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Bethlehem Backes
Southeastern University - Lakeland

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THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

By

BETHLEHEM BACKES

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BETHLEHEM BACKES

Dissertation Approved:

Karen M. Ingle
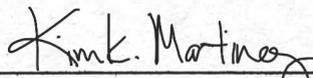
Karen M. Ingle, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair

Thomas J. Gollery

Thomas J. Gollery, Ed.D., Committee Member

Kim K. Martinez

Kim K. Martinez, D.Min., Committee Member

Jim Anderson

James A. Anderson, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education

DEDICATION

I would not have been able to complete this venture without the constant support of my loving family and faithful friends. Greg, you encouraged me when I felt overwhelmed and worked hard keeping our family functioning while I spent countless hours researching and writing. Thank you for being my friend, husband, and greatest ally. Sierra and Brendan, you both cheered me on to the finish line. No matter what I do in life, you are my greatest accomplishments. I am forever grateful to Don and Jodi Detrick who challenged and pushed me to do more than I imagined possible. Don, thank you for opening doors of opportunity for me in leadership. Jodi, your question "What's stopping you?" completely changed the trajectory of my life. The Detrick duo loved me into being with their coaching, mentoring, and friendship. My colleagues at the Northwest Ministry Network have been a source of strength and support through the years, and I am grateful for each of these life-giving relationships. I especially appreciate the administrative gifts of Elaine Jones, who kept my calendar organized so I could stay focused on the finish line. Pastor Monica DeLaurentis was the first church planter I had the privilege to work alongside and I have been inspired by her courageous leadership through the years. I dedicate this work to her and the thousands of pastors who dare to say "yes" to the God-sized adventure of planting a church. The strong network of supportive family and friends across the country have provided wind in my faith-sails that have taken me on this unforgettable journey. My life is the culmination of your love and support.

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Abstract

The steady decline of churches in America is a cause of great concern among spiritual leaders (Stetzer & Im, 2016). Missiologists agree that church planting is vital to presenting the gospel to unreached people groups. If church planting is the vehicle to deliver the life-giving message of Jesus to the world, church planters are the drivers who actively accomplish the purpose of healthy multiplication. Recent data on the health of church planters indicates many of them are not adequately prepared and desire long-term support to be successful. The Assemblies of God denomination has tasked the Church Multiplication Network with leading the charge in the area of national church planting. Launch church plant training is the primary avenue to prepare church planters. The study surveyed 91 Launch participants to evaluate their perceptions of the training they received. An evaluation of Launch participants indicated they perceived the training itself to include relevant and helpful content. However, indicators of post-Launch support was significantly low on the survey results, which included coaching, parent church backing, and the help of the local denominational network. The research data highlights the need for post-launch support for church planters following the start of a new church. Church planters who perceived they had post-launch support, were 66% more likely to plant a church, compared to those who did not perceive they had ongoing support. The data indicated the perception of post-launch support was a predictor of the launch of a church.

*Keyword*s: church planting, training church plant leaders, professional development of church planters, church plant training, launching new churches.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of a non-experimental quantitative descriptive survey of church plant training methods conducted by a three-day intensive called Launch through the Church Multiplication Network. The study was based on a survey designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the training in preparing church planters to successfully start new churches. The Assemblies of God (AG) is a Christian Pentecostal movement that formed in 1914 following the historic Azuza Street revival in California. From inception, the mission of the founders was committed to leading "the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen" (Leake, 2014, p. 56). The fellowship of churches has grown to include 3.2 million adherents in the U.S. and 69 million adherents worldwide. While many mainline denominations have plateaued or are declining, the AG denomination in the U.S. has grown by 12% in the past decade. Despite evident growth, there are concerning trends that point to decline. The efforts of the Church Multiplication Network, the AG department tasked with planting new churches, helped plant 265 churches nationwide in 2019. However, more churches closed than opened in 2019, and the AG experienced a national net loss of 31 churches, the largest annual loss in the past 54 years (Statistics on the Assemblies of God, 2020).

Church planting is the vehicle that has delivered the gospel to the world since Jesus proclaimed the Great Commission. According to Stetzer and Im (2016), "Church planting is essential. Without it, Christianity will continue to decline in North America" (p. 7). The current

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state of church engagement in North America is a steady decline. According to the Pew Research Center, adults in the U.S. who identify as Christian has decreased to 65%, down 12% in the past decade (In U.S., Decline of Christianity…, 2019).

The church in America is in a critical situation. Church growth expert Alan Hirsch (2010) explained, "What we need are missionally responsive, culturally adaptive, organizationally agile multiplication movements" (p. 9). In response to the need for an increase of healthy churches within the movement, the AG created and funded a church planting department entitled the Church Multiplication Network (CMN), that is dedicated to ensuring continued multiplication of churches. CMN hosts regional church plant training events, an annual conference, and offers a wide variety of resources online for supporting church planters. The Launch church plant training is an integral part of ongoing efforts to equip and release new church planters to begin new faith communities across the country. The study informed the level of effectiveness of Launch church planter training to prepare successful church planters. The data primed CMN of strategies that are beneficial and identified areas that could be improved. The research provided valuable data to support CMN as they strive to establish a healthy church in every community.

Background of the Study

A serious examination of church planting methods from history revealed a dramatic shift in approach based on the changing dynamics of culture and current practiced theology of the Church. Paul was one of the first century church planters whose strategies are well documented in scripture. During this time in history, Paul implemented what is referred to as an indigenous approach to church planting. Stetzer and Bird (2010) emphasized that, "Paul planted new churches that in turn, planted new churches" (p. 22). Looking at Paul's training in preparation for church planting provides insight into the elements that shaped his success in this role. Paul

received a world class formal education being trained by Gamaliel (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 22:3). He also participated in an apprenticeship under Barnabas (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 11:25-26). Paul actively learned though hands-on experience by travelling extensively with teams to plant new church communities throughout the known world. Scriptural records of Paul's ministry estimated he may have pioneered at least 20 new churches during his ministry (Ugo, 2012).

In twenty-first century America, missiologists distinguish four primary approaches to training for the role of church planter. Reimer (2016) identified these models as follows: church-based training, in-service training, school-oriented approach, and non-formal training. Regarding church-based training, Ott and Wilson (2010) explained that leaders in church planting do not appear overnight. Instead, Ott and Wilson (2010) said they follow a process of "becoming disciples, then servants, and eventually leaders" (p. 360). The local church acts as an incubator for leaders by providing safe spaces for leaders to identify gifts, learn under other qualified leaders, and practice using skills through hands-on experience.

The in-service training approach typically occurs within the local church and is marked by intentionality in equipping and engaging leaders in training. Ferguson & Ferguson (2010), outlined the process of training through a specified four-step apprenticeship. Other in-service training opportunities include internships, seminars and focused training by local church leaders.

Formal education began around 500 A.D. in ancient Greece and has evolved through the centuries to include the wide range of educational institutions available today. During the late 19th century, Bible Institutes were established in North America. Most schools promoted curriculum that included active participation and leadership experiences, in addition to formal classroom instruction. Today, formal ministry education may include an internship requirement

within a degree, yet is confined to the classroom setting. The approach in formal education emphasizes theological preparation over practical application. Saavedra and Opfer (2012) described the transmission approach to education as "outdated" although it "remains the dominant approach to compulsory education in much of the world" (p. 6). Encouraging learning transfer (also known ask skill implementation) teaches students how to apply skills and knowledge learned into the context of their lives (Saavedra and Opfer, 2012). There is a growing awareness among educational institutions that curriculum needs to include both theological and practical training to be effective. An inclusive approach is needed when training church planters as the nature of the role requires a wide scope of skills. Church planters cannot receive needed skills by transmission alone but by being given ample opportunities to transfer knowledge to their ministry context. Educational models should inform the practices of training effective church planters.

The fourth emerging area of training is non-formal training. The presence of non-formal training opportunities has gained more acceptance in the United States (U.S.) and around the world (Reimer, 2016). Within the AG, District Schools of Ministries have emerged to fill the need to provide affordable and practical ministry training. Currently there are 16 higher education universities among the Assemblies of God in the U.S. The number of non-formal training centers has increased to 36 centers nationwide, double the amount of AG Universities. Other non-formal training programs include Masters Commission and Youth with a Mission. In India, the Hindustan Bible Institute (HBI) developed a two-year program for church planters, during which each student plants a church as part of the experiential-based curriculum (Reimer, 2016). The president of HBI, Paul Cupta, explained that the skills needed for effective ministry, "can be understood and mastered only through practice" (Reimer, 2016, p.76).

Understanding how ministry training has evolved provides the foundation for evaluating the Launch church plant training. Exploring the elements of training, including curriculum, resources, and follow-up support through the research survey, will assist church plant trainers as they determine the effectiveness of the Launch training to effectively prepare church planters.

Theoretical Framework

Adult learning models and leadership development competencies are critical elements for training programs. Understanding how adults learn is an essential element for organizational leaders who provide training to the adult demographic. Malcom Knowles popularized the theory of andragogy in the United States (Malik, 2016). He developed six principles that identify the ways adults learn that are distinct from children. Malik (2016) noted key principles include:

(1) As a person matures, his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.

(2) An adult accumulates a grown reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning.

(3) The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.

(4) There is a change in time perspective as people mature—from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem-centered than subject-centered in learning.

(5) The most potent motivations are internal rather than external.

(6) Adults need to know why they need to learn something. (p. 49)

Organizational leaders who train adults should intentionally seek to apply these principles to support growth and development.

Leadership Development models include various approaches that assist leaders in translating new information for use in their context. Maise (2013) explained that this generation of learner's desire "personalization in the learning process" (p. 38). Traditional training programs employ linear structures to guide learners through information alongside other learners regardless of need or skill level. This approach often includes disseminating content in a format designed for large groups. Maise (2013) highlighted that the learner, in most corporate settings, desires a personalized package of content, experience, collaboration, and even certification that includes:

- Content that is critical to have.

- Content not already known.

- Content likely to be needed in the near future.

- Content not available to retrieve when needed.

- Content referenced around one's work, background, and language. (p.38)

When organizational leaders apply personalized training to adult learners, it challenges long-standing traditions and rituals (Maise, 2013). The blend of learning activities offered in a personalized training includes interactive lectures, coaching, and apprenticeship opportunities. Adult learning culture has adapted to customization and has an expectation for training to be delivered with personalization.

Program implementors who utilize adult learning approaches in combination with providing a personalized delivery system will provide church planters with the essential information they need to be prepared for the task of church planting. The current context of church planting includes models that are varied according to the unique demographic pastors are reaching. As a result, a one-size-fits-all training event lacks the effectiveness to provide for the

multi-faceted needs of individual church planters. When trainers apply the framework of adult learning with personalized training models, there will be a more robust model provided, being more of a contextualized and relevant training experience for church planters.

Conceptual Framework

Significant emerging church trends that highlight new and varied church models are found in the literature from the World Council of Churches. In North America, there was a homogenous style of church model that involved the Sunday attractional church service. A historic shift in church models has occurred since the early 1990s. Church leaders have categorized these models into three significant categories (Todjeras, 2019). According to Todjeras (2019), "Evangelical churches represent 28.5% of emerging churches" (p. 301). Todjeras (2019) contends the majority of evangelicals identify as reconstructionists who believe "the gospel should be translated into local contexts without compromise" (p. 293). As a result of this paradigm shift, a variety of church models have emerged.

Church planters with a missional focus encourage planting of churches in every community, to include rural, urban, suburban, and multiethnic communities. The AG movement has a variety of models: parent affiliated church (PAC), multi-campus sites, house churches, and fresh expressions. Church planters with a missional focus encourage planting of churches in every community, to include rural, urban, suburban, and multiethnic communities. Church planting models are no longer homogenous but rather expressed as a variety of shapes, sizes, and cultural expressions. The shift toward a variety of church models requires an adjustment in training methods to include a personalized training approach for church planters. Developing leaders using a customized method involves the use of coaching, cohorts, apprenticeships, and varied information delivery systems.

One of the distinctive leadership skills required for planting a new church is being entrepreneurial. Davis (2019) described the characteristics of an innovative leader as "one who has the ability to leverage existing ideas and transform them into unique solutions" (p.70). Offering training that exclusively focuses on content delivery does not meet the felt needs of church planters who experience multifaceted challenges when pioneering. Davis (2019) lists several skills that innovative leaders must develop and includes "team building, cross-cultural competency, project management, and inter-relational capabilities" (pp. 70-71).

The implementation of the personalization approach to training, that includes customized adult educational methods based on need, provides church planters the necessary information they require. Personalized training that includes various models prepares a wide variety of church planters to accomplish church planting. The result of personalized training is church plant multiplication that is inclusive of the varied models of church plants needed to reach a diverse population of various cultures. The leadership development model for church planters begins with discipleship, provides an opportunity for church planters to develop as servant leaders, and results in capable leaders who are prepared for the task of church planting. Figure 1 depicts the conceptualization of church plant training as professional development is delivered to church planters in their context.

