as we do.”¹⁷⁷ He went on to explain his reaction: “Soon I realized that we could not work only toward the assimilation of another culture, but toward a more heterogeneous congregation. We did not try to change one culture for another; we did not attempt to extinguish one culture to install another one. Cultural diversity is always more flavorful.”

Bob also insisted on the need to emphasize the message of unity and love in these multicultural contexts, because “The different groups are not naturally attracted to each other and many misunderstandings can occur. Diverse groups are naturally segregated while we need to intentionally congregate them.”

Sam had to help his Anglo congregation see their racist attitudes because they were blind to the racism at first. He remembers that even simple things such as the cleanliness of the sanctuary or how money was budgeted caused racial problems. Sam recalls that one of the biggest conflicts was “When we brought homeless people, or even some brothers from a lower social class. We need to realize that cultural diversity often

¹⁷⁷ This phrase cannot be comprehended without its context. Immigrants from Great Britain had brought the railways to Argentina and started teaching the Argentineans to run the railway system. When the leadership was passed on to the Argentineans, many problems arose. So this phrase became very common between British immigrants who despised Argentineans: “Argentinean Railways.”

also means social differences, and one culture despising another one not for their color, but for their social position.”

General Answers

One or two interviewees shared challenges to their multicultural ministry that were worth noting even though they were not widely discussed.

Two of the interviewees mentioned that they faced conflicts due to different concepts of morality or sanctity among different cultures. Diverse cultures act in different ways and live with different values. Both pastors related how important it was to develop kingdom values that help their congregations discern their cultural values.

Two other interviewees referred to the different expectations that they faced. Joseph did not expect so much resistance from the congregation he was going to serve. He stated, “When you go as a missionary, you assume you will be well received. I soon realized that was not the case.”

Finally, Bob shared the need for theological contextualization. He translated theological concepts to be understood by his congregation without losing his own theological perspective or the denomination’s doctrinal standards. Bob fought for both theological purity and clarity within his church, a difficult goal to achieve.

These church leaders shared with the researcher several challenges they faced in multicultural ministry including language and communication, time, training, liturgy, racial reconciliation, morality, expectations and theological contextualization. While these multicultural pastors faced many challenges, they also received help and support for their work. The next section will describe how the interviewees' denomination helped their ministry.

Denominational Help for Multicultural Church Planters

The second research question explored the interviewees' perception about how their denomination helped to enhance their ministry. Their answers have been grouped into four major topics, and they will be presented in order of relevance.

Accompaniment

Five of the six pastors recalled a time in their ministry when they had to face conflict and felt their denomination's accompaniment encouraging them and helping them thrive. Joseph shared that "[t]here were times of conflict and also times of celebration, when we felt accompanied, sheltered by presbytery leaders. We felt we were part of something bigger than our small group." For Jack, it was very important that his mother church "trusted me. I felt very accompanied at least in some aspects by the session (of our mother church)...especially when we had to deal with conflicts. Some

leaders were asking me to leave the denomination and become an independent church, but the session got involved and supported me in this conflict.”

Although Ben expressed how at first his denomination did not support him, he later remembered that he received valuable support from other pastors. He stated, “At the beginning, I did not have support from my denomination, although they would not fight against me either,...but I received support and encouragement from a foreigner pastor in our denomination who came and told me, ‘Ben, go and build up the church of Christ, and if the Scottish want to go, don’t throw them out’.”

Bob also shared that when tensions arose in the congregation and he had problems with elders, he “always felt the accompaniment of the presbytery and the relief of knowing that I was not alone.” In the same sense, Erik recalls feeling “a wide support from the presbytery.” Especially when they had problems with some leaders in the congregation, he recalls having peace because “I was not alone. I was accompanied by elders from other churches and I know they also had pastoral attitudes toward those who were involved in the conflict.”

All the pastors who mentioned how their denomination’s accompaniment helped them also referred especially to times of conflict, when they needed someone above them to come alongside them.

Confessional Standards

Three interviewees saw an advantage in having confessional standards dictated by their denomination. According to Ben, the confessional standards helped bring a sense of truth and of teaching to his congregation. Therefore, Ben would not teach by presenting his own theology but the theological tradition shared by the denomination. Bob also considered the confessional standards as helpful “because they provide theological strength.” Finally, Erik employed the theological resources from the denomination to train others.

Connectional System

Three interviewees referred to the importance of belonging to a connectional system where local churches and church leaders work together in the development of the church. Joseph shared, “The connectional nature of the Presbyterian church has much strength, although I had to take the initiative to get involved. That gave me emotional support that was very good. Planting a church is usually a quite lonely task. It is ideal for the church planters to have fellowship and friendships with whom they can pray for each other and for the mission of the church.”

Bob also valued the connectional system as a way of avoiding loneliness in ministry. Finally, Sam shared his need of having fellowship with other pastors. He sees how “For a pastor, the presbytery can function as a place of shelter, where to find peace.”

Form of Government

Beyond the connectional system that the Presbyterian church offers, two pastors noted the help that the Presbyterian form of government extends to pastors in multicultural ministry settings. Ben explained, “I strongly believe in the Presbyterian form of government. I feel it is good for the church, and it helps the church to know where to go and how to go there, without having to fight about how they will organize the church.” In the same way, Erik shared that “The Book of Church Order is a good tool as a guide to the task that has to be developed and the steps to follow.”

The interviewees saw their denomination support their multicultural church ministry by providing accompaniment, confessional standards, a connectional system, and a form of government. While their denomination helped in many areas, in other areas the denomination also hindered ministry. The next section summarizes how the interviewees’ perceived the obstacles their denomination brought to their ministries.

Denominational Hindrances for Multicultural Church Planters

The third research question explored different ways in which the denomination, in attempting to enhance ministry, hindered the work of these multicultural church leaders. The researcher categorized the interviewees' answers into themes that were mentioned by two or more participants.

Lack of Cultural Awareness

All the pastors interviewed referred to different ways in which the cultural identity of the denomination was problematic. Jack, for example, struggled to help his session understand the cultural differences between the mother church and the church plant. He stated, "The session could never interpret the cultural differences and they would not recognize the new congregation as a Presbyterian church, according to their conceptions of what a Presbyterian church should be." Later he summarized his difficulties: "When the church plant started to shape its own identity, that was the time when, if the denomination didn't accept us as a particular church, we were ready to leave the denomination."

Some of the interviewees described how the denominational leaders mistrusted their ministries. The interviewees believed the mistrust was rooted in misunderstandings about the cultural reality of their ministries. Jack, whose experience was already

mentioned, recalled how he felt in that process: “First, I had to leave my own culture and get adjusted to a multicultural setting. But when I had to come back to my own culture, they would not understand me anymore! They trusted me when I was sent, but when I started to assimilate into other cultures, they became suspicious of our ministry.” In the same way, Bob recalled, “Sometimes I felt the need to show the presbytery that we can indeed work with other cultures and low social classes. I had to fight to feel inside of the presbytery and insist on being just as the other pastors, although working in different contexts.”

Joseph expressed, “There are many cultural challenges within our denomination;...there needs to be much commitment, wisdom and love to move the church beyond one’s own culture.” Ben saw a lack of cultural awareness in his congregation and how its strong cultural identity became problematic in helping other cultures feel welcomed. He mentioned, for example, “The properties, the church buildings and the reputation of being formed by high class people can be an obstacle.”