Figure 1

Conceptualization of Church Plant Training
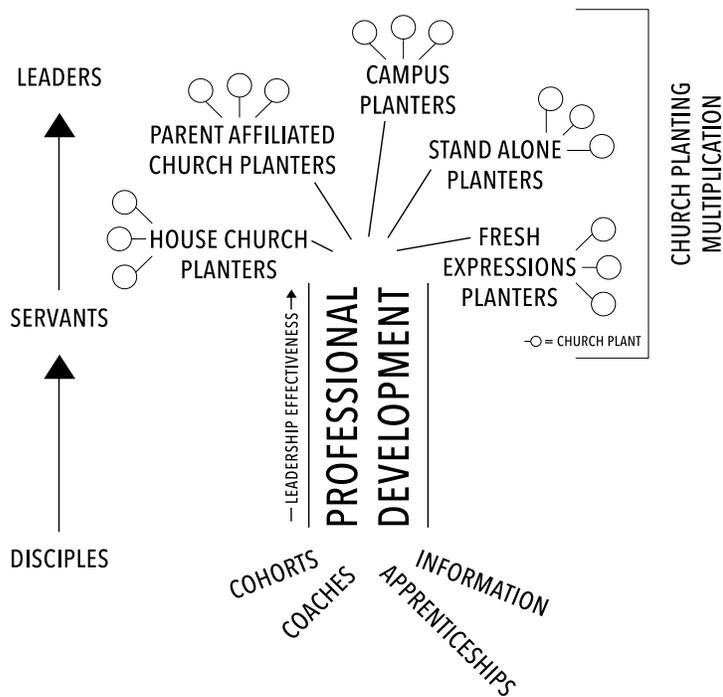
Problem Statement

Church planting is recognized as one of the most effective ways to reach people with the gospel by church plant experts (Stetzer, 2016). Hirsch (2010) explained, "What we need are missionally responsive, culturally adaptive, and organizationally agile multiplication movements" (p. 9). The AG established the CMN to lead the way in multiplication efforts. CMN implements regional Launch events to train new church planters across the United States. However, 60% of Launch participants who attended training between 2016-2018 have not yet planted a church (J. Deese, personal communication, August 31, 2020). In addition, minimal research in the past decade has been conducted on effective church planting methods. The focus of this research was to evaluate how Launch participants perceived the effectiveness of the

training they received. The data gathered can provide CMN with valuable information regarding how the training was perceived by Launch participants.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Purpose Statement</h2>

The purpose of this study was to survey Launch participants to measure how effective a Launch training is in preparing individuals to plant a new church.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Significance of the Study</h2>

Surveying Launch participants provided significant data regarding the effectiveness of a Launch training. A survey collecting data from a select group of Launch participants has not yet been conducted prior to this study. The data gathered provided valuable information regarding participant perceptions of training adequacy.

Overview of Methodology

The study was a quantitative and non-experimental research design, utilizing a survey research methodology approach to address the topic and research problem. The study's research instrument was created using subject matter expert (SME) agreed-upon themes to generate survey items to be used for study purposes. Instrument validation was conducted at both a priori and posteriori phases. The a priori validation of the research instrument was conducted through as pilot study administration to 25 to 30 study participants. Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to evaluate the internal reliability of pilot study participant responses to the instrument. An alpha level of at least $\alpha = .70$ was sought for validation purposes in the pilot study phase. Refinements may include elimination of items or restructuring of items detracting from optimal internal reliability levels. In the posteriori phase of instrument validation, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to assess the internal reliability of participant to survey items when study data were collected.

Cronbach alpha levels of $\alpha \geq .80$ are considered "very good" and levels of $\alpha \geq$ will be considered "excellent" (Field, 2018).

Study Participant Sample

The study sample included Launch participants in the United States. The survey was given to all lead church planters who completed the Launch training between 2016 and 2019.

Study Procedures

The survey questions were emailed to the Launch participants using the Typeform platform to gather data.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The topic and problem statement of the proposed study were addressed through the statement of four research questions and accompanying hypotheses. The following represent the research questions for the proposed study:

1. To what degree did the three-day Launch training model effectively prepare study

    participants for planting a church?

    H_a1: There will be a statistically significant effect exerted by the three-day training "Launch Model" for study participant perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church.

2. Was there a statistically significant difference in Launch participants' perceptions of

    being effectively prepared for planting a church between those who planted a church and

    those who did not plant a church?

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H$_a$ 2: There will be a statistically significant effect in the difference of perceptions of study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church for being adequately supported after the launch training.

3. To what degree did study participants perceive they received adequate support after the Launch training to plant a new church?

H$_a$ 3: There will be a statistically significant effect for study participant perceptions of having received adequate support after the launch training to plant a new church.

4. Was there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of receiving adequate support after the Launch training by the study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church?

H$_a$ 4: There will be a statistically significant difference between study participants who have planted a church and who have not planted a church in perceptions of receiving adequate support after participating in the Launch training.

Analyses

Foundational analyses were conducted in advance of the formal analysis of data associated with the proposed study's research questions. Evaluations of missing data, internal reliability, demographic identifying information, dimension reduction of survey items, and descriptive information associated with the study's dependent variables will be conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The analysis, interpretation, and reporting of study finding was conducted through the use of the 26th version of IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Missing data was assessed using descriptive statistical techniques, and the missing completely at random (MCAR) statistic for randomness. MCAR values of $p > .05$ are considered affirming of the randomness of missing data. Internal reliability of participant responses to survey items on the research instrument was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach alpha levels of .80 or greater was considered very good and values of .90 or greater as excellent (Field, 2018).

In research questions one and three, frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations represented the descriptive statistical techniques to be used. The one sample t test was used to assess the statistical significance of finding in both research questions. The assumption of relative normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) Test. S-W values of $p > .05$ are considered indicative of the assumption as having been satisfied. The probability level of $p < .05$ will represent the threshold for statistical significance of finding for both research questions. The magnitude of effect (effect size) for both research questions were assessed using the Cohen's d statistical technique.

In research questions two and four, frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, represented the descriptive statistical techniques to be used. The t test of independent means was used to determine the statistical significance of difference of mean scores in the comparison featured in both research questions. The assumption of relative normality was assessed using the S-W Test, and the assumption of equality of variances was assessed using the Levene test. Values of $p > .05$ on both the S-W Test and the Levene test are considered indicative of the respective assumptions as having been satisfied. The probability level of $p < .05$ will represent the threshold for statistical significance of finding for both research questions. The magnitude of effect (effect size) for both research questions was assessed using the Cohen's d

statistical technique or a variation of *d* (i.e., increment o change or Hedge's measure of effect size).

Limitations

The study was limited to Launch participants who completed the training between 2016 and 2019. The survey will focus on the perceptions of training effectiveness from participants. Data was gathered to collect information from participants to determine who planted and who did not plant churches following the training. The survey questions were designed to gather information regarding the adequacy of training and availability of resources incorporated in the training, which are considered predictors of successful church planting. The data was not designed to evaluate the competency level of participants, motivation levels, or other factors that could influence effectiveness of church planting.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Church**: when Church is capitalized, it refers to the universal Church community worldwide who identify as Christians. When church is not capitalized, it refers to a specific, local church in a community.

- **church planter**: an individual who serves as the lead pastor of a new church. The planter is responsible for pioneering a new church community that has not previously existed. The planter is the main vision caster and entrepreneur.

- **district/network**: the Assemblies of God U.S.A is organized geographically by districts/networks that serve the pastors and churches within certain geographical boundaries. For example, the Ohio Ministry Network serves all pastors and churches within the Ohio state boundaries. However, the Northwest Ministry Network serves all pastors and churches within the state of Washington and North Idaho. The term

district and network are used interchangeably as a large majority of geographical

regions use the term network, while another segment of regions use the term *district*.

- **fresh expressions**: a church community designed to reach a specific subculture of the

    population with the intention of reaching an unchurched segment of the population.

- **launch training**: the 3-day training event for church planters that is facilitated by the

    Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network. The training is intended to

    prepare church planters for pioneering a new church. The trainings take place

    regionally across the nation and are open to all church planters regardless of

    denominational affiliation.

- **parent church**: A church that has committed to planting another church and

    assuming responsibility for supporting the new church for a designated period of

    time. Some parent churches choose to remain in the role of "parenting" indefinitely,

    while others determine a timeframe that will expire as the new church becomes

    capable of being self-supporting and self-governing. The responsibilities of a parent

    church are varied and typically outlined in a memorandum of understanding

    document between the parent church and the church planter.

Summary

Developing capable church planters will meet the felt need for starting new churches that

influence unreached people groups. With the shifting paradigm of church plant models, there is a

need to adjust training methods to produce church planters who are equipped to reach the

demographic they are reaching. Utilizing models that focus on methods for adult education along

with personalized leadership development will provide relevant methods for training the next

generation of church planters. Church planters require training methods geared toward

developing innovative leaders who are prepared for the challenges of 21st century ministry. A holistic approach to leadership development of church planters begins with discipleship, provides opportunity for servant leadership, and results in leaders who are prepared to plant churches in a wide variety of contexts. The focus on surveying participants who completed the Launch training evaluated the effectiveness of the training and provided data to inform CMN with valuable information.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to survey Launch participants to measure how effective a Launch training is in preparing individuals to plant a new church.

Overview of the Chapter's Organization

The review of current literature focused on the topic of professional development training. A clear definition of church planting was provided to give context to the subject matter. First century church plant training methods are explored with an emphasis on Jesus's approach to preparing future church planters. A summary of early church planters was examined, along with contemporary 21st century ways of equipping new leaders to pioneer churches. Several professional development models were examined, including problem-based learning, learner-centered instruction, and entrepreneurial education approaches. In addition, adult-centered learning models emphasized transformative learning, personalized leadership development, and emotional intelligence.

Conceptual Framework

Church missiologists agree that accomplishing the Great Commission involves actively planting new churches (Chai, 2018; Ferguson & Ferguson, 2010; Hirsch, 2010; Ott & Wilson, 2010, Stetzer & Bird, 2010; Wilson et al., 2015). Multiplying new churches is an effective way of spreading the gospel to new communities with a focused goal on reaching the unchurched. According to Ott and Wilson (2010), "Roughly one-third of the residents of Planet Earth are still

without a local church that can share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ in an understandable and meaningful manner" (preface). The need for new church plants is evident. Stetzer & Bird (2010) explained, "To truly reach our world, churches need to multiply among every thin slice of society: suburban, urban, rural, cowboy, artistic, senior adult, collegiate—and on the list goes" (p. 36). While there is clarity among church planting experts on the theology of planting new churches, there are a wide variety of approaches on the methods and means to accomplishing the task.

The most elementary step in planting a new church begins with training a capable church planter who will take the lead in the entrepreneurial effort of starting a new church. Training and developing church plant pastors are essential goals of every successful church planting movement. According to Reimer (2016), "The British missiologist Stuart Murray points to the Anabaptist movement which lost its vibrancy as a church planting movement by failing to address the question of leadership training" (p. 70). In contrast, Reimer (2016) explained "The training provided for the Celtic church planters was a significant component in the vibrancy of this movement" (p. 70). A serious examination of training methods for church planters among the first century Church and the 21st century Church can provide a framework of development that will effectively prepare capable leaders to plant new churches. To expand understanding of training methods, a review of current professional development models was studied along with approaches to adult-centered learning.

Defining Church Planting

Jesus introduced the concept of church (*ekklesia*) when he said, "I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (New International Version, 1973/2011, Matthew 16:18). The universal Church is understood to include all Christ-followers globally since the

local church refers to congregations of believers that exist in individual communities. In scripture, the church planting movement can be traced back to the early church. Payne (2005) defined church planting:

> Biblical church planting follows the way modeled by Jesus and imitated by the Apostolic Church for global disciple making. It is a methodology and strategy for bringing in the harvest, raising up leaders from the harvest, and sending leaders to work in the harvest fields. It is evangelism resulting in congregationalizing. Under the leadership and work of the Holy Spirit, biblical church planting seeks to translate the gospel and the irreducible ecclesiological minimum into any given social context, the expectation that new communities of believers in turn will continue the process in their contexts and throughout the world (p. 1).

The concept of starting new churches can be observed in scripture as the New Testament church multiplied and expanded after the ascension of Christ. The local congregational model is the strategy that has successfully taken the gospel message around the world for over 2,000 years. Christ followers who seek to model and multiply new churches embrace church planting as a biblical mandate. McGeever (2018) emphasized, "Ample evidence is provided in the biblical literature that reaching unbelievers or contextualized evangelism is required for healthy church planting that is modeled after Jesus" (p. 9). It is critical for leaders of church planting movements to understand and apply the biblical theology and mission of church planting in multiplication efforts. Scott (2017) noted that scripture prescribes certain practices for the church, including selecting qualified leaders, gathering regularly, and practicing baptism and the Eucharist. In addition, the church participated in vibrant worship (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 2:47), prayer (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 2:42), reading of scripture (New

International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 4:23-31) and outreach to the community (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 6:1). Church planting, as a mission, is outlined in scripture. However, the methodology for accomplishing the task is left somewhat ambiguous. Horrell (2017) emphasized, "If the New Testament reflects ambiguity regarding organizational forms, what appears tangible are the God-glorifying activities of the early church" (p. 212). This unprescribed methodology makes it possible to translate the gospel into any culture. As a result, churches around the world represent a mosaic of diverse congregations that are inclusive of various ethnicities and cultures.