Sam also remembered how he felt: “Some presbytery leaders felt embarrassed for being identified with me for being from a different culture;...I just felt they were watching me all the time. They didn’t trust me and were expectant to see me get into trouble.”

Timing and Bureaucracy

Four interviewees experienced their denomination delay a decision that would have benefitted their ministries. Also, they dealt with internal bureaucracy that felt like a waste of time.

Joseph believes that his congregation could have become a particular church more rapidly in another denomination, but instead his denomination delayed and extended the process. He remembered, “We worked during many years in groups that would have been declared as particular churches in other denominations...The process to become a church is so long that we felt like second class citizens for a long time.” Jack also recalled,

I think the mother church made a mistake: they did not let go of the church plant at the right time, when we were already asking to be particularized. We were financially stable, were preparing ruling elders, the church was growing, but since the session was not sure how to proceed, the congregation felt it as a lack of confidence and lost the initial vigor.

Erik, referring to the denominational government documents, stated, “Many times we focus more in the law and forget the spirit of the law.” He elaborated, “The Book of Church Order’s proceedings are sometimes used to extend the time and some unnecessary steps are added that restrains the ministry.” Sam put it bluntly, “Many times the denomination is felt as a waste of time, when the structure is not functional to the mission and the change seems unattainable.”

Rigidity for Leadership Training

Four interviewees mentioned the need for help in leadership training and the rigidity they experienced in their denomination. Joseph explained it from his perspective:

“I feel that the denominational perception of leadership training is frontloaded. I agree with aiming at a high quality of leadership, but it is better to propose continuing education... I had people that should have been ordained as elders or considered as leaders, but the denomination made it too difficult.” Jack experienced a similar rigidity.

In one instance, Jack tried to ordain a number of elders, but the mother church rejected them. He explained,

They were expecting ruling elders of the mother church type. It was a double-sided problem: we did not have people from the mother church culture to become elders in our congregation, but if there were, most probably, they would not be effective either because they were from another culture... My session could not understand that I was forming elders for another neighborhood; not elders for the mother church.

In a similar way, Sam stated, “The denomination was too slow to ordain elders and the standard for ordaining pastors was too high.”

Bob proposed that the rigid expectations for leadership were an obstacle because they did not allow for personality diversity. He concluded, “The denomination was assuming certain types of leadership as more Presbyterian than others without a biblical or theological foundation, but built upon the custom of the majority culture.”

Inflexible Tradition

Three interviewees described an inflexible view of tradition as a hindrance to their ministries, especially in areas affecting ecclesiological decisions and denominational procedures. Joseph expressed how “[t]he denomination had ideas too specific on what a church should be and what can’t be accepted. They expected certain characteristics that were not biblical. We worked hard during many years in a congregation that would have been declared as a particular church in other denominations.” As a church planter, Joseph said, “I felt frustrated because they made the process too long and too complicated, not allowing different ways of being a church.”

Bob bluntly diagnosed the problem as “too much bureaucracy.” He also found many preconceptions and prejudices at the denominational level. He stated, “I had to challenge many preconceptions at the presbytery on what it means to be Presbyterian and Reformed pastors and churches, because many things were assumed as being Presbyterian, but they were only habits at this presbytery, not having necessarily a biblical or reformed theological foundation.”

Sam explained it in his own words, “I had to confront many dinosaurs,...those pastors and elders that always refer to how things were done in the past.” He clarified

saying, “A dinosaur doesn’t need to be an old person; we have young people acting as dinosaurs.”

Lack of a Master Plan

Two interviewees mentioned frustration that resulted from their denomination’s lack of a master plan. Joseph explained, “It was contradictory,...on the one hand, there was no master plan, no formal directives, or explanation on how things should be done and a procedure manual to guide the process,...on the other hand, they had very definite ideas of what they wanted us to do.” He emphasized, “If the presbytery had a plan, the process could be more agile.” Bob agreed, “I always thought that a master plan is what is lacking for church planting, so that the presbytery, including church planters, candidates, and supportive churches, can be on the same page when analyzing the process being made to plant the church.”

Long-distance Supervision

Two participants mentioned the problem of ineffective, long-distance supervision. Jack shared how his session limited itself because they did not want to get to know the congregation. He stated, “Distance was a problem...The session wanted to understand all that was happening just during a meeting,...but cultures cannot be understood in a

meeting. The elders needed to come and see. At that time, I felt really lonely, frustrated and misunderstood.”

Sam also shared a similar experience, recounting how “The presbytery leaders could not really grasp what was going on and brought suggestions that were inadequate for the situation;...when they visited the church, they started to be critical of the liturgy and questioned my pastoral authority.”

According to the interviewees, their denomination hindered their multicultural ministry through its lack of cultural awareness, timing and bureaucracy, rigid leadership training, inflexible tradition, lack of a master plan, and long-distance supervision. The participants proposed helpful changes in their denominational structure and support that could more effectively support multicultural ministry. The next section will explore these proposals.

Proposed Changes in Denominational Structure and Support

The final research question sought to determine what kinds of denominational structures and support multicultural church leaders desire. This question asked the pastors to reflect on how denominations can improve their role and enhance multicultural church-planting projects.

Accompaniment, Involvement, and Trust

Five participants referred to the importance of feeling accompanied by their denominations. When the denomination accompanied these pastors, not from a distance, but with a close relationship with the missionary and his family, the denomination enhanced the pastor's work. This need of accompaniment must include trust. When the participants spoke of accompaniment, their definition included a close, trust-filled relationship between those exercising supervision, themselves, and their church. The participants valued the wisdom and support given by the presbytery through accompaniment but resented it when the relationship took on a boss-employee feel.

Jack reflected on his expectations for the committee that was supervising him. He stated, "You may have resources and great potential, but if you are not involved, all the rest is useless. The work of a committee cannot be reduced to an office; they need to come out and do field work, trying to understand and get to know people from the congregations they are supervising." Ben shared how important it was for him when the denomination received and trusted him. He explained, "I was examined in my doctrine, my knowledge of the Bible, but they were not trying to find any other problem;...beyond the normal examinations, they trusted me. Denominational leaders need to know when to believe in candidates and pastors, building trust and producing confidence." Sam agreed,

“The missionary needs the committee to endorse the authority and dignity of the ministry in front of the congregation, showing respect and confidence to the pastor... The kind of accompaniment that is needed is a close presence avoiding the image of a boss, always confirming that the pastor is in charge.”

Bob agreed that missionaries need “permanent, continuous and close accompaniment, including the pastor and his family.” Erik added another factor to the need of accompaniment: “Missionaries need to be heard, they need to feel that their opinion is valued, and at the same time, they need to be shepherded.” He also shared the idea of bringing the supervision committees out of the office. Erik stated, “The committee needs to commit to participating in the mission fields, not only during a formal meeting but also visiting the new congregations. This involvement requires time, money, shepherding and prayer.” Finally, Sam added, “Besides having the supervision committee shepherding the pastor and family, the denomination can also provide for improving the fellowship between pastors and their families.”

Training and Assessment

Four participants valued having their denomination provide training and assessment to better fulfill their ministry tasks. Even though Joseph had all the theological degrees required for ordination, he confessed, “I had never had specific

training on church planting... I did what came to mind, but never received clear advice on how I was doing. An assessment process is very helpful to avoid pastors getting involved in a ministry that is not for them.” Joseph insisted that when providing this targeted training, “[t]he denomination needs to make clear that they value formal education, but church planters need to receive specific training on church planting and cross-cultural ministry.” Bob commented, “The denomination needs to make sure that the pastor is suitable for church planting.” Sam also shared, “The denomination needs to discover if the candidates for cross-cultural ministries are apt, have the gifts needed and the optimal personality types to handle this challenge.”

Reflecting on the time that a candidate spends in seminary, Erik came to the conclusion that “[f]ield work is essential. During their theological preparation, candidates should have practical experiences in different churches or mission fields, going beyond their comfort zone, getting in touch with other cultures.”

Master Plan

Three participants expressed a desire for their denomination to have a master plan as an essential resource. A master plan would clearly outline a missionary’s job description, their ministry goals and the steps to achieve those goals. Bob clarified, “A master plan is very helpful for the missionary because it helps you understand the

guidelines of what you are doing, offering orientation.” He also added the importance of having “the right pressure concerning goals,...not imposing a heavy burden but avoiding the lack of incentive.” Sam agreed, “It is necessary to have a plan for missions and evangelism so that the missionary can know his responsibilities.”

Joseph, coming from another culture, perceived that “[t]he denominational leaders had a certain prejudice against canned resources, having preference for the organic materials. Of course, all resources need to be contextualized, but I would have preferred to have a more specific project and strategy so that all people involved can know and evaluate where we were and where we were aiming at.” Later, he explained, “If we have a plan, we can better understand the goals of each stage and get assessment and feedback on the implementation of those stages.”

Life-long Learning

Three participants referred to the importance of going beyond formal education and assessment. They desired ongoing training and a forum for sharing ideas and resources for ministry. Joseph proposed, “Instead of having such a high standard for ordination, it would be better to lower the initial prerequisites and get a commitment from the pastors to submit to an ongoing training process.” He clarified, saying, “Denominations need to work to design a training program that suits the reality and needs

of their context, addressing their leaders' challenges." Joseph challenged anyone designing such a program "to avoid two extremes: overestimating pastors' expertise and underestimating what they can learn."

Ben saw another benefit to continuing education: "Life-long learning puts all pastors at the same level, improving fellowship, and the idea of forming peers, not followers." Learning to share ministry resources and how to learn together could allow pastors to both grow in their ministry skills and feel less lonely in their work. According to Ben, "Pastors need colleagues, not bosses."

Bob shared that "The importance of life-long learning is crucial because the church planter is on the front line. Denominations should try to strengthen the unification of church planters because it allows for cross-pollination, providing resources and a place for church planters to dialogue and be shepherded."

Multicultural Openness

Three participants shared how important it is for denominations to be culturally open and ready to adapt to different circumstances. Jack, for example, suggested "Committees or sessions involved in supervising multicultural ministries should try to be a multicultural body, meaning that they should be formed by people from different cultures. If that were not possible, I would ask them to learn to interpret other cultures

different from the majority culture in the denomination;...we all need to be nourished by and learn from each other.” Then he continued, stating, “Mission committees should start to see the city as a multicultural place. We need to open our minds. If we don’t, we will always fail at missions. We need to understand that we are submerged into a new situation, having to learn different ways of doing things.”

Bob shared about the importance of “working the contextualization of theological elements, developing a Presbyterian identity in multicultural spheres, and depriving the gospel of the added historical and cultural carcass.” Sam exposed the same idea but referring to the ecclesiastic structure. He stated, “We need the structure to be more flexible, avoiding too many regulations. Missionaries need to find out how to adapt a Presbyterian government to the new congregation’s culture.”

Financial Support

Finally, three participants talked about the importance of receiving financial support from their denomination for two reasons. First, if missionaries receive financial support from their denomination, they can devote themselves to ministry without worrying for their family’s welfare. Missionaries are then free from a great burden and stress and can better focus on their work. Second, if missionaries receive financial

support from their denomination, they will not have to receive money from a different culture that might want to control their work through money.

Ben clearly expressed his feelings, saying, “It is the denomination’s task to provide enough financial support, protecting pastors from the economic control of other cultures, keeping them free from the good or bad humor of local people who may try to dominate the situation through money.” Bob added, “Financial support is very important to have the missionary focused on important matters.”

However, both Ben and Sam wanted a healthy balance regarding financial support. Ben stated, “Overfeeding the financial status of a project might be harmful, but stimulating and providing confidence to a pastor is essential.” Sam referred to the importance of “avoiding the economical manipulation from dinosaurs who enjoy being bosses.”

In this section, participants described the ideal structure and support that they would expect from their denomination. The main areas in which the multicultural church planters desired to receive help from their denominations were accompaniment, involvement and trust, training and assessment, a master plan, life-long learning, multicultural openness, and financial support.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined the data collected during interviews with multicultural church leaders. This data was processed and analyzed in order to uncover common themes, patterns and concerns. The research provided a description of the congruencies or discrepancies found between the participants' answers. Each interview was transcribed and analyzed utilizing the constant comparative method, and findings were categorized under different subheadings regarding each of the major research questions.

The first research question examined the common themes regarding the challenges that multicultural church planters have to face in their ministries. The answers from the participants were summarized under these headings: language/communication, time factor, training, liturgy, racial reconciliation, and other general answers.

The second research question explored how the participants perceived their denomination's role in blessing their ministries. The analysis brought these general answers: accompaniment, confessional standards, connectional system, and form of government.

The third research question analyzed the participants' perceptions on how their denomination hindered their ministries. These findings were categorized under the following headings: lack of cultural awareness, timing and bureaucracy, rigidity of

leadership training, inflexible tradition, lack of a master plan, and long-distance supervision.

Finally, the fourth research question asked the participants what they would desire to receive from their denomination. These answers were categorized as follows:

accompaniment, involvement and trust, a master plan, life-long learning, multicultural openness, and financial support.

Having analyzed and categorized all the data gathered from the interviews, the next chapter will explore how the literature and the data from the interviews interact in order to determine practical conclusions that can improve the denomination's role in enhancing the ministry of multicultural church planters.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The world is rapidly becoming multicultural. Tourism, finances, commerce, education, politics, and many other social realities are all adjusting to a new world ethos, especially in the so-called global cities. With this new panorama, we ask ourselves: Is the church at large adjusting to these new mission fields? Is the church even trying to adjust? Is the church willing to adjust?

Since I face this multicultural ministry challenge myself, I devoted my studies to finding some answers to these questions. My preliminary research showed that many denominations had actually pronounced some kind of statement declaring their willingness to give birth to multicultural ministries and church plants within their denominations. On the other hand, I met with many multicultural church planters and rapidly found that they did not feel well supported by their denominations in their multicultural ministries.

In his book *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, Soong-Chan Rah concludes that “[m]ost will recognize that planting, developing, and nurturing

a multiethnic and multicultural church is extraordinarily hard work.”¹⁷⁸ Notwithstanding that fact, the church of Christ should never abort God’s mission merely because it will be difficult. We are called to accept God’s challenge and to continue proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to the world around us. Many denominations are launching programs with the intention of enhancing multicultural church planting. However, for many reasons, church planters feel that these programs are intended to supervise and control rather than to bless their ministries. The attempt to bless a ministry is not enough; the church needs to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs, and that cannot be done without listening to our partners.