First Century Training Models

Examining models of church plant training within scripture requires study of two primary areas. First, an analysis of how Jesus trained the disciples to become leaders provides valuable insight into effective leadership development. Second, a study of the ministry of Paul and his church planting efforts is beneficial to understanding effective training models. A close study of leadership development within the Early Church provides insight into practices that were essential to the success of church planting in the first century.

Jesus's Method of Training

The Early Church was formed as a result of the ministry of the disciples in A.D. 33. It is notable that Jesus himself trained the disciples for three years utilizing a hybrid of various training methods. What Jesus did to prepare, train, and equip his disciples is foundational. An in-depth look into the leadership development practices implemented by Jesus offers a framework for his approach to equipping leaders to expand the kingdom through church planting.

The first practice Jesus modeled was team building. Liu et al. (2014) described, "Shared leadership is expected to foster team learning through strengthening the interconnectivity among

individual members and cultivating effective knowledge exchanges within the team" (p. 385).

Jesus selected 12 disciples who would learn from him during an extended timeframe. Keehn

(2019) explained, "The first method of leadership development that is rooted in the Old

Testament is the practice of serving under and literally following around the master-leader to

learn by observation and servanthood" (p. 136). Throughout the gospels, the disciples are

mentioned working alongside Jesus during his three years of public ministry. The team-building

efforts of Jesus are an essential component that marked his ministry and laid the foundation for

expanding the Church.

The approach of utilizing teams to accomplish goals has been an area of study for

leadership experts. Effective team leadership is essential for team success (Burke et al., 2006;

Liu et al., 2014). According to Hackman (2012), there are six enabling conditions of group

effectiveness: "compelling purpose, right people, real team, clear norms of conduct, supportive

organizational context, and team-focused coaching" (p. 437). These elements can be observed in

the team building practices of Jesus with his disciples in scripture as he chooses his team, creates

norms, and uses a coach- approach (New International Version, 1973/2011, Matthew 9:9, New

International Version, 1973/2011, Matt. 4:19, New International Version, 1973/2011, Mark 8:29,

New International Version, 1973/2011, John 14:6).

Another aspect of Jesus's leadership development approach included apprenticeship. The

apprenticeship model has been used throughout history for instruction in various vocations

(Bennett, 1936; Lodge, 1947). The Jewish tradition historically involved developing leaders

through an intentional apprenticing relationship (Payne, 2019). Jesus followed this pattern by

inviting his disciples to follow him and engage in the practical operations of his ministry. The

apprentices of Jesus had a unique opportunity to watch how he responded to needs, navigated

conflict, and organized efforts to meet the needs of people. Apprenticeship is an effective model of education. Keehn (2019) emphasized, "Immersive field education graduates have [a] statistically significant higher perception of vocational preparedness [as it] relates to mentoring opportunities" (p. 138). The Apostles who Jesus trained were fulfilling immersive internships that resulted in the formation of the Church (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 2:42-47).

Teaching was an integral part of Jesus's leadership development process. Nilson (2016) described the use of lecture as an integral part of the learning process. Verbal communication is an effective method of passing along information from one person to another. Throughout scripture, Jesus taught his followers using significant lectures that included instruction for life and ministry. The Sermon on the Mount, and a collection of parables, include essential teachings of Jesus. Jesus also used visuals in his messages, a method that engaged his audience. Educators have identified the use of visuals, examples, and restatements as tools for effective lectures (Nilson, 2016). Jesus was a rabbi who provided apprenticing opportunities as he taught frequently in the temple and among the people. The chapters of Matthew 8 and 9 serve as a primer of sorts as they include the work and teachings of Jesus. The messages Jesus taught to his disciples clearly communicated the tasks he wanted them to accomplish; healing the sick (New International Version, 1973/2011, Matthew 8: 1-17, 23-27; 9:34) driving out demons (New International Version, 1973/2011, Matthew 8: 28-34) and preaching the good news of the kingdom (New International Version, 1973/2011, Matthew 10: 7; Keehn, 2019). The teaching ministry of Jesus was an integral part of developing the disciples intellectually, along with their spiritual formation. The teaching ministry of Jesus highlights the importance of including lecture-style training in the process of leadership development.

After the disciples had been chosen and experienced hands-on apprenticeship, it was time for them to assume leadership. One of the nine critical events of instruction outlined by the work of Gagne et. al (2005) is elicit performance. Simply put, learners need an opportunity to apply what they have learned. Moving from cognitive understanding to practical application is a critical step in the leadership development process. Jesus provided opportunities for his followers to engage in ministry by providing specific assignments. The most notable instructions Jesus provided to his disciples was given in the Great Commission to, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (New International Version, 1973/2011, Mark 16:15). However, Jesus also provided specific opportunities for his followers to participate in ministry experiences. He empowered 72 of his disciples by sending them out in pairs with instructions to heal the sick and teach about the kingdom of God (New International Version, 1973/2011, Luke 10:10-9). The response from these leaders can be seen in the form of the progress report they shared upon returning from their assignment: "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us when we used your name!'" (New International Version, 1973/2011, Luke 10:17). Once the followers of Jesus began to lead in building the Church, the process of leadership development had been accomplished. The cycle continued as these leaders continued to make disciples who in turn made other disciples. The cyclical process is repeated as disciples reproduce disciples, resulting in exponential multiplication of church leadership.

Jesus utilized a planned approach to develop leaders that included team building, apprenticing, instructing, and releasing of empowered leaders into ministry. Leadership development practices molded the Early Church and were a catalyst for the sustained multiplication of the Church, as early leaders continued the work planting new churches throughout the known world. Horrell (2017) explained, "Missiologically speaking, in the

formation of new congregations, the vibrant activities of Acts serve as a basic, transferable matrix for incentivizing, praying, organizing, and structuring the local church, all by the power of the Holy Spirit" (p. 224). The basic ingredients for training church planters were provided by Jesus in the scriptures that capture his practical approach to developing leaders.

Early Church Planters

The apostle Paul is credited by many theologians for being the founder of Christianity (Patton, 2015). Paul's widespread missionary journeys are considered church planting efforts, as new church congregations were founded as a result of his work. Paul's leadership development process can be observed through the details shared regarding his training and experiences in the scriptures. Scripture explains the Apostle Paul was known as Saul before his encounter with Jesus while on the road to Damascus (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 9:3). However, Saul's unique ministry training shaped his leadership abilities. Saul was brought up in Tarsus, which was the capital city of Cilicia. He was a member of a very strict sect of Pharasaism and received his early religious education from conservative Hebrew parents. When Saul was the tender age of twelve or thirteen, he went to Jerusalem to learn from Gamaliel, who was one of the most respected rabbis of his time (Patton, 2015). Because of strict religious training by the zealous Pharisees, Saul regarded Christ followers as heretics and "violently tried to destroy their work" (Patton, 2015, p. 135). It was his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus that drastically changed Saul's heart, his name, and his mission (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 9:3). Immediately Paul determined to help spread the gospel that he had been working to eradicate.

There are certain patterns that can be observed in Paul's church planting efforts. It is critical to recognize that Paul's leadership is a reflection of his earlier training received by the

Pharisees. Paul was an educated leader of leaders. His development prepared him for the task of taking the gospel to the known world. Alawode (2020) outlined four patterns of church planting Paul implemented in his leadership.

Paul focused on preaching to responsive people. He adopted this method given to the disciples through the ministry of Jesus (Alawode, 2020). According to Payne (2016), "Jesus emphasized to the disciples to go to people who were receptive to their message, but should not overlook the non-receptive; moreover, they were to focus on those ready to hear" (p. 3). The practice of focusing on receptive communities is a church planting approach that Paul successfully used in his missionary journeys. Secondly, in the book of Acts, Paul strategically focused on establishing new churches in urban cities (Alawode, 2020). Urban church planting contributed significantly to successfully spreading the message of the gospel to influential communities (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 13). Thirdly, Paul's approach brought the gospel to entire households. "Homes were primary instruments for Christian life and formation" (Alawode, 2020, p. 2). Scripture records entire households coming to faith using this method, including Lydia (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 16:14-15), the jailor (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 16:32-34), and Crispus and Stephanas (New International Version, 1973/2011, New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 18:8). Fourthly, Alawode (2020) explained, "Paul contextualized the message of the gospel through the methods he used to suit the audience to which he was preaching" (p. 3). Paul's message of the gospel remained consistent, although he freely adjusted his methods to reach different audiences.

An analysis of Paul's approach to church planting must include an examination of how he apprenticed other leaders. Biblical examples of Paul's apprenticing include Timothy, Titus (New International Version, 1973/2011, 1Tim. 1:2), Barnabas (New International Version, 1973/2011,

Acts 14:8), and Lydia (New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 16:40). Following the example of Jesus, Paul included others in his ministry endeavors by giving them opportunity to learn by observing. Paul eventually released his protégé into leadership by commending Timothy to other churches as an authority, naming him as a co-author of biblical epistles, and imploring him to carry on the task of planting churches. The value of apprenticing in the life of church planters in the Early Church can be noted by the successful ministry efforts they accomplished together in the area of planting churches in the known world.

21st Century Church Plant Training Methods

To understand how church planters are trained in the 21st century, it is imperative to note how leadership ideals have progressed over the decades. Rost (1991) outlined the ways in which concepts of leadership have evolved over the past century. In the early 1900s, the emphasis was on the leadership traits of control and the centralization of power. By the 1950s, the leadership themes included the continuance of group theory, along with an exploration of the effectiveness of groups. Leadership development experts from the 21st century have focused on four primary concepts regarding leadership, to include authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and adaptive leadership (Rost & Amarant, 2005). Successful leaders are required to adapt to address the multi-faceted needs of the current culture. The ways in which church planters prepare for the task of church planting has shifted dramatically, compared to a century ago. The one-size-fits-all church model is no longer relevant. Leading in the current culture requires a flexible approach that aligns with the diverse representation of pastors needed to reach a variety of communities.

According to Stetzer and Im (2016), there are three primary leadership models of church planting that are largely based on how the lead pastor is gifted. The most common model of

church plant in North America is the founding pastor approach where the leader starts a new congregation and pastors the church for an extended term. Examples of this include planters such as Charles Spurgeon, Rick Warren, Darrin Patrick, and Daniel Montgomery (Stetzer & Im, 2016). The second model is the apostolic harvest church planter. The leader starts the church, develops leaders, and then quickly moves on to begin a new church. Historically, this model worked during the rapid growth of the Methodist and Baptist denominations in nineteenth-century America (Stetzer & Im, 2016). More recently, in 2006, Jon Tyson planted an apostolic harvest church in New York. There has been a resurgence of this model with the rise of the bi-vocational church planters who intentionally stay in the marketplace while leading ministries. Bi-vocational ministers experience economic advantages that ease the burden on the church to provide a full-time salary while staying in touch with the culture. Lastly, the team planting approach utilizes a group of planters who relocate to an area to start a new congregation. The team has a lead pastor who serves as the visionary for the collaborative efforts of the team. Unique from the other approaches, team planting leans into the gifts of individuals, while also depending on the leader for vision and direction. All three of these approaches have been effective, and the success is largely based upon aligning the gifts of the leader with the corresponding model.

A common theme among 21st century church leaders is the need for missional churches pastored by missional pastors (Hirsch, 2010; Stetzer & Im, 2016; Washington, 2019). The term *missional* describes the intent to be outward focused, engaging in evangelistic efforts that are primarily focused on the population of unchurched. Stetzer & Im (2016) explained how the Church in North America "finds itself on the periphery, having been marginalized by the larger culture" (p. 15). The Pew Research Center reported in 2019, 65% of Americans identify as

Christians, down from 77% in 2009 (Washington, 2019). The decline of churches in America in proportion to the population is also cause for alarm. The North American Mission Board calculated the church-to-population ration based on statistics from the United States Census Bureau:

- In 1900, there were twenty-eight churches for every 10,000 Americans.

- In 1950, there were seventeen churches for every 10,000 Americans.

- In 2000, there were twelve churches for every 10,000 Americans.

- In 2011, there were eleven churches for every 10,000 Americans

    (Stetzer & Im, 2016).

The need for more churches in America is apparent, but the need to plant churches with a missional focus is critical. Paas and Schoemaker (2018) defined church planting as, "the creation of new Christian communities for missionary reasons" (p. 366). Evangelism is the ultimate goal for missional churches. It is essential for the understanding of multiplication efforts, to recognize that churches are led by pastors. Leadership guru, John Maxwell (1993) emphasized, "In this world, everything rises and falls on leadership" (preface.) Missional churches are led by missional pastors. Alan Hirsch (2010) noted that the motto of the underground church movement in China is, "every believer a church planter, every church a church planting church" (p. 10). Commitment to creating a church planting culture can be observed in places, such as China, where church multiplication is successful. The education and formation of missional pastors is paramount to the expansion of church multiplication efforts.

Reimer (2016) stated the reality that, "planting needs planters" (p. 70). Church planting experts concur that, "biblical and theological equipping of leaders is not optional" (Ott & Wilson, 2010, p. 356). Close examination must be given to models that train and empower church planters. Brelsford (2016) insisted:

A majority of Protestant churches, and denominations, and church leaders…are stuck in schooling models and structures and practices and assumptions born in the nineteenth century when families tended to be stationary and stable, and options for socialization and leisure activities were far and away more limited than today. (p. 2)

Shifting culture demands new approaches to training church planters. Reimers (2016) identified four categories of training that are producing church planters: church-based training, in-service training, school-oriented approach, and non-formal training. Some emerging church plant training methods align with the models Reimers (2016) identified. Other approaches indicate new trends that may be contributing to preparing the next generation of church planters for the complexities of 21st century leadership.

The emergence of active church planting networks that exist with the singular goal of starting and supporting new churches is unique. Hunter (2018) emphasized, "church planting networks become an increasingly important source of support and resources for aspiring church planters" (p.1). There are currently ten influential church planting networks identified in North America: Soma, Acts29, Ecclesia, V3, Association of Relational Churches, Stadia, Sojourn, Summit, Church Multiplication Network, and Sovereign Grace. The majority of the planting networks listed in North America were created in the past 10-20 years in response to the need to plant missional churches. The resources provided by church planting networks range from assessments for new church planters, to a wide variety of resources, including funding, coaching, training, conferences, and apprenticing opportunities (Hunter, 2018). Church planting networks most closely align with the non-formal training, as most do not require a formal degree to join. Some of the church planting networks, such as the Church Multiplication Network, are associated with existing denominations. However, many operate independent of formal

denominations and structures in order to remove unnecessary organizational red tape that often hinders the efforts of church planters.

The use of leadership coaching and mentorship to support church planters is in high demand, as the trend in coaching continues to grow. Some claim that leadership coaching is one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Bueno, 2010). Academic scholars Athanasopoulou & Dopson (2018), Ely et al. (2019), and Grant (2012), have identified two common elements that define coaching:

> (1) a relationship between a coach and coachee with the (2) objective of helping the coachee change in some targeted way, such as achieving greater self-awareness, becoming more effective, improving performance, maximizing potential, develop and maintaining positive change, or reaching goals and sustaining development (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 2).

Coaching is a leadership development tool that has proven valuable for many vocations. Recent empirical research identified that coaching meets the three basic human needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Taylor et al., 2019). Studies revealed church planters who navigate the enormous task of starting a new church, express the need for coaching. Paas & Shoemaker (2018) interviewed 31 church planters in Europe and discovered both challenges and felt needs. The challenges experienced by church planters included: high and unclear expectations, uncertainty about finances and facilities, team challenges, encounters with broken lives and unbelief, doubt and spiritual struggle, including deconstruction and incomprehension (Pass & Shoemaker, 2018). Intentional coaching and mentorship surfaced as one of seven sources of resilience needed by church planters (Paas & Shoemaker, 2018). The strength of coaching models is the ability to apply them in a variety of settings. Coaching is a flexible tool that has the potential of being utilized in all four categories that Reimer (2016) identified.

Apprenticing is a leadership development tool that has been implemented in church plant training since the establishment of the Early Church (Acts 14:6, New International Version, 1973/2011, Acts 4:20, New International Version, 1973/2011 and Acts16:1, New International Version, 1973/2011). The concept of apprenticeship learning was presented academically by educational theorists John Dewey and his colleague George Herbert Mead in the early 1900's (Kock, 2017). According to Kock (2017) "in an apprenticeship system, people are trained in a profession by participating in the actual practice of the job on the shop floor, learning by observing and imitating more experienced workers" (p. 234). Ferguson and Ferguson (2016) explained four phases in the process of apprenticing: apprentice selection, apprentice expectation, apprentice preparation, and apprentice graduation.

The practice of apprenticeship is often compared to the process of discipleship as outlined in scripture. Jesus modeled apprenticeship through his work with a small group of disciples, from selection to graduation in the form of empowering them to leave after his ascension (Luke 24:50). Apprenticeship as a model of education was a common practice among medieval monks in the fifteenth century. Bednarksi and Courtemanche (2009) noted, "Young Manosquins could train for several years under a skilled craftsman to compete economically as adults" (p.114). Both formal and informal apprenticeship programs are common practice in the field of education, medicine, politics, and clergy (Bishop, 2015). Well known evangelical pastor, Mark Batterson, recently launched an apprenticeship program, called Protégé, to provide apprenticeship opportunities for developing ministry leaders around the world. The internship is a training and proving ground for emerging church leaders (national.cc/nccu/protégé). Protégé consists of a year-long intensive spiritual growth, leadership development, and ministry immersion experience at National Community Church. The implementation of apprenticeship

can be utilized in every category of training identified by Reimers (2016). The value of apprenticeship can be overlooked when the focus of education is on distributing information, instead of the implementation of concepts. Incorporating apprenticeship models provides learners with opportunities to apply instruction in real life situations.

Davis (2013) conducted a qualitative descriptive study to discover the qualities of a good church planting internship that implemented an apprenticeship model. The researcher conducted interviews and surveyed twenty-one church planters, internship coordinators, and mentors. Data were analyzed and coded for emerging themes. According to Davis (2013), over half of the internship directors interviewed identified three significant keys to the success of a church planting internship:

- The need for quality evaluative feedback from the mentor coupled with the intern's ongoing theological reflection;

- Interns taking preparatory and complimentary on-campus coursework that harmonized with the on-site field experience;

- Personal involvement in community research and cultural exegesis (p. 149).

In addition, based on the results of the study, Davis (2013) emphasized, "The ideal church-planting mentor would be someone in the process of leading a new church plant or a seasoned pastor with a heart for planting and hopefully some experience leading his church to parent daughter churches" (pp. 161-162). Apprenticeship models, when implemented with vocational training, is an effective form of leadership development and is considered essential according to Davis (2013).

Utilizing cohorts as a method of developing competent church planters is the primary method used by Stadia, a church planting movement gaining momentum in the United States

(stadiachurchplanting.org). Church planting cohorts meet regularly throughout the initial planning and launch phases of starting a new church. Holmes et al. (2010) described the function of a cohort saying, "Although each member is responsible for his or her own work, each is also responsible for contributing to the success of other members" (p.7). Based on O'Neill's (2019) research of various cohort characteristics, the collaborative framework model includes five primary characteristics:

- They have a defined, long-term membership who commence and complete together.

- They share a common goal that can best be achieved when members are academically and emotionally supportive of each other.

- They engage in a common series of learning experience.

- They follow a highly structured and intense meeting schedule.

- They form a network of synergistic learning relationships that are developed and shared among members. (p. 168)

According to the definition from O'Neill (2019), the 12 disciples could have been considered a cohort led by Jesus. Fairchild (2020) reports, "In the last 100 years, the number of Christians in the world has quadrupled from about 600 million, in 1910 to well past 2 billion presently. Today, Christianity remains the world's largest religious group" (p.1). The success of the original cohort of Christ followers is evident in the spread of Christianity worldwide. A Nelson (2019) study interviewed 70 church planters, church plant directors, and denominational leaders from North America for a study. The study was qualitative and involved open-ended interviews of participants. The summary of findings included 320 pages of interview notes that were coded to provide insight to core themes. Nelson (2019) discovered that isolation was a primary struggle identified and that "planters do best when they are sent out of a culture of

support and when they are constantly working to build a culture of support" (p. 164). The consistent and collaborative support offered within the safety of a cohort can assist church planters in efforts to overcome the five main categories of challenges identified in Nelson's (2019): finances, numbers, leadership, fatigue, and isolation. The data also identified five categories of support that are sought by church planters: the power of God, vision refilled, initiating relationships and care, problem-solving and training, administration and systems. Church planters need assistance with the challenges they experience and the specific areas of support that were identified in Nelson's research. The flexibility of the cohort model enables cohorts to be utilized in all of Reimers (2016) training categories. Formal and informal educational programs alike have utilized the cohort model as an effective leadership development tool. Church planters are prime candidates for receiving the benefits that cohorts offer in the area of support and ongoing training.

Professional Development Models

Professional development models have significantly changed over the past century, as culture shifts demand evolving methods to meet current demands. Scott (2017) noted, "Overuse of conventional didactic methods such as lecturing and teacher-centered instruction consistently tops critics' lists of reasons why institutions have failed to develop the teamwork, leadership, and problem solving-skills necessary for managers to be successful in the 21st century" (p. 4). The emerging experiential pedagogical approaches, such as action learning and problem based learning, are often considered more effectual for developing leaders when compared to traditional classroom-based methods (Brownell & Jameson, 2004; Johnson & Spicer, 2006; Leonard & Lang, 2010; Tushman et al., 2007). An examination of current leadership

development practices in the field of education is vital to understanding best practices for training church planters to meet the demands of pastoring in today's culture.

The ability of professional leadership models to prepare spiritual leaders has been questioned by religious leaders who believe scripture is the singular source of wisdom and practice. Many leadership development programs focus on competency of skills. However, Avolio (2011) insisted that the emphasis should be on "…teaching leaders and followers to process and reflect, as opposed to developing a particular style or behavior" (p. 762). Rothausen (2017) suggested spiritual leadership can and should be applied to professional leadership models. An interdisciplinary approach has the potential of combining the best of both models. Church planters can benefit from applying proven leadership development models to their efforts to pioneer spiritual communities.

During the weeks following the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the US Army War College coined the acronym VUCA, which stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Dr. Johansen, former president of Institute for the Future predicted that "our VUCA world is not going away, it's just going to spin faster during the next decade" (Leading in a VUCA world, 2012, para. 3). Johansen noted while VUCA can provide threats, it also offers opportunities if translated to "vision, understanding, clarity, and agility" (Leading in a VUCA world, 2012, para. 4). Iordanoglou (2018) explained, "Leadership development practices have not proven adequate to meet the challenges of the new era" (p. 118). In 2016, Bersin et al. released the Global Human Capital Trends report that is based on over 7,000 survey responses in over 130,000 countries around the world (Human Capital Trends, 2016). The survey researchers identified four primary forces of global change: demographic upheavals, digital technology saturation, rapid business acceleration, and a new social construct developing between

companies and workers (Human Capital Trends, 2016). The current changes are a catalyst to align approaches to leadership development with the most pressing needs leaders are experiencing. According to global research conducted by Hay Group (2011), it was revealed:

> Leaders should abandon much of the thinking and behaviors that propelled them to the top of their organizations in the first place and adopt a post-heroic leadership style…leaders of the future will need to be adaptable, flexible, multilingual and internationally move, to have deep integrity, and a strong conceptual and strategic thinking skills. (p. 2)

A number of leadership development models address the identified skills leaders need. These models are especially applicable in the VUCA culture of church planting. The models examined will include problem-based learning, learner-centered instruction, and entrepreneurial education approaches to leadership development.

Problem-Based Learning

Strobel and Barneveld (2009) reported that "problem-based learning (PBL) has been utilized for over 40 years in a variety of different disciplines" (p. 44). The PBL model promotes self-guided learning in a process of discovery. Yew and Goh (2016) explained, "problem-based learning has been widely adopted in diverse fields and educational contexts to promote critical thinking and problem- solving in authentic learning situations" (p. 75). This pedagogical approach facilitates student learning through problem-solving in collaborative settings and self-directing learning habits by applying reflection (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). The pioneer in education, Dewey (1997), explained that cognitive engagement requires the catalyst of "perplexity, confusion, or doubt" to motivate learning (p.12). Introducing learners to a specific challenge presents the opportunity to both stimulate thinking and provoke solutions. Barrows (2002) identified the following key components of PBL:

- Problems are presented to the learner in the way they would present in the real world, as unresolved ill-structured problems.

- Learners have to assume responsibility for their own learning, determine what it is they need to learn, and find the appropriate resources for the information from the world around them.

- The teacher's roles that of a guide or facilitator of learning; commonly referred to in the PBL as the tutor.