The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which denominations can serve multicultural church planters in their ministries, starting a conversation where both denominations and church planters can be mutually heard. In chapter two, the review of literature shed insight on the challenges encountered by multicultural church planters and denominational leaders in the process of enhancing the church’s multicultural church planting ministry. Much of the literature focused on the church planting ministry itself, including the multicultural challenges involved, but not much was found on how a

¹⁷⁸ Soong-Chan, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, 196.

denomination can be an important player in the venture, bringing the multicultural church to birth.

With this purpose in mind, this qualitative study focused on how multicultural church planters perceived the efforts made by their denominations to enhance their ministry. To start this conversation, the researcher pursued answers to these preliminary research questions:

1. What are the ministry challenges of multicultural church planters?
2. What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as helpful in their ministry challenges?
3. What aspects of denominations do multicultural church planters perceive as hindrances in their ministry challenges?
4. What kinds of denominational structure and support do multicultural church planters desire to have for their ministry challenges?

Summary of the Study

This study provided insight into multicultural church planting challenges, as well as into the denomination's intention to enhance multicultural church planters' ministries. An important focus was to initiate a conversation between denominational leaders and multicultural church planters. The first chapter introduced the problem statement and

context for this research. Chapter two reviewed the literature that was found on the issues of the challenges of multicultural church planting, the purpose and organization of denominations, and the relevance of adequate leadership from the perspectives of both denominations and church planters. The literature review sought to combine what has already been researched on multicultural church planting and the task and challenges faced by denominations. Chapter three described the methodology used in this qualitative study, in which six multicultural church planters were interviewed. Chapter four reviewed the findings of these interviews, in which the multicultural church planters shared their main challenges in ministry, as well as how they perceived the attempts of their denomination to enhance their ministry. They also discussed the kinds of structure and support they would like to receive from their denomination. This final chapter will synthesize the data collected in the study and discuss recommendations for practice.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the literature and research will interact in order to identify practical findings that denominations should keep in mind when considering ways in which they can enhance their multicultural church-planting ministry. Because that this study is intended to be a useful resource, the conclusions will focus on what multicultural church planters value and expect, instead of underlining their complaints. For practical purposes,

the conclusions will be ordered in three levels: denominational responsibilities toward multicultural congregations, denominational responsibilities toward multicultural church planters, and denominational responsibilities toward themselves. Under each subheading, I will describe the main ideas brought out of the literature review and the data gathered from the interviews.

Denominational Responsibilities Toward Multicultural Congregations

There are many ways in which the literature and the interviewees addressed the importance of the denomination's responsibilities regarding the congregations.

Healthy Dialogue – Two-Way Communication

One of the most common comments on problems that arose in congregations involved misunderstandings in communication. For multicultural relationships, communication needs to be very intentionally planned. Multiplicity of languages within a multicultural congregation can definitely be an issue, but it is even more dangerous when a group is speaking the same language, and everyone assumes that what they say will be received in the way that they intend. Not only do multicultural church planters need to be aware of this concern, but denominations that are trying to bless the church planters' ministry should also understand the potential for miscommunication. As Bob cautioned

during his interview, “Nothing should be taken for granted, and we cannot assume that all that we say is correctly understood.”

Because this study was performed within an interconnected denominational system, I believe that the denomination has a role to play in the relationship with the congregations. As Conger and Benjamin explained, “[T]he best strategic intervention programs design initiatives that cascade across all levels of the organization.”¹⁷⁹ But denominational leaders should be very careful in what, how, and when they communicate, especially considering multicultural settings.

Sam recalled an experience when “The presbytery leaders could not really grasp what was going on and brought suggestions that were inadequate for the situation... When they visited the church, they started to be critical to the liturgy and questioned my pastoral authority.” Communication is critical, both in good and bad ways.

Denominational leaders would do well to intentionally foster healthy communication with multicultural congregations, especially regarding the support of the church planter, the rules of the denomination, and the expectations regarding the church plant. Overall, denominational leaders need to understand their role of serving the church, instead of exercising control. As Crabtree asserts, “One of the most important tasks in redeveloping

¹⁷⁹ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 177.

a regional association is shifting its culture to that of servant leadership.”¹⁸⁰ Stetzer and Putman address the same idea in a different way, admonishing, “Denominations need to serve churches to accomplish their mission.”¹⁸¹ But this shift will not mean much if it is not clearly communicated to the congregation.

Finally, developing healthy communication means that the denomination needs to be effective in informing the congregations, and that denominations need to listen to what the congregations are trying to tell them. As Conger and Benjamin explain,

Collective dialogue across functions and between levels is particularly important for developing a common understanding of a firm’s larger vision, and in turn a shared interpretation of how that vision can be adapted at the local level... The importance of collective dialogue is perhaps best demonstrated in its absence.¹⁸²

Denominational leaders should be very intentional in learning to pay attention to those silenced or quiet voices, which might provide valuable feedback.

Liturgical Diversity – Fighting Preconceptions

Liturgy is a very important component of the life of the church. Because it is so important, it becomes critical for a church planter to identify which liturgy is best suited

¹⁸⁰ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 112.

¹⁸¹ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 179.

¹⁸² Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 170-171.

for each particular congregation. This task becomes even more difficult in a multicultural setting. As Jack remarked, “We had to learn to create our own worship style, different from our own preferences.” Ben also shared, “To develop a liturgy that is new to that group is a wonderful work.”

The main responsibility for developing a particular liturgy falls on the church planter. However, for denominations that believe in an interconnected ecclesiological body, it is very important for the congregation and church planter to feel that the denomination supports their forms of worship. In that sense, denominations face a challenge. Most denominations have some sort of majority that sets the norm, while some minorities strive to be accepted. As Joseph explained, “The denomination had ideas too specific on what a church should be and what can’t be accepted of a church. They expected certain characteristics that were not biblical.” Bob shared, “I had to challenge many preconceptions at the presbytery on what it means to be Presbyterian and Reformed pastors and churches, because many things were assumed as being Presbyterian, but they were only habits at this presbytery, not having necessarily a biblical or reformed theological foundation.”

For multicultural church planters and congregations, it becomes critical that the denominations intentionally celebrate and enjoy liturgical diversity, rather than setting a rigid, repeatable pattern.

Uncomfortable Flexibility – Facing Dinosaurs

Multicultural church planters must accept that flexibility is an essential element of their ministry. However, this flexibility often puts them in a suspicious position from a denominational point of view. The fact that multicultural ministries need to be flexible indicates that denominations desiring to give birth to multicultural churches need to be equally flexible. Even though it is usually easier to remain in our own comfort zone, the multicultural setting challenges us to step outside our area of safety. As Ed Stetzer and David Putman explain in their book *Breaking the Missional Code*, “As church planters and church-planting leaders, we need constantly to evaluate our methods and ask, ‘Is there a better method or model that would reach my community with the unchanging gospel?’”¹⁸³

The need to develop a flexible denomination was a very important issue from the perspective of the multicultural church planters. Many of the interviewees mentioned several times that the denominational leadership did not understand what was happening,

¹⁸³ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 155.

and that the leadership wanted to suggest how things should be done, without considering the multicultural context. This was very evident when Jack expressed that the denomination was too rigid to accept elders from the church plant. He stated, “They were expecting ruling elders of the mother church type.” Robert shared the same perception when he explained, “The denomination was too slow to ordain elders, and the standard for ordaining pastors was too high.” Bob recounted, “The denomination was assuming certain types of leadership as more Presbyterian than others, without a biblical or theological foundation, but built upon the custom of the majority culture.”