- The problems chosen are those most apt to be confronted by the learner in life and career. (p. 119)

Empirical research supported the effectiveness of PBL to achieve long-term knowledge retention (Gijbels et al., 2005; Capon & Kuhn, 2010). It does not appear that short-term knowledge is sustained significantly through the use of PBL, when compared to lecture-based learning (Pourshanazari et al., 2013). A recent study that focused on the problem-analysis and the reporting phases of PBL, show improved student learning in these areas (Yew & Goh, 2016, p. 77). Yew & Goh (2016) concluded the review of recent studies demonstrated that PBL is an effective teaching approach when it is evaluated for long-term knowledge and application (p. 78). Study of PBL is shown effective, especially in vocations, such as the medical field where it is imperative for practitioners to have highly developed problem-solving skills. While various vocations are exploring the use of PBL, using this method in the area of training church planters has not been researched. The nature of church planters being entrepreneurial and encountering several on-the-job challenges makes PBL instruction highly applicable to the field.

Learner-Centered Instruction

The 21st century classroom is increasingly diverse, and the traditional teacher-centered approach is being challenged. Global educational reform has called for teachers to embrace learner-centered instruction (Ji-Hye et.al, 2017). Learner-centered instruction, as an effective form of pedagogy, has been accepted among many educational leaders (Brown, 2003). Brown (2003) evaluated essential learner-centered instruction to include: "two essential factors for a learner-centered approach to education: (a) characteristics of the learner and (b) teaching practices" (p. 49). Teaching practices need to be adjusted, based on the learner's needs. The transmission of knowledge is the primary element associated with the teacher-centered approach. Thompson (2003) aptly noted that the teacher-centered approach was modeled after factories that have been traditionally designed toward efficiency through a rigid process. The work of Tomlinson (2000) focused on the differing needs of students, including readiness to learn, experiences, and life experiences. In order for teachers to meet these needs, learner-centered instruction adapts with an emphasis on guiding and supporting the student through the educational process. Brown (2003) argued that "there must be a commitment to reflection, creating thinking-centered learning, and constantly assessing the quality of instructional programs (p. 54).

Empirical study in the area of learner-centered instruction has focused on the field of education (Cohen, 2004; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Heck et al., 2008). The teaching profession provides ideal opportunity to research instructional methods. Polly and Hannafin (2011) conducted research with 24 teachers who completed a workshop on learner-centered instruction. The results showed misalignment between teachers espoused and enacted practices following the training (Polly and Hannifin, 2011). Although the instructors were highly motivated to adopt

learner-based instruction, the analysis showed the majority of teachers continued to use directive practices instead of guiding students through the material. Learner-centered instruction is effective yet requires intentional implementation by teachers to be effective.

The paradigm shift from teacher-centered learning to learner-centered instruction has major implications for best practices in training church planters. The need to apply learner-based instruction is paramount because church plants are started within a wide range of demographics among a variety of ethnicities, socio-economic, and culturally diverse populations. Church plant training that employs a learner-based approach will align with best proven instructional methods being used in the field of education.

Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurial education is accepted as a subject and approach to prepare learners for the variety of challenges encountered in society today (Greene et al. 2015; O'Connor 2013). Eckhardt and Shane (2003) defined entrepreneurship as the "discovery, evaluation and exploitation of future goods and services" (p. 336). Theorists in the field of entrepreneurial education have identified three stages within the decision-making process for entrepreneurs:

1. Opportunity recognition is the ability entrepreneurs demonstrate when combining prior knowledge with existing ideas to discover new opportunities (Baron, 2004).

2. Opportunity evaluation requires entrepreneurs to appraise the situation for opportunity potential (Keh et al. 2002).

3. Opportunity exploitation necessitates entrepreneurs gaining motivational, cognitive and social abilities, skills and resources to act on viable new discoveries (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

Entrepreneurial theory is largely based on the andragogy framework outlined by Knowles, (1973). The five-assumptions in Knowles (1973) andragogy include self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn (Merriam, 2001). Adult learning has been studied as a professional field since early 1900. Several models have emerged, yet not one single model encompasses all the research on the topic. Merriam (2001) noted there is a "mosaic of theories, models, sets of principles and explanations that, combined, compose the knowledge base of adult learning" (p. 3). The entrepreneurial framework closely aligns with the learner-centered model, as the student is the primary driver to set the pace for guided learning.

Church planters are in the category of social entrepreneurs. Manyaka (2015) defined social entrepreneurship as "a process of seeing the problem in the community (an unjust equilibrium), becoming alert to the opportunities that arise from the problem and devise and implement the systems and procedures for solving, or at least, addressing the problem" (p. 4). According to Chell (2007), social entrepreneurship is unique, because of the focus on social mission rather than profit making. Church planters follow the social entrepreneurship process when they take steps to start a new church in a community. Baumgartner and Flores (2017) emphasized:

> Church planters and their teams venture out as faith entrepreneurs in obedience to Christ's commission to share the gospel in every community. They have to experiment with creative ministry approaches in a particular context. Then as they find methods which meet the needs of the people in that community context, experimenting gives way to more predictable ministry structures. (p. 2)

Leaders of new churches follow the pattern outlined by entrepreneurial educators to identify challenges, explore possibilities, and create innovative ministries. Study in the area of entrepreneurial leadership outlined five relevant skills required to successfully navigate a start-up venture:

- Ability of seeing opportunity and acting on it;

- Ability of doing feasibility study;

- The writing of a business plan;

- Putting healthy management systems;

- Ability of marketing of the product or service (Manyaka-Boshielo, 2018, p. 7).

Training systems that address all five of these skills provide relevant content that will prepare church planters for the unique task of being a social entrepreneur. Common Launch church plant training elements include the task of creating a business plan, implementing management systems. and strategizing a promotional strategy. Emphasis on incorporating social entrepreneurial skills is imperative to prepare capable church planters.

Adult-Centered Learning Approaches

Malcolm Knowles (1973) first identified adults as a neglected species when describing the unique needs and characteristics of adult learners. He suggested adult learners were more self-directed and outgrow pedagogical methods of education, while thriving with hands-on methods that are best taught at the pace of the student with emphasis given on practical application (Knowles, 1973). The field of church planting focuses specifically on adult learners whose needs align with the research identifying adult learners. However, many church plant training methods continue to use pedagogical approaches using highly structured, teacher-centered, information-based methods that result in low engagement. The concept of

transformative learning was popularized by the work of Mezirow (1997) who believed, "adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world" (p. 5).

Transformative Learning

The transformative model approaches education with the understanding that adults build on frameworks that have been established throughout their lifetime and can be built upon with new concepts. Garrison (1997) explored the theoretical construct of self-directed learning in the field of adult education. Mezirow and Associates (2000) provided a comprehensive definition:

> Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of references in order to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs an options that will prove more truth or justified to guide action. (pp. 7-8)

Mezirow (1997) explained that the process of transformative learning requires adults to see themselves as autonomous and responsible. The definition of autonomy provided by Mezirow (1997) referred to "the understanding, skills, and disposition necessary to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions" (p. 9). The role of adult learners taking initiative in the educational process is important, because the nature of church planting work is highly individualized. When church planters attend a training, they have already accumulated years of experience that have shaped and developed significant leadership skills. Utilizing a transformational model in training acknowledges the unique skills that planters have acquired and looks for ways to build upon the existing knowledge. Mezirow (1997) noted, "As we move into the next century and more technologically sophisticated industry and service sectors, work becomes more abstract, depending on understanding and manipulating information rather than

merely acquiring it" (p. 8). According to Mezirow (1997), learners must gain new forms of skill and knowledge. The unique challenges of planting in the pluralistic culture of the 21st century will require church planters to acquire new skills.

In his work, *Reenvisioning Theological Education,* Banks (1999) explained the need for a missional model of education that includes "reflection, training, and formation for work on the mission field, whether the latter takes place overseas or locally" (p. 142). A fundamental connection exists between transformational learning and the training of missional church planters in the need for reflective practices that prepare individuals for meaningful work. Shaw (2014) referred to the process as "deep learning" and proposed "real learning is not what is remembered at the end of a course, but what is remembered five or ten years after taking the course, and even more what shapes in the long term the character and actions of the learner" (p. 130). Kempster et al. (2017) explained learning for the sake of knowledge is necessary, but "collective evidence speaks to experiential learning being the most efficacious in leadership learning transference" (p. 2). Applying the transformational approach can include experiential practices, such as assessments to determine skill levels, reflective activities to encourage learners to expand knowledge on a specific topic, and conversations that engage learners in critical problem solving. Church planters can benefit from training that includes both relevant content and a transformational framework that challenges them to build on preexisting knowledge. The goal is for new knowledge to be applied to the individual context of the planter.

Personalized Leadership Development

Masie (2013) observed increasing societal trends in culture toward personalization, particularly in the areas of entertainment, dining, and e-commerce. As a result, people desire customized learning models. Instead of enduring extended classes, course models, or multi-day

conferences, learners desire to "learn in their own style, focusing on content that is just right for them at that moment in their lives or careers" (Masie, 2013, p. 37). Researchers in the field of education have recognized a shift in how learners want to discover and digest content. Because church planters have multiple responsibilities that may include secular vocation or raising a family while leading a church plant team, the time needed to invest in ongoing training is scarce. A study conducted by Rhode et al. (2017) focused on developing a personalized development plan for individual faculty members from four major colleges. A personalized self-assessment was emailed to 114 faculty, and 58 faculty completed the assessment and received a personalized framework recommendation. The approach utilized an assessment that served to help faculty identify what areas they would benefit from improving. Following assessment, the faculty was provided with services, worships, and resources that already existed. Rhode et al. (2017) explained, "Energy was spent on relationship building and unique concerns, rather than the development of an all-inclusive, standardized online professional development program" (p. 4). Providing a personalized approach also included a one-on-one consultation and support in developing a professional development plan. The researchers did not evaluate the completion of personalized plans; however, "100% of those who responded agreed that the recommendations were applicable to their online course development and teaching" (Rhode et al., 2017, p. 5). In addition, the faculty reported the personalized framework increased their confidence to provide quality instruction. The research demonstrated that, providing personalized leadership development requires a more individual approach and also takes advantage of existing resources. Providing multiple resources alleviates the need to create new material and focus solely on connecting leaders with the valuable resources needed to develop desired skills.

A model for providing personalized leadership development to leaders can be observed in the Rhode et al. (2017) study. Church planters experienced the same need for ongoing professional development as other vocations, especially since the cultures they lead are constantly changing. Continuing vocational training is expected among professions in the fields of education, medicine, and law. Nelson (2019) conducted a research project among church planters in the Evangelical Covenant Church. The researcher determined the findings clearly indicated that, "Church planters need more support" (Nelson, 2019, p. 2). In addition, Nelson (2019) indicated, "After three years, when church planters truly begin to struggle, few resources are available" (p. 8). The vital role of ongoing leadership development cannot be underestimated for leaders of fledgling churches who are struggling, not only to start new congregations, but also to make them sustainable. Sustainability is the true litmus test of success in the field of church planting. Nelson (2019) emphasized, "We need thousands of church plants that are missional and healthy enough to grow into maturity, able to support themselves and others. This will require additional support for church plants through the young church stage" (p.11). The additional support needed could be through models of personalized leadership development. The Church Multiplication Network launched CMN Lead as one option to meet the need for ongoing development of church planters. CMN Lead is a website containing thousands of articles and videos on critical topics for leaders of new church plants. The site is organized by topic, with search features to assist pastors in locating the information they need. Resources cover topics, such as budgeting, team building, and creating healthy systems. The demand for personalized leadership development was the catalyst for this resource that is now available to church planters around the world. Church plant training methods for the next generation will need to include

options for personalized leadership development to meet the increasing demand for the highly

pluralized contexts.

Emotional Intelligence

German psychologist William Stern (1930) first coined the term "intelligence quotient" in

1912. Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon developed intelligence testing for both children and

adults. As a result, intellectual intelligence has been a benchmark for measuring leadership

capacity for decades. Goleman (2006) popularized the concept of emotional intelligence in his

publication *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. French poet Marquis de

Vauvenargues (1936) believed that emotions guide the reasoning of people. Serrat (2017)

described emotional intelligence as "the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to

identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups" (p. 330).

Goleman (2006) outlined the emotional intelligence model to include five primary domains: self-

awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills. Serrat (2017)

proposed:

> Staff is now judged by new yardsticks: not just by how smart they are, or by their training
>
> and expertise, but also by how well they handle themselves and one another, and that is
>
> strongly influenced by personal qualities such as perseverance, self-control, and skill in
>
> getting along with others. (p. 337)

Researchers in the field of emotional intelligence believe the skills can be taught and

developed (Codier et al. 2011; McEnrue et al. 2009; Pekaar et al., 2018). Spivey (2014)

conducted the first study exploring the role of emotional intelligence in the effectiveness of lead

church planters. The research examined the relationship between emotional intelligence profiles

of lead church planters and healthy growth patterns, including attendance and financial data for

three years following the church being planted. Participants in the study included 18 church planters within the Restoration Movement who completed an assessment, and seven planters contributing to interviews. Spivey (2014) discovered that 77% of planters tested above normal on the EQi 2.0 assessment and observed a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence scores and church growth over a three-year period. The inclusion of emotional intelligence training among church planters can be beneficial to the success of church growth. Training among church planters should intentionally include emotional intelligence instruction as part of a comprehensive curriculum.

Summary

Missiologists agree that church planting efforts are essential to accomplishing the Great Commission (Chai, 2018; Ferguson & Ferguson, 2010; Hirsch, 2010; Ott & Wilson, 2010, Stetzer & Bird, 2010; Wilson et al., 2015). Church planting efforts were taught by Jesus and modeled by the apostle Paul (*New International Version*, 1973/2011, Matthew 16:18, 1973/2011). Methods of training church planters can be observed in the Old Testament, as well as early church planting efforts in the New Testament.

Early 21st century leadership models focused on traits of control and power. By the 1950s, the introduction of group theory highlighted the importance and effectiveness of teams. Within the past two decades, various models have emerged, such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, and adaptive leadership.

The rapid decline of church attendance in America, as outlined by Stetzer and Im (2016), has led to the critical need for missional churches that focus on serving unreached people groups. Hirsch (2010) explained that missional churches must be led by missional pastors. The need to adequately train missional leaders is essential. Brelsford (2016) emphasized the need for new

approaches to training pastors. Instead of prescribing details of such training, Brelsford (2016) promoted a framework that included training that aligned with the felt needs the leader is experiencing.

Approaches to training methods explored the benefits of coaching that Bueno (2010) recognized as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. An empirical study among church planters revealed the need for coaching ranks among the top seven resources in demand. Apprenticing models were examined, and this tool was used by the early church leaders, continuing to be implemented by effective leaders in the Church today. Davis (2013) conducted a study to determine the qualities of an effective apprenticeship model that provided practical goals for church plant internships. In addition, literature on the framework and strengths of the cohort model outlined five specific characteristics that profit participants. The connection between small group cohorts modeled by Jesus as a training method and the importance of cohort learning among modern church planters were observed in the research.

Professional development models in literature were studied and empirical research using those models in connection with church planters was explored. The specific models examined included problem-based learning, learner-centered instruction, and entrepreneurial education. Empirical research supports the effectiveness of problem-based learning, and this model particularly benefits church planters as they are tasked with layers of organizational and interpersonal challenges in their role. Brown (2003) noted the current acceptance of learner-based instruction among educators. Empirical work was not discovered relating learner-based education and church plant training. In the field of education, Polly and Hannafin (2011) conducted research that revealed the desire for learner-based instruction among educators and the tendency for training to continue using directive practices that are out of alignment with the

learner-based approach. The conclusion drawn from both literature and relevant research is that leaders prefer a training approach that places their individualized needs at the center.

Entrepreneurial education is a new field of research that offers training that considers combining prior knowledge, evaluating potential of opportunities, and taking advantage of resources that help leaders act on viable discoveries (Keh et al., 2002). Manyaka (2015) defined social entrepreneurship in light of leaders identifying problems in a community and creating procedures to address the challenges presented. Church planters easily fall into the category of entrepreneurship when taking the steps to start a new church in a community. Baumgartner and Flores (2017) aptly called them faith entrepreneurs as they experiment with creating ministries to meet the needs of a particular context. Church plant training programs would benefit from incorporating the five skills outlined by Manyaka-Boshielo (2018) that include practical steps in entrepreneurial process.

Significant adult-centered learning approaches were examined, including transformative learning, personalized leadership development, and the need to cultivate emotional intelligence in leaders. The pedagogical approach popularized by Knowles (1973) implied the critical need to offer training unique to the needs of adults. Transformative learning models approach training with the understanding that adults build upon existing knowledge. The importance of this framework acknowledges that church planters have an existing toolbox of skills they bring to the table. Those training new church planters should seek to identify those skills and provide steps to add value to existing abilities within their planting context. Shaw (2014) encouraged deep learning in this process that shapes the learner, by expanding upon existing skills. Lastly, Masie (2013) observed the trend towards personalized leadership development frameworks. The need for leaders to have access to relevant training that meets felt needs is critical. A study by Rhode

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et al. (2017) highlighted the desire for personalized leadership development among professional educators. Empirical study related to personalized leadership for church planters was not identified. However, organizations, such as CMN, are providing platforms for resources that provide personalized development in the form of videos, assessments, and articles for church planters.

Mining the relevant literature for leadership development models unveiled proven training frameworks that are beneficial for the growth of leaders. The process also revealed the lack of empirical research in the area of developing effective church planters. The majority of studies existed in the field of training educators and health care providers. While there is research supporting the use of new models of training, such as adult-centered learning and transformative education, many leadership development programs default to the directive educational models used in past centuries. Learning and employing new models of leadership development within the practice of training church planters is essential to multiplication efforts in North America.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to survey Launch participants to measure how effective a Launch training is in preparing individuals to plant a new church.

Statement of Problem

CMN has encountered a challenge, understanding the reason being 60% of Launch participants who attended training between 2016-2018 have not yet planted a church (J. Deese, personal communication, August 31, 2020). Evaluating the perceptions of Launch participants provided insight into the obstacles encountered by church planters during the preparation and implementation phases of training.

Description of Methodology

The study was quantitative and non-experimental by research design, utilizing a survey research methodology approach to address the topic and research problem (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The study's research instrument was researcher-created, using subject matter expert (SME) agreed-upon themes to generate survey items to be used for study purposes. Instrument validation was conducted at both a priori and posteriori phases. The survey instrument, a 5-point, Likert-scaled survey, was comprised of 11 closed response items. The survey's scale offered participants the option of selecting "uncertain" as a response. Study data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

The participant response rate desired at the outset of the study was at least 50%, a figure considered well beyond the customary 10% to 15% customarily achieved through external surveying, as well as the 25% level generally achieved through surveying via email (Fryrear, 2015). The study's desired participant completion rate of survey items represented on the research instrument was set at 95% or greater, a figure well beyond the customary completion rate of 78.6% generally achieved in surveying (Fluid Surveys, 2014). Missing data at or less than 5% are generally considered inconsequential for analysis purposes (Schafer & Graham, 2002).

Research Context

The study involved surveying those directly involved in the CMN Launch regional training events. Research involving those who actively pursued planting a church in the United States provided relevant data.

Participants

Study participants included those who completed the CMN Launch training event between 2016-2019. The participants were lead pastors from Assemblies of God networks across the United States.

Instrument(s)

A total of 91 study participants were accessed for participation in the study through a non-probability, purposive sampling approach. The study's research instrument, a restricted-response quantitative survey consisting of 11 Likert scale-type items, was researcher-created. The survey was distributed via email using the platform Typeform for delivery.

Validity

The validity of data produced through the use of the study's research instrument was addressed through a subjective, content validity judgment process (Burns & Grove, 2005).

Subjective judgment is generally understood as a process whereby informed persons, called experts, give an opinion or estimate of something based on intuition and guessing (Miranda, 2001) in the absence of objective data. The process, using experts (SME) in the area of church planting, provided the themes that formed the survey items reflected in the study's research instrument. No statistical information was yielded in the subjective content validity judgment phase of instrument validation.

Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to evaluate the internal reliability of pilot study participant response to the instrument. The a priori validation of the research instrument was conducted through pilot study administration to 30 study participants. An alpha level of at least $a = .70$ was sought for validation purposes in the pilot study phase.

In the posteriori phase of instrument validation, Cronbach's alpha (α) was again used to assess the internal reliability of participant response to survey items once study data were collected. Cronbach alpha levels of $α \geq .80$ were considered "very good," and levels of $α \geq$ were considered "excellent" (Field, 2018).

Statistical power analysis using the G*Power software (3.1.9.2, Universität Düsseldorf, Germany) was conducted for sample size estimates associated with statistical significance testing. The study's statistical power analysis was delimited to anticipated medium effects, a power $(1 - β)$ index of .80, and a probability level of .05.

In research questions one and three, the one-sample *t*-test was used for statistical significance testing purposes. An anticipated medium effect ($d = .50$) would require 27 survey responses to detect a statistically significant finding. In research questions two and four, the *t*-test of independent means was used for statistical significance testing purposes. An anticipated

medium effect ($d = .50$) would require 102 survey responses to detect a statistically significant finding.

Reliability

The internal reliability of study participant response to the 11 survey items on the research instrument was addressed using the Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. As a result, the internal reliability of study participant response to the survey items on the research instrument was manifested at a very good level ($a = .83$). Cronbach alpha levels of $a = .80$ to .89 are considered to be "very good" levels of internal reliability (Field, 2018).

Procedures

Study data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Foundational analyses were conducted relative to matters of missing data, internal reliability of study participant response to items on the research instrument, demographic identifying information, and essential descriptions of participant levels of agreement within the 11 survey items represented on the study's research instrument.

The probability level of $p \leq .05$ was utilized as the threshold value for statistical significance for all findings in the study involving statistical significance testing. Effect size values were interpreted qualitatively using the conventions outlined by Sawilowsky (2009). The study's data were analyzed using the 26th version of IBM's *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).*

Data Analysis

Foundational analyses were conducted in advance of the formal analysis of data associated with the study's research questions. Evaluations of missing data, internal reliability, demographic identifying information, and descriptive information associated with the study's

dependent variables were conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The analysis, interpretation, and reporting of study finding was conducted through the use of the 26th version of IBM's *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).*

In research questions one and three, frequencies (*n*); percentages (%); mean scores and standard deviations (*SD*) represented the descriptive statistical techniques that were used to address both research questions. The one-sample *t*-test was used to assess both research questions for statistical significance testing purposes. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding for each research question. The magnitude of effect (effect size) was assessed using the Cohen's *d* statistical techniques. Sawilowsky's (2009) conventions of effect size interpretation were applied to the effect sizes achieved in research questions one and three.

In research questions two and four, frequencies (*n*); percentages (%); mean scores; and standard deviations (*SD*) represented the descriptive statistical techniques that were used to address both research questions. The *t*-test of independent means was used for statistical significance of difference of mean scores in the comparison featured in both research questions. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding for each research question. The magnitude of effect (effect size) was assessed using Hedges' *g* in light of sample size differences in the groups compared. Sawilowsky's (2009) conventions of effect size interpretation were applied to the effect sizes achieved in research questions two and four.

Preliminary Analysis

The topic and problem statement of the study was addressed through the statement of four research questions and accompanying hypotheses. The following represent the research questions and hypotheses stated in the study.

Research Question 1

To what degree did the three-day Launch training model effectively prepare study participants for planting a church?

H_a 1: There will be a statistically significant effect exerted by the three-day training Launch Model for study participant perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church.

Research Question 2

Was there a statistically significant difference in Launch participants' perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church between those who planted a church and those who did not plant a church?

H_a 2: There will be a statistically significant effect in the difference of perceptions of study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church after the launch training regarding preparedness to plant a church.

Research Question 3

To what degree did study participants perceive they received adequate support after the Launch training to plant a new church?

H_a 3: There will be a statistically significant effect for study participant perceptions of having received adequate support after the launch training to plant a new church.

Research Question 4

Was there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of receiving adequate support after the Launch training by the study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church?

H_a 4: There will be a statistically significant effect in the difference of perceptions of study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church after the launch training regarding adequacy of support.

Summary

The quantitative and non-experimental research was successfully conducted with a response rate of 22.8% considered well above the customary survey response (Fryrear, 2015). The Likert-scale survey was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α) and determined to have a "very good" rate of internal reliability (Field, 2018). The study data were analyzed by implementing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to determine significance. The sample size of 91 Launch participants between 2016-2019 provided statistical comparison between planters and non-planters. Three out of four of the research questions in the study resulted in statistically significant findings. There was not a statistically significant effect for study participant perceptions of having received adequate support after the Launch training to plant a new church. However, planters and non-planters had a significantly significant effect in their perceptions regarding the adequacy of receiving support following the Launch training. Those who perceived having adequate post-Launch support were more likely to plant a church than those who did not perceive having post-Launch support.

IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to survey Launch participants to measure how effective a Launch training is in preparing individuals to plant a new church.

Methods of Data Collection

Four specific research questions with accompanying research hypotheses were posed to address the topic of the study. A total of 91 individuals participated in the study through a non-probability, purposive sampling approach. The study's research instrument, a restricted response quantitative survey consisting of 11 Likert scale-type items, was researcher-created. Instrument validation procedures were conducted at both the a priori and posteriori phases of the instrument validation process. Prior to the research instrument's administration, a pilot study was conducted as part of the validation process. The pilot study internal reliability of participant responses to the survey items on the research instrument was manifested at a noteworthy, validating level ($\alpha > .80$).

Study data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Foundational analyses were conducted relative to matters of missing data, internal reliability of study participant response to items on the research instrument, demographic identifying information, and essential descriptions of participant levels of agreement within the 11 survey items represented on the study's research instrument.

The probability level of $p \leq .05$ was utilized as the threshold value for statistical significance for all findings in the study involving statistical significance testing. Effect size values were interpreted qualitatively using the conventions outlined by Sawilowsky (2009). The study's data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26).