A multicultural context challenges church planters to understand their changing setting. Romo explains, “[A] pluralistic society is defined as an aggregation of peoples of different groups characterized by their heritages, cultures, languages, and life-styles.”¹⁸⁴ In that context, multicultural church planters need to develop their ability to remain flexible in their ministries. Anderson states, “Some of the biggest hindrances to multicultural ministry are the structures in place that keep churches from being more flexible.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 18.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, “The Building Block of a Multicultural Ministry,” 19.

However, if multicultural church planters need to remain flexible, then denominations need to learn how to support that flexibility. In his interview, Sam declared bluntly, “I had to confront many dinosaurs...those pastors and elders that always refer to how things were done in the past.” He clarified, “A dinosaur doesn’t need to be an old person; we have young people acting as dinosaurs.” Denominations need to make sure that they are not an obstacle for church plants, and that the structure they set in place can be beneficial. Joseph expressed, “There are many cultural challenges within our denomination...there needs to be much commitment, wisdom and love to move the church beyond one’s own culture.” In the end, a denomination’s strength depends not so much on what it has accomplished in the past, but on what it does to remain relevant in the present context, and to ready itself for the future changes. As Adizes describes it, “As flexibility declines, the organization mellows.”¹⁸⁶

Racial Reconciliation – “Argentinean Railways”

Mutual acceptance and tolerance are not the biblical goals for the nations. Jesus taught us to “love one another as [God] has loved us,”¹⁸⁷ and he also stated that the second most important command of the law of God is to “love your neighbor as

¹⁸⁶ Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, 110.

¹⁸⁷ John 15:12.

yourself.”¹⁸⁸ Multicultural churches cannot simply aim at accepting cohabitation of different cultures. Rather, they should face the issue of racial reconciliation. Manuel Ortiz, in his book *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church*, explains, “...[T]he intentional attempts by local ministries to create multiethnic and multi-congregational churches that have been most productive are the ones that move toward reconciliation.”¹⁸⁹ It is very difficult to develop racially united congregations if the denomination itself has not worked through the issues of division and hostility. Ben referred to a sad experience of having a cultural majority discriminating against pastors from different cultures. He stated, “Other pastors that had come before me were treated with much disdain.” He recalled how British immigrants would scornfully refer to Argentineans as “Argentinean Railways,” meaning that they could never work at the same level.

Bob explained, “The different groups are not naturally attracted to each other. and many misunderstandings can occur. Diverse groups are naturally segregated, while we need to intentionally congregate them.” Although nature would tear nations apart, the church needs to work hard to bring them together, even though that attitude can result in

¹⁸⁸ Mark 12:31.

¹⁸⁹ Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church*, 45.

conflict. As Sam recalled that one of the biggest conflicts he experienced happened

“...when we brought homeless people, or even some brothers from a lower social class.

We need to realize that cultural diversity many times also means social differences, and one culture despising another one not for their color, but for their social position.”

Even though developing healthy relationships among the different cultures that form a congregation is part of the church planters’ responsibility, the denomination can enhance multicultural ministries, or it can be a hindrance. If the denomination treats multicultural church planters with disdain, or it considers them to work at a lower level, such an attitude will definitely not help the church. This was evident when Jack shared, “When the church plant started to shape its own identity, that was the time when if the denomination didn’t accept us as a particular church, we were ready to leave the denomination.” Sam also recalled, “Some presbytery leaders felt embarrassed for being identified with me for being from a different culture...I just felt they were watching me all the time. They didn’t trust me and were expectant to see me get into trouble.”

Denominations should evaluate their own internal and external attitudes in order to ensure that they are intentionally working towards racial reconciliation.

Sound Expectations – Well-Cooked Sausages

Planting a church takes time; denominations need to know that planting a multicultural church may take even longer. The time factor should not bring about impatience and critique, although evaluation is always necessary. As Moore explains it, “Working within a denominational framework can be tricky for a new pastor. Local problems and opportunities dictate one set of behaviors, while denominational traditions demand another.”¹⁹⁰ Denominations need to understand that they are in a position to serve church planters, and they must not expect church planters to serve the denomination’s own set of priorities. In different ways, all of the multicultural church planters that were interviewed for this study mentioned that adjusting to a new culture takes time, and that church growth in a multicultural setting may take more time.

Referring to the useless attitude of hustling church planters along, Ben expressed the need for patience, comparing the process of planting a church to the time required for cooking. He put it this way, “Changes take time...I need the sausages to be well-cooked, not burned.” Bob also shared, “In a multicultural context, we always make progress more slowly, but the slower process may end up being more valuable and creating a more permanent result.”

¹⁹⁰ Moore, *Starting a New Church*, 57.

Sam, however, discussed this from a different perspective. In his experience, the multicultural ministry grew more quickly than the mono-cultural mother church. The time factor was also a challenge, but for a different reason – everything moved too quickly, and the mother church could not adapt to the new reality quickly enough.

This study indicates that expectations should be managed through sound evaluations, taking into consideration the many aspects of multicultural church planting. Denominations may need to adapt their evaluation processes to each unique church planting setting, avoiding the creation of a rigid pattern that causes unnecessary frustration.

Denominational Responsibilities Toward Multicultural Church Planters

Having mentioned those responsibilities that denominations can perform in relation to multicultural congregations, we will focus now on specific courses of action that denominations can take in order to enhance their service to the individuals who commit their lives to multicultural church planting.

Training – Formal Education, Assessment, Coaching and Life-long Learning

Even before multicultural church planters steps into the mission field to begin their work, denominations can bless their ministry. Both the literature and the interviews revealed the importance of the process of training, assessment, and life-long learning.

Although there is a general consensus that theological and ministerial training is important for those desiring to devote themselves to pastoral ministry, there are many different points of view regarding the way in which that training should occur. Moreover, since culture changes so dynamically, denominations would do well to regularly evaluate their training programs, adjusting to new realities and making use of new techniques. As Conger and Benjamin explain, “Multiple learning methods are essential to a well-designed leadership program.”¹⁹¹

Multicultural church planters need to be well trained, with a solid theological and ministerial foundation, as well as with specific cultural awareness training. All pastors interviewed for this study had formal theological training. However, all of them confessed that they still needed to learn more regarding church planting as a specific ministry, especially in multicultural settings. Joseph made this clear by declaring, “The denomination needs to make clear that they value formal education, but church planters need to receive specific training on church planting and cross-cultural ministry.” As Ben expressed, “...good training in handling cultural differences is of great help.” Bob also shared the importance of both grasping theological concepts, and being trained on ways

¹⁹¹ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 42.

to contextualize those principles into the life of each particular congregation, considering the multicultural diversity.

The literature related to the topic of ministerial training emphasized the importance of assessment, coaching, and life-long learning programs as part of the denominational responsibilities toward potential church planters. The works of both Philip Douglass¹⁹² and Ted Powers¹⁹³ contributed greatly to the implementation of the assessment program within Mission to North America, the mission arm of the Presbyterian Church of America. In his interview, Joseph explained, “An assessment process is very helpful to avoid pastors getting involved in a ministry that is not for them.” Sam shared, “The denomination needs to discover if the candidates for cross-cultural ministries are apt, have the gifts needed and the optimal personality types to handle this challenge.”