Response Rate

The study's participant response rate was 18.2% ($n = 91$). The response rate achieved in the study exceeded the customary response rate of 10% to 15% generally achieved through external means of surveying (Fryrear, 2015).

Missing Data

The study's extent of missing data within the responses to the 11 survey items on the research instrument was evaluated using descriptive statistical techniques. As a result, the extent of the study's missing data was considered minimal (1.20%; $n = 12$) and inconsequential in subsequent analyses. Regarding the study's person-level data, the minimal extent of missing data (2.86%; n = 13) observed in the study's data set was well-below the 30% threshold of acceptability noted by Newman (2014). In light of the minimal degree and inconsequential nature of missing data at the person-level and within the participant response set to survey items, the use of data imputation procedures in advance of the analysis of the study's research questions was not a consideration.

Internal Reliability

The internal reliability of study participant response to the 11 survey items on the research instrument was addressed using the Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. As a result, the internal reliability of study participant response to the survey items on the research

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instrument was manifested at a very good level (α = .83). Cronbach alpha levels of α = .80 to .89 are considered to be "very good" levels of internal reliability (Field, 2018).

Table 1 contains a summary of internal reliability values achieved within the study by demographic identifier and the overall value for alpha.

Table 1

Internal Reliability (α) by Category and Overall

Category	n	α
Planters	11	.84
Non-Planters	11	.79
Male	11	.83
Female	11	.80
Urban	11	.89
Suburban	11	.78
Rural	11	.85
Overall	11	.83

Demographic Identifier Data

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to address the evaluation of study's demographic identifier information. Slightly over 80% (83.5%; n = 76) of study participants were identified as male by gender, with the remaining 16.5% (n = 15) identified as female. Nearly seven in 10 (65.5%; n = 55) of study participants were identified as Caucasian by ethnicity. One-fourth (25.0%; n = 21) were identified as either Hispanic (13.1%; n = 11) or

African American (11.9%; $n = 10$). The remaining 9.6% ($n = 8$) of the study's sample was identified as either American Indian (6.0%; $n = 5$) or Asian (3.6%; $n = 3$).

Nearly 90% (86.8%; $n = 79$) of the study's sample indicated that, at the time of attending the Launch training, they were committed to planting a church. The remaining 13.2% ($n = 12$) of the participant sample indicated that they were exploring the possibility of planting the church. Nearly half (48.2%; $n = 41$) of the study's sample of participants indicated that they represented churches located in suburban areas, with nearly 30% (27.1%; $n = 23$) indicating that they represented churches located in urban areas. The remaining 24.7% ($n = 21$) of the study's participant sample indicated that they represented churches located in rural areas. Nearly nine in 10 (87.9%; $n = 80$) of study participants indicated that they had planted a church following the Launch training, with the remaining 12.1% ($n = 11$) indicated that they had not planted a church.

Descriptive Response: All Survey Items

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to assess study participant level of agreement (strongly agree and strongly disagree) with the survey items represented on the study's research instrument. Percentages were specifically used for illustrative and comparative purposes for study participants who were church planters and for study participants who did not plant churches in the wake of the Launch training. Percentage of agreement was also analyzed for the aggregate sample of study participants.

Table 2 contains a summary of findings for the percentage of agreement by study participants who planted churches and did not plant churches following Launch training, as well as for the entire sample of participants.

Table 2

Percentage of Agreement by Survey Item

Survey Item	Planters	Non-Planters	Overall
The topics addressed at Launch training were essential in preparing me for launching a new church.	83.8%	90.9%	84.7%
A variety of strategies for addressing the obstacles church planters may face were presented to a satisfactory degree.	72.6%	72.8%	72.6%
I received adequate support from my district/network after attending the Launch training.	58.2%	36.4%	55.5%
Post-training support received from a parent church was satisfactory.	57.3%	37.3%	53.4%
I pursued post-training support from consultants, coaches or other church planters.	77.6%	60.0%	75.6%
Coaching was offered to me after completing the Launch training.	48.8%	45.5%	48.4%
I worked directly with a coach after completing the Launch training.	34.6%	9.1%	31.5%
The importance of ongoing coaching was addressed satisfactorily in the Launch training.	48.8%	54.6%	49.5%
Resources available for church planting were provided to a satisfactory degree during the Launch training.	76.0%	90.9%	77.8%
Various fundraising models were presented at the Launch training.	62.6%	81.8%	58.3%
I applied fund-raising strategies to raise necessary finances to plant a church.	58.2%	40.0%	56.2%

Data Analysis by Research Question

The findings for research questions formally stated in the study and the analytic

techniques associated with the respective findings are presented as follows:

Research Question 1

To what degree did the three-day Launch training model effectively prepare study participants for planting a church?

Hypothesis

H$_a$ 1: There will be a statistically significant effect exerted by the three-day training "Launch Model" for study participant perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church.

Analysis

The one-sample *t*-test was used to assess the statistical significance of study participant perceptions of preparedness to plant a church. As a result, the mean score response of 4.20 (*SD* = 1.01) was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(90)}$ = 11.28; $p < .001$). The magnitude of response effect in research question one was assessed using the Cohen's *d* statistical technique. As a result, the magnitude of effect, or effect size, for study participant response in research question one was considered approximating the very large effect threshold of 1.20 (*d* = 1.19).

Findings

In light of the statistically significant effect for study participant perceptions of preparedness to plant a church after completing the Launch training, the alternative hypothesis (H$_a$ 1) was retained.

Research Question 2

Was there a statistically significant difference in Launch participants' perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church between those who planted a church and those who did not plant a church?

Hypothesis

H$_a$ 2: There will be a statistically significant effect in the difference of perceptions of study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church after the Launch training regarding preparedness to plant a church.

Analysis

The *t*-test of independent means statistical technique was used to assess the statistical significance of the difference in mean score perceptions of preparedness to plant a church for study participants who eventually planted a church and for study participants who did not plant a church following the Launch training. As a result, the mean score difference in perceptions of preparedness of 0.02 favoring church planters was manifested at a non-statistically significant level ($t_{(89)} = 0.06$; $p = .96$).

The assumptions associated with the use of the *t*-test of independent means in research question two were satisfied by statistical means. The assumption of homogeneity (equality) of variances assumption was satisfied in light of the non-statistically significant Levene *F* value finding (Levene $F = 0.74$; $p = .39$). The assumption of normality of distribution was satisfied in light of the respective skew and kurtosis values being manifested at levels less than -2.0/+2/0 (George & Mallery, 2010).

Findings

The magnitude of effect, or effect size, was evaluated using the Hedges' *g* statistical technique as an alternative to Cohen's *d* in light of the imbalance of sample sizes in the comparison. As a result, the mean score comparisons for study participant response favoring those identified as church planters in research question two was considered trivial ($g = 0.02$).

Table 3 contains a summary of finding for the comparison featured in research question two.

Table 3

Perceptions of Preparedness to Plant a Church Comparison

Category	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*t*	*g*
Planters	80	4.20	1.04	0.05	.02
Non- Planters	11	4.18	0.87		

Research Question 3

To what degree did study participants perceive they received adequate support after the Launch training to plant a new church?

Hypothesis

H$_a$ 3: There will be a statistically significant effect for study participant perceptions of having received adequate support after the launch training to plant a new church.

Analysis

The one-sample *t*-test was used to assess the statistical significance of study participant perceptions of adequacy of support to plant a church. As a result, the mean score response of 3.39 (*SD* = 1.30) was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(89)} = 2.87$; $p < .001$). The magnitude of response effect in research question one was assessed using the Cohen's *d* statistical technique. As a result, the magnitude of effect, or effect size, for study participant response in research question three was considered between a small and medium effect (*d* = .30)

Findings

In light of the statistically significant effect for study participant perceptions of being

adequately supported to plant a church in the wake attending Launch training, the alternative

hypothesis (H_a 3) was retained.

Research Question 4

Was there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of receiving adequate

support after the Launch training by the study participants who have planted a church and not

planted a church?

Hypothesis

H_a 4: There will be a statistically significant effect in the difference of perceptions of

study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church after the launch training

regarding adequacy of support.

Analysis

The *t*-test of independent means statistical technique was used to assess the statistical

significance of the difference in mean score perceptions of adequacy of support to plant a church

for study participants who eventually planted a church after attending Launch training and for

study participants who did not subsequently plant a church. As a result, the mean score difference

in perceptions of preparedness of 0.86 favoring church planters was manifested at a statistically

significant level ($t_{(88)} = 2.11$; $p = .04$).

The assumptions associated with the use of the *t*-test of independent means in research

question four were satisfied by statistical means. The assumption of homogeneity of variances

assumption was satisfied in light of the non-statistically significant Levene *F* value (Levene $F =$

0.87; $p = .36$). The assumption of normality of distribution was satisfied in light of the respective

skew and kurtosis values that were manifested at levels less than -2.0/+2/0 (George & Mallery, 2010).

The magnitude of effect was assessed using the Hedges' *g* statistical technique, an alternative to Cohen's *d*, in light of the sample size imbalance inherent in the comparison. As a result, the mean score comparisons for study participant response favoring those identified as church planters in research question four was considered approaching a large effect ($g = 0.68$).

Table 4 contains a summary of finding for the comparison featured in research question four.

Table 4

Perceptions of Adequacy of Support to Plant a Church Comparison

Category	*n*	Mean	SD	*t*	*g*
Planters	79	3.49	1.24	2.11*	.67
Non-Planters	11	2.64	1.43		

*p = .04

Findings

In light of the statistically significant finding for the comparison of study participant perceptions of adequacy of support by church planting status, the alternative hypothesis ($H_a 4$) was retained.

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

The data indicated that both planters and non-planters perceived a high level of preparedness from attending the three-day Launch training. The overall rating of the perception that Launch adequately prepared participants to start a church was 84.7%, signifying the effectiveness of the training experience itself. However, there was a statistically significant

difference in the degree of receiving adequate resources between planters and non-planters in the areas of support from a district/network, support from a parent church, and receiving coaching. Participants who reported higher percentages of these critical areas were more likely to successfully plant a church. Participants who planted a church reported having a higher level of adequate support after the Launch training. It is important to note the data indicate that the content of the Launch training is adequate, while essential resources, such as support from a parent church, network/district, and coaching, were consistently rated lower by those who did not plant a church. The results indicate the necessity of post-Launch support as an essential part of the overall preparedness of church planters.

V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to survey Launch participants to measure how effective a Launch training is in preparing individuals to plant a new church.

Statement of Problem

Missiologists have agreed that planting new churches is the singular most effective way to accomplish the Great Commission (Stetzer, 2016). CMN was established by the AG to initiate and develop successful church multiplication efforts. The three-day Launch event is the primary training source for all church planters. Launch events are hosted regionally to train new church planters across the United States each year. However, 60% of Launch participants who attended training between 2016-2018 have not yet planted a church (J. Deese, personal communication, August 31, 2020). Minimal research in the past decade has been conducted on effective church planting methods. The focus of this research was to evaluate how Launch participants perceived the effectiveness of the training they received. The data also included measuring various resources that have been identified as predictors of success for church planters, including availability of resources, coaching, and support from a parent church and denominational leadership.

Review of Methodology

The study was a quantitative and non-experimental research design that utilized a survey research methodology approach to address the topic and research problem. The study's research

instrument was created using subject matter expert (SME) agreed-upon themes to generate survey items to be used for study purposes. Instrument validation was conducted at both a priori and posteriori phases. The a priori validation of the research instrument was conducted through as pilot study administration to 25 to 30 study participants. Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to evaluate the internal reliability of pilot study participant responses to the instrument. An alpha level of at least $\alpha = .70$ was sought for validation purposes in the pilot study phase. Refinements may include elimination of items or restructuring of items detracting from optimal internal reliability levels. In the posteriori phase of instrument validation, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to assess the internal reliability of participant to survey items when study data were collected. Cronbach alpha levels of $\alpha \geq .80$ are considered "very good" and levels of $\alpha \geq$ will be considered "excellent" (Field, 2018).

Summary of Results

The data indicated both planters and non-planters perceived a high level of preparedness from attending the three-day Launch training. The rating of the perception that Launch adequately prepared participants to start a church was favorable at 84.7%, signifying the effectiveness of the training experience itself. When training of church planters is expanded outside of the parameters of the training event to include post-training support, there are indications of inadequacies. A statistically significant difference in the degree of receiving adequate resources between planters and non-planters existed in the areas of support from a district/network, support from a parent church, and receiving coaching. The data indicated Launch participants who reported higher percentages of these critical areas of support were those who actually planted a church. Participants who planted a church reported having a higher level of adequate support after the Launch training. As the perception of support following Launch

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increased so did the likelihood of planting a church. Study participants who perceived they had received adequate support following the training event were 66% more likely to plant a church.

It is critical to recognize that survey respondents ranked the content of the Launch training as adequate. When expanding preparedness training beyond the event itself, the survey responses indicated essential resources, such as support from a parent church, network/district, and coaching were consistently rated lower by those that did not plant a church. The low-ranked support following the training event highlights the necessity of post-Launch support. A holistic approach to evaluating the training of church planters is necessary to discover the strengths and weaknesses in the process of preparation.