Regarding coaching, the website of Mission to North America states that “on-site coaching and mentoring of church planters is absolutely critical to the life and health of

¹⁹² Douglass, *The Effect of Leadership Behaviors and Mentoring Styles upon Presbyterian Church Planters in America*.

¹⁹³ Ted Powers, “Church Planting Apprenticeships: Developing Laborers for the Harvest,” *D.Min. Diss.* (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2000).

our church planting ministry and to the church planter and his family as well.”¹⁹⁴ Lassey also suggests, “Recent surveys have shown that the main method of training is through on-the-job coaching.”¹⁹⁵ In his interview, Joseph confirmed this from his own experiencing, sharing, “It would have been good to have a closer and honest helper to instruct me.” As Charan, Drotter, and Noel explain, “The best way to learn and grow as a leader is through on-the-job ‘stretch’ experiences.”¹⁹⁶ Church planter Erik expressed the same concept in his own words, “Field work is essential. During their theological preparation, candidates should have practical experiences in different churches or mission fields, going beyond their comfort zone, getting in touch with other cultures.” Conger and Benjamin state, “If you ask managers where they learned their leadership abilities, they will often tell you that their job experiences and bosses have contributed the most. Rarely will formal training be mentioned.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Mission to North America, *Mission to North America. Presbyterian Church of America*, www.pcamna.org/church-planting/church-planting-resources/coaching (accessed November 08, 2012).

¹⁹⁵ Lassey, *Developing a Learning Organization*, 90.

¹⁹⁶ Charan, Drotter and Noel, *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership-powered Company*, 217.

¹⁹⁷ Conger and Benjamin, *Building Leaders: How Successful Companies Develop the Next Generation*, 9.

Finally, both the literature review and the interviews reinforced the need for development of a life-long learning process that helps multicultural church planters stay updated on new theological, ministerial, and cultural trends. Life-long learning programs help church planters to keep studying, as well as offering them the opportunity to think through the challenges they face and to apply learned concepts to their ministries. As Conger and Benjamin write, “Leadership development is a continuous, lifelong process rather than a single discrete event.”¹⁹⁸ Faircloth also explains, “The basic idea is to ‘keep in training.’ The reason is simple: living things change; the local church is a living thing.”¹⁹⁹ Church planter Joseph suggested, “Instead of having such a high standard for ordination, it would be better to lower the initial prerequisites and get a commitment from the pastors to submit to an ongoing training process.” He added, “I feel that the denominational perception of leadership training is frontloaded. I agree on aiming at high quality of leadership, but it is better to propose continuing education...I had people that should have been ordained as elders or considered as leaders, but the denomination made it too difficult.”

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹⁹ Faircloth, *Church Planting for Reproduction*, 174.

Overall, the literature and interviews showed the importance of training, including formal education, assessment, coaching, and long-life learning programs that denominations can provide to enhance a multicultural church planter's ministry.

Accompaniment, Support in Ministry and Peer-to-Peer Fellowship Program

Beyond the concept of coaching, the literature and interviews revealed the church planters' need to feel personally supported in their ministry. Three aspects of this need were underlined throughout this study. They included the accompaniment of denominational leaders, the need for support in ministry, and the implementation of a peer-to-peer fellowship program.

According to Stetzer and Putman, one of the core issues that every denomination must consider in order to be a key player in church-planting is "how they define the basis for cooperation."²⁰⁰ In many places, there has been a tendency to limit the role of the denomination to helping the church planters and missionaries get ready to move to the mission field and sending them with sufficient financial support. The interviews and literature revealed how important it is for church planters to feel that they are not alone and that they can count on their denominations for help when needed.

²⁰⁰ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 175-176.

Most of the church planters that were interviewed valued their denomination's assistance when they had to face some kind of conflict. For example, Joseph shared, "There were times of conflict and also times of celebration, when we felt accompanied, sheltered by presbytery leaders. We felt we were part of something bigger than our small group." Bob also remembered a time when, as he faced problems with leaders, he "always felt the accompaniment of the presbytery and the relief of knowing that I was not alone." Bob discussed the need for "Permanent, continuous and close accompaniment, including the pastor and his family." Erik added that it was important for the church planter's opinions to be taken into consideration, stating that "Missionaries need to be heard, they need to feel that their opinion is valued, and at the same time, they need to be shepherded."

The theme of accompaniment includes not only the desired personal relationship between denominational leaders and multicultural church planters, but also the provision of both financial support and ministry resources. For example, Ben stated, "It is the denomination's task to provide enough financial support, enshrining pastors from the economic control of other cultures, keeping him free from the good or bad humor of local people who may try to dominate the situation through money." Sam agreed, saying that the denomination should help church planters by "avoiding the economical manipulation

from dinosaurs who enjoy being bosses.” Beyond the need for financial support, Erik said that for him it was very important to count on the theological resources provided by the denomination, which helped him to train others.

All of the church planters interviewed valued the relationally connected system of their denomination, feeling that it helped them understand that they were not alone in their ministry. Joseph expressed, “Planting a church is usually a quite lonely task. It is ideal for the church planters to have fellowship and friendships with whom they can pray for each other and for the mission of the church.” Sam noted, “For a pastor, the presbytery can function as a place of shelter, where to find peace.” This role of coming alongside multicultural church planters is something that supervision committees in the denomination can perform, but it is also advisable to develop peer-to-peer fellowship programs. Sam advised, “Not only is the supervision committee who makes the pastoral work toward the missionary and his family, but the denomination can also provide for improving the fellowship between pastors and their families.” The literature review included a reference to the Southern Baptist Convention, which created ethnic fellowships that provided a place for multicultural leaders to be encouraged and shepherded.²⁰¹ Ben shared, “Life-long learning puts all pastors at the same level,

²⁰¹ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 135.

improving fellowship, and the idea of forming peers, not followers.” Learning to share ministry resources and learn together could allow pastors to both grow in their ministry skills and to feel less lonely in their work. According to Ben, “Pastors need colleagues, not bosses.” Bob advocated, “The church planter is in the frontline. Denominations should try to strengthen the unification of church planters because it allows for cross-pollination, providing resources and a place for church planters to dialogue and be shepherded.”

Personalized Supervision – Avoiding Boss-Employee Relationship

Part of the role of a denomination is to supervise the church planter’s ministry and to ensure that it is making the desired progress. Although evaluation is an important part of any project, the method by which it occurs may enhance or hinder the players’ responses to the evaluation process. Jack shared about an experience in which the supervisory body attempted to evaluate from a distance, without much commitment to the church plant. He stated, “Distance was a problem...The session wanted to understand all that was happening just during a meeting...but cultures cannot be understood in a meeting. The elders needed to come and see. At that time, I felt really lonely, frustrated and misunderstood.”