<div align="center">**Discussion by Research Question**</div>

Research Question 1

To what degree did the three-day Launch training model effectively prepare study participants for planting a church?

Was there a statistically significant difference in Launch participants' perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church between those who planted a church and those who did not plant a church?

The data indicated there was a significant effect in the perceptions of Launch participants perceiving the three-day training event as effective in preparing them for starting a new church. The overall rating of 84.7% of participants indicating training effectiveness was large.

The high percentage of participants who rated a positive experience at the Launch training in the area of effectiveness supports the work of Maise (2013), who emphasized the essential need for relevant content. Nilson (2016) described the use of lecture as an essential part of the learning process. Launch training utilizes 12 lecture-based sessions that are presented

during the 3-day training. It is evident the Launch training is providing a high level of relevant content. An essential part of the Launch training is the connection with seasoned church planters, which follows the apprentice model observed in the early church (Keehn, 2019). The Launch training exposes participants to experienced church planters and provides opportunity for meaningful conversations and questions that support the learning process. In addition, the Launch training utilizes pairing each participant with a coach for the duration of the training. The work of Hackman (2012) included coaching as an essential practice for group effectiveness. The provision of personalized coaching during the training event also aligns with the model of adult-centered learning popularized by Knowles (1973). Providing opportunity for personalized development that includes one-on-one conversation aligns with the work of Rhode et al. (2017), who conducted research on the success of giving faculty options to receive individualized content that aligned with their professional development needs. Overall, the high indication of effectiveness for the Launch training aligns with current professional development models and early church plant training methods.

Research Question 2

Was there a statistically significant difference in Launch participants' perceptions of being effectively prepared for planting a church between those who planted a church and those who did not plant a church?

The data comparing the magnitude of effect size were trivial between planters and non-planters in participants' perceptions of being effectively prepared by the Launch training event itself. Both those who planted a church and those who did not plant a church indicated that the training was essential in preparation for launching a new church. It is notable that non-planters

rated the level of adequacy of Launch training at 90.9% compared to those who planted a church who rated the training at 83.8%

All of the survey respondents indicated there was a high level of being adequately prepared by the Launch training. As previously discussed, the training included relevant approaches to leadership development, including coaching, mentoring opportunities, and applicable content. The early church model supports a highly personalized approach that can be observed between the apostle Paul and Timothy. Launch utilizes the personalized approach during the live training event by connecting future planters with seasoned coaches and church planting mentors. The research conducted by Keehn (2019) emphasized that field graduates felt more prepared when they experienced mentoring opportunities. The results of the Keehn (2019) study support the question of why all Launch participants had a similar sense of preparedness having experienced the same training. The reality that both planters and non-planters started the church planting process with high levels of preparedness also informs the importance of holistic training, as the two groups deviated significantly in perceptions in several categories of post-training support, including availability of coaching, along with parent church and denominational support.

Research Question 3

To what degree did study participants perceive they received adequate support after the Launch training to plant a new church?

Overall, study participant perceptions of adequacy of support in the wake of Launch training was manifested to a statically significant degree. The magnitude of study participant response effect was considered beyond the upper threshold of small effect (d=.30). Although the overall response effect to research question three was manifested at a statistically significant

level, the effect was mitigated considering the non-planter non-statistically significant inverse effect within research question three (d=-.03). The response for planters was statistically significant for planters and approaching a medium effect at *d*= .40. As a result, the perceptions of adequacy of support following the Launch model training were strikingly different for planters and non-planters within the overall statistically significant finding in research question three.

The work of Bednarski and Courtemache (2009) explained the benefits of ongoing training for skilled craftsman. The more experience an apprentice received, the more prepared they were to receive a position in their field. The work of Bishop (2015) noted how informal apprenticeship programs are successfully utilized in the field of education, medicine, politics, and clergy. When preparing future church planters, Jesus followed the model explained by Ferguson and Ferguson (2016) as he selected, expected, prepared, and graduated his followers. The Launch training provides participants with a sense of achievement providing a graduation ceremony and outlining available resources to help them as they step into the next phase of church planting. The resources offered include availability of coaching, an annual conference, and support from the local denominational network. Overall, Launch participants perceived these resources as adequate, even though there was a low percentage of participants who took advantage of resources, such as coaching.

Research Question 4

Was there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of receiving adequate support after the Launch training by the study participants who have planted a church and not planted a church?

Those who planted churches responded that they perceived having adequate after the Launch training when compared to those who did not plant. When church planters sense they are

adequately supported after the initial training event, they are 66% more likely to move forward in planting a church than those who do not perceive having long-term support. However, planters who do not sense there will be post-Launch support are less likely to plant.

Nelson (2019) explained that very few resources are available to church planters following Launch when they need it most, according to his research. In addition, Nelson (2019) concluded that church plants need additional support in the first three years after launching. Church planters who perceived they had adequate support after the training were most likely taking advantage of coaching and mentoring opportunities than those who did not plant. Church planters reported a 25% increase, compared non-planters, in working directly with a coach following the Launch training. According to the research from Davis (2013), providing mentoring opportunities for church planters is considered essential for the long-term success of pioneering. The Launch training pairs church planters with seasoned leaders who have experience in planting a church. Coaching was not offered to all Launch participants. The data indicate that less than half of the survey respondents were offered coaching after the training.

The data displayed a disconnect in the area of models that were presented and the implementation of those models. For example, 81.8% of non-planters reported that various fundraising models were presented at the Launch training. However, only 40% of non-planters applied the fundraising strategies to raise necessary finances to plant a church. Paas and Shoemaker (2018) revealed in a study of church planters that finances was the top-ranked need for training. Older educational models relied on transfer models that simply communicated needed information. However, the necessity for planters to apply knowledge learned is an entrepreneurial skill. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) provided a three-phase approach that taught entrepreneurs to find solutions to challenges they encountered. Church planters are

entrepreneurial by nature and can benefit from this framework. Offering skills to implement vital financial models and utilizing the entrepreneurial approach of training is essential. A focus on financial practices and innovative problem-solving will assist church planters by building proficiencies that address the wide array of complex issues they encounter, instead of giving them a one-size-fits-all method. Because church planters serve in a variety of socio-economic communities, the entrepreneurial training model is ideal.

Study Limitations

Study limitations exist primarily in three areas: the nature of non-experimental research, the sample size, and the scope of inquiry. Non-experimental studies lean heavily on perceptions and correlations. However, non-experimental research has the disadvantage, in that it cannot control or manipulate subjects. Instead, this type of research relies on interpretation and observation of data gathered. The research in this study measured the perceptions of Launch participants. It is important to note that the data they provided indicated their unique circumstances. However, it is also critical to understand that their responses were limited by their experience and may not indicate other realities that were not measured in the study. The second limitation was the size of the sample surveys received. Out of 400 Launch participants who received the survey, only 91 completed it. A second limitation involves the studies response rate. A response rate of 22.8% (91) was achieved in the study. Although the 22.8% response rate fulfills what is customary for external surveying (10-15%), according to Fryrear (2015), a higher response rate would have provided more reliable data on the important topic of training church planters nationwide. The sampling procedure was not specifically probability in nature and as such, further mitigates the response rate of 22.8%. Lastly, the scope of the inquiry was limited to 11 questions that focused on key indicators of successful church planting, such as support from

parent churches, networks/districts, and coaching. There are other significant factors of preparedness for church planting, such as formal education, previous leadership experience, and entrepreneurial capacity that were not measured in this research.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Implications for Future Practice</h2>

The implications for this study are far reaching and will inform the strategies and practices of church plant training methods in the local church, in regional networks, and in the national level of denominational leadership. Church planters, who experienced training and evaluated the effectiveness of both the event and the support they received following, provided relevant data that can improve multiplication training efforts in the future.

The local church is the incubator for church planters. Ott and Wilson (2010) explained how all future church planters begin as disciples in the local church. The local church should intentionally provide leadership development through various volunteer opportunities. Potential church planters can be identified in the local church and provided with the option for apprenticeship. Reimer (2016) identified church-based training as one of the most organic approaches to preparing the next generation of church planters. Local churches who desire to be an active part of multiplication efforts can create an intentional apprenticeship program that begins with identifying potential planters. Once identified, the local church can create systems that equip and place those trained into leadership positions as church planters. Because the local church is on the front lines of ministry, it has the potential to offer hands-on training in ways that no other organization is capable of. The local church should recognize and embrace the challenge as the primary source for producing healthy church planters. If each of the 12, 986 Assemblies of God churches in the U.S. trained and released church planters, the mission of CMN to see a healthy church in every community could be accomplished.

Regional leadership, in the form of districts or networks, have the responsibility to serve the churches and ministers in their geographical area. Unfortunately, only 58.2% of survey respondents reported receiving adequate support from their district/network. Regional leaders have the opportunity to restructure leadership roles to include funded church plant directors who will support local church planting efforts. The launching of successful church plants can be accomplished when church plant directors assume the responsibility of training parent churches to start and support new churches. Support from parenting churches should include cohorts, seminars, and apprenticeship opportunities. In addition, parent churches should be encouraged to support church planters in practical ways, since only 57.3% of survey respondents reported receiving satisfactory support from a parent church. Practical support should include financial assistance, coaching, and long-term planning. Regional leadership is also well-positioned to provide resources directly to church planters, including cohorts, coaching, fund-raising assistance, and spiritual care.

The national CMN initiative has a unique opportunity to implement best practices that were discovered in this study. The primary responsibility of the national CMN team is to support both the regional and local church multiplication efforts nationwide. CMN should continue to provide relevant content delivered in the training event, as 84.7% of participants reported it was essential in preparing them for launching a new church. Utilizing table coaches, who are seasoned ministers, is a critical piece of training that exposes church planters to experienced leaders who can offer practical advice in a mentoring context.

CMN should consider adopting a holistic approach to the training of church planters to include, not only preparation before the initial planting of a church, but ongoing support for the first two to three years following a church launch. Expanding the perimeters of Launch training

to include ongoing support for each church planter is essential in light of survey respondents

reporting low levels of post-Launch support. Less than half of all Launch participants reported

that coaching was offered to them after the training event. An essential part of support offered by

CMN should include mandatory personalized coaching for the first two years following the

launch of the church. Because coaching is a primary indicator of long-term success in church

planting, all Launch participants should be required to meet with a seasoned church planter

regularly. In addition, participation in Launch should require church planters to collaborate with

a parent church and regional network. Encouraging the strengthening of strategic partnerships

will increase the likelihood of long-term success. Church planters who perceived having long-

term support following Launch training were 66% more likely to plant a church than those who

did not perceive having long-term support. CMN has the opportunity to dramatically increase the

percentage of successful church plants for those who complete the Launch training by

implementing strategic post-training support.

<p align="center">**Recommendations for Future Research**</p>

Conducting ongoing research of church planters will provide church planting

organizations with real time data that can shape the approach to recruiting, training, and releasing

new church planters. CMN should consider collaborating with universities to conduct regular

research that can inform church plant training methods within the movement.

Introducing a quasi-experimental design with the addition of a qualitative component

would provide CMN with more in-depth data by which organizational change can be guided.

Changing the research design to a more experimental approach, including a pre- and post-survey

model, would provide more robust data. The current researcher has an opportunity to partner

with Northwest University in 2021 to begin an experimental study that includes surveying

church planters before and after a two-year coaching cohort. The design of the study has the potential to offer substantial data regarding the effectiveness of long-term support for church planters.

A replication of the original study, including the next five years of Launch church plant participants, could yield significant data to measure the effectiveness of new initiatives implemented as a result of the current research. In addition, the development of focus groups, including planters and non-planters, could provide helpful data to the CMN organization regarding perceptions of training practices by those who are experiencing it first-hand. Ongoing research of this nature can provide CMN with relevant data to support effective church multiplication practices.

Conclusion

Missiologists have clearly diagnosed the critical state of church decline in America stating, "We need to plant more churches, or the church will continue to decline" (Stetzer & Im, 2016, p.14). The solution of planting more churches to meet the need is a task that will require focused prayer, strategy, and collaboration among those working toward church multiplication efforts at all levels. The challenge of pioneering more churches in America to accomplish the Great Commission can be met by effectively training more pastors to plant new churches and providing long-term support to planters to ensure sustainability. The local church, regional networks, and national leadership have a distinct opportunity to learn from current research and apply best practices for recruiting, training, and positioning new church planters for success. The research data supports a holistic approach of providing church planters with relevant training before the initial start of a new church and thorough long-term support following the church launch. Implementing resources that include intentional post-Launch support will increase the

likelihood of pastors launching a church by 66% compared to those without post-Launch

support. Planting a healthy church in every community is possible by applying methodology that

provides church planters with the research-based ingredients essential for lasting success.

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Section I: Demographic Information

Please indicate which of the following describes you:

*Gender