When the participants spoke of accompaniment, their definition included a close, trust-filled relationship among those exercising supervision, themselves, and their church. The participants valued the wisdom and support given by the presbytery through accompaniment, but they resented when the relationship developed a boss-employee feel. Jack explained, “The work of a committee cannot be reduced to an office; they need to come out and do field work, trying to understand and get to know people from the congregations they are supervising.” Sam agreed, “The missionary needs the committee to endorse the authority and dignity of the ministry in front of the congregation, showing respect and confidence to the pastor... The kind of accompaniment that is needed is a close presence avoiding the image of a boss, always confirming that the pastor is in charge.” Erik added, “The committee needs to commit participating in the mission fields, not only during a formal meeting but also visiting the new congregations. This involvement requires time, money, shepherding and prayer.” Thus, we can conclude that denominations should avoid generalized evaluation systems, and instead perform more personalized supervision, in which they attempt to understand the uniqueness and challenges of each multicultural church planting setting.

Denominational Responsibilities Toward Themselves

Finally, beyond the denominational responsibilities toward the congregations and toward the multicultural church planters, the literature and the interviews pointed to additional areas where the denominations should evaluate and improve.

Cultural Awareness – Avoiding “Second Class Citizens” Feelings

As stated in the introduction, most denominations realize the need to face the multicultural challenges of the present world. Denominations that have not yet decided to face these challenges will have to do it sooner or later. Two routes are available to them. First, they may face the multicultural challenges as present realities and decide what actions will be taken in order to adjust. Second, they could decide to ignore any multicultural challenges and oppose any change. This second alternative may seem simpler, as if it involves a lower level of risk. However, the rate at which the world is becoming multicultural, especially in the more global cities, may mean that this challenge will soon become unavoidable. The first alternative, facing the facts and adjusting to reality, will include the challenge of improving denominational cultural awareness. This involves both the members and leaders of a denomination, as well as the cultural adaptability of the denominational structures and procedures.

A new concept that has been growing in recent decades is that of cultural synergy.

Harris, Moran, and Moran state, “Effective global leaders believe that cultural differences, if well managed, are resources, not handicaps.”²⁰² However, in the experience of the church planters that were interviewed for this study, this was generally not the case. For example, Bob expressed, “Sometimes I felt the need to show the presbytery that we can indeed work with other cultures and low social classes. I had to fight to feel inside of the presbytery and insist on being just as the other pastors, although working in different contexts.” Note the verbs used by this church planter regarding his interaction with the presbytery: “show,” “fight,” and “insist!” He did not feel that his ministry was well received, and that was because of multicultural differences that were debated, rather than celebrated. Joseph felt the same when he advised, “There are many cultural challenges within our denomination...there needs to be much commitment, wisdom, and love to move the church beyond one’s own culture.” Then he added, “We worked during many years in groups that would have been declared as particular churches in other denominations...The process to become a church is so long that we felt second class citizens for a long time.”

²⁰² Harris, Moran and Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*, 37.

Regarding the multicultural openness that should be present in denominations that purport to move toward racial reconciliation, Jack suggested:

Committees or sessions involved in supervising multicultural ministries should try to be a multicultural body, meaning that they should be formed by people from different cultures. If that were not possible, I would ask them to learn to interpret other cultures different from the majority culture in the denomination...we all need to be nourished by and learn from each other.

Bob also mentioned the importance of "...working the contextualization of theological elements, developing a Presbyterian identity in multicultural spheres, and depriving the gospel of the added historical and cultural carcass."

Finally, although multicultural congregations may have more direct involvement in racial reconciliation, there are certain regional facets of this challenge with which a single church planter cannot cope. Denominations can engage in regional initiatives to fight racial segregation, and they should urge even monocultural congregations to get involved in racial reconciliation movements. According to Stetzer and Putman, denominations can also "conduct relevant research"²⁰³ that a single congregation may find difficult. Crabtree suggests the same idea by stating that "Parish leaders generally do not have time to do the research required to uncover new opportunities [in the region]. They must focus on the visible, namely, the work that is immediately before them, and

²⁰³ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 176-178.

trust the regional association leader to focus on emerging possibilities.”²⁰⁴ In the end, racial reconciliation is not a task meant only for certain types of Christians, but for the whole church of God.

Master Plan – Listening to the Same Music

Becoming aware of cultural diversity and the challenge for racial reconciliation may be a good first step, but it is not sufficient to address the problems. The literature and interviews revealed that if a denomination desires to be actively involved in multicultural church planting, it must develop a master plan. If that plan is well-designed and enthusiastically put into practice, these kinds of work documents can help institutions orient their procedures, their structure, and their decisions. At some point, a master plan will also help those involved to evaluate what progress has been made.

Roozen and Kirk Hadaway evaluated the decline of mainline denominations in the United States of America and came to the conclusion that an intentional master plan was crucial in order to revert the present situation. They state that “mainline denominational growth is related to goal-directed planning... [T]he evidence suggests that they could grow, or at least moderate their declines, by re-emphasizing evangelism

²⁰⁴ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 51.

and new church development.”²⁰⁵ Joseph discussed the benefit of having a master plan and the danger of not having one when he shared, “It was contradictory...on the one hand, there was no master plan, no formal directives, or explanation on how things should be done and a procedure manual to guide the process...on the other hand, they had very definite ideas of what they wanted us to do.” He added, “If the presbytery had a plan, the process could be more agile.”

A master plan also encourages all players to follow the same sheet of music. Denominational leaders, church pastors, church planters, lay leaders, and members of the congregations must all know where the denomination is going and what the goal is, as well as understanding what is expected of each person or group that is involved. In this sense, Bob revealed, “I always thought that a master plan is what is lacking for church planting, so that the presbytery, including church planters, candidates, and supportive churches, can be on the same page when analyzing the process being made to plant the church.” Sam also explained, “It is necessary to have a plan for missions and evangelism so that the missionary can know his responsibilities.”

Finally, a master plan can help the denomination provide the necessary balance of support, structure, and challenge. Joseph advised, “If we have a plan, we can better

²⁰⁵ Roozen and Hadaway, “Denominational Growth and Decline,” 45.

understand the goals of each stage and get assessment and feedback on the implementation of those stages.” Likewise, Bob shared the importance of being challenged with “the right pressure concerning goals...not imposing a heavy burden but avoiding the lack of incentive.”

The development of a master plan requires much more than writing in order to be effective in actually changing the reality and focus of the denomination. The next section will expose the need to evaluate denominational values, structure, and procedures.

Transformational Regional Associations – Habits, Beliefs, and Values

When a well-designed master plan is put into practice, it challenges existing values, structures, and procedures, forcing the denomination to evaluate and often change them. History shows, however, that change is not easy. As Stetzer and Putman describe it, “It is amazing but consistent – churches that need to grow think they can do it without change! They think they can break the code by doing the same things they have always done.”²⁰⁶ At the conclusion of his research on how denominations can better serve local congregations, Crabtree argued, “What is required is a deep, systemic change in the bodies that are called to support congregations for their mission in the world:

²⁰⁶ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 137.

transformational regional associations.”²⁰⁷ The concept of transformational regional associations should challenge denominations not only to make a one-time effort to evaluate and suggest changes, but to develop a flexible culture that can adjust to the changing world. This is especially true if the denomination wishes to minister in a multicultural context. Because social and cultural changes occur quickly, denominations need to be ready to adjust continually. Oscar Romo describes this changing reality by stating, “Ethnic groups in America are not only diverse, but they live in changing cultural and linguistic patterns. Each group continually influences others.”²⁰⁸ Crabtree challenges, “...one of the most important principles for individuals and organizations to flourish in the world is simply to change before you have to.”²⁰⁹

Roxburgh develops the idea that “The challenge for the reframing of denominational systems is more complex; it requires more than a technical change. It requires an adaptive change.”²¹⁰ Heifetz and Linsky explain that this adaptability is difficult to achieve, noting that “Adaptive change stimulates resistance because it

²⁰⁷ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 21.

²⁰⁸ Romo, *American Mosaic. Church Planting in Ethnic America*, 123.

²⁰⁹ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 6.

²¹⁰ Roxburgh, “Reframing Denominations from a Missional Perspective,” 77.

challenges people's habits, beliefs, and values.”²¹¹ Change is difficult, but failure to change is dangerous. The literature agrees with the opinions of the multicultural church planters interviewed for this study regarding the need for the denominations to be flexible in terms of their habits, beliefs, and values.

Habits: Procedures, Timing and Bureaucracy

Instead of being a blessing, a denomination can act as a hindrance to multicultural church planters when it requires the planters to expend time and energy in ways that seem completely useless. Sam shared, “Many times, the denomination is felt as a waste of time, when the structure is not functional to the mission and the change seems unattainable.” Bob put it bluntly: “Too much bureaucracy.” The denomination needs to understand that all human beings have limited time and energy. For a denomination to remain healthy, it needs healthy churches. Those two statements should help us understand that most of the time and energy of church leaders should go to the congregations, not to the denomination. This understanding leads denominations to face the question: Who serves whom? As the New Wineskins’ vision statement declares, it “[s]erves the ministry and

²¹¹ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 30.

mission of the local congregation”²¹² instead of having congregations serve the denomination. Crabtree adds, “One of the most important tasks in redeveloping a regional association is shifting its culture to that of servant leadership.”²¹³ Stetzer and Putman also expose this concept very clearly when they state, “Denominations need to serve churches to accomplish their mission.”²¹⁴

Beliefs: Confessional Standards

Denominations also need to consider their confessional standards. Denominations are usually very rigid in their theological traditions. Evaluating the confessional standards does not necessarily mean changing them, but it may involve continual contextualization of the denomination’s beliefs in order to stay relevant. Having denominationally established confessional standards helps multicultural church planters to be oriented in their ministry beyond their personal inclinations.

For example, Ben shared that the confessional standards helped to bring a sense of truth and teaching to his congregation. Therefore, Ben would not teach by presenting his

²¹² New Wineskins - Association of churches, “New Wineskins - Association of churches,” *New Wineskins Vision Statement*, 2009, http://www.newwineskinsassociation.com/documents/vision_statement.pdf (accessed January 14, 2010).

²¹³ Crabtree, *The Fly in the Ointment*, 112.

²¹⁴ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 179.

own theology; instead he utilized the theological traditions shared by the denomination.

Some denominations have specific documents (beyond the scriptures) containing doctrinal standards that are accepted and proclaimed as rules. Although many denominations find it difficult to challenge those confessional standards, society needs those standards to remain relevant. We need to understand that confessional standards were written for a specific context, and that context has changed. Whether denominations are willing to update their confessional documents or not, they will need to contextualize them.

Values: Form of Government, Structure and Norms

Finally, denominations usually hold their form of government in high esteem, because it provides biblical and useful structure for every aspect of church life. Although the literature and the data gathered from the interviews reveal the need for and validity of an established form of government, these experts also realized the importance of keeping that government flexible. Especially regarding multicultural settings, Soong-Chan Rah explains, “It is critical for a multiethnic church to think in terms of creating a new culture that transcends existing norms.”²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, 108.

In terms of valuing the form of government, Ben explained, “I strongly believe in the Presbyterian form of government. I feel it is good for the church, and it helps the church to know where to go and how to go there, without having to fight about how they will organize the church.” In this sense, the establishment of a specific form of government provides orientation and guidelines for the mission, without causing denominational leaders to worry about what kind of ecclesiology the congregation will adopt. Erik also expressed the importance of a form of government when he stated, “The *Book of Church Order* is a good tool as a guide to the task that has to be developed and the steps to follow.”

However, the interviews revealed that these structures become a hindrance when they are too rigid and cannot be easily adapted to different contexts. Sam argued, “We need the structure to be more flexible, avoiding too many regulations. Missionaries need to find out how to adapt a Presbyterian government to the new congregation’s culture.” Erik added, “Many times we focus more on the law and forget the spirit of the law.” He explained, “The *Book of Church Order’s* proceedings are sometimes used to extend the time, and some unnecessary steps are added that restrain the ministry.”

Summary of Findings

Overall, the literature and interviews revealed how imperative it is for denominational leaders and multicultural church planters to work together in order to intentionally face the challenge of the advancement of God's kingdom in the midst of a growing multicultural context. The research revealed several denominational responsibilities that multicultural church planters consider to be the most valuable, particularly regarding the denomination's relationship with multicultural congregations, the denomination's relationship with the church planters themselves, and aspects of the denomination at large.

First, regarding denominational responsibilities toward multicultural congregations, five aspects were found to be essential. These included developing a healthy dialogue among all players involved, enjoying the liturgical diversity, striving to accept the uncomfortable flexibility, and having sound expectations regarding results.

Second, regarding the responsibilities that denominations should have toward the multicultural church planters, the research suggested training (including formal education, assessment, coaching, and long-life learning programs), accompaniment (including support in ministry and peer-to-peer fellowship), and personalized supervision (avoiding a boss-employee relationship).

Third, the study showed that there are some aspects of the denominations themselves that should be evaluated and adapted to face the challenge of multicultural ministry. These include increasing multicultural awareness, intentionally putting into practice a master plan, and developing transformational regional associations that are flexible enough to permanently evaluate their habits, beliefs, and values.

Recommendations for Practice

In light of these findings, denominations desiring to give birth to multicultural congregations and answer God's call to see racial reconciliation in this world need to make a serious commitment in order to be effective. This decision will need to involve much love, wisdom, and perseverance. All findings in this research may take several years to put into practice.

Denominations answering this multicultural call should start by evaluating their goals in different areas and setting up a hierarchy of priorities. From the researcher's perspective, the primary, most urgent, and most compelling goal should be to increase the relationship and foster the dialogue between denominational leaders and multicultural church planters. This action should be followed by the development of a master plan in which all voices are taken into consideration. The achievement of these two goals will be

critical in order to create the best climate in which the involved parties can work towards the rest of their goals.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on ways in which the denominations can serve multicultural church planters in their ministry and get involved in the challenge of racial reconciliation.

As with any study, there were limitations as to how extensive the focus could be.

Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of further study could be highly valuable for improving the advancement of God's kingdom through multicultural church planting.

This qualitative research addressed the purpose of this study from the perspective of church planters. An important follow-up study would be to explore the perceptions of denominational leaders or monocultural pastors on the same issues. Moreover, this study focused mainly on multicultural church planting, but further research could include the roles played by established and growing multicultural congregations, both independent churches or those inserted within a denomination.

Final Words

The world is becoming increasingly multicultural, and that new social reality challenges the church's habits, beliefs, and values. The church may have an important

role in God's mission to unite Christians from all the nations, tribes, peoples, and languages to worship his son Jesus Christ with one voice.

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”²¹⁶

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Philippians 2:9-11.

²¹⁷ Revelation 7:9-10.

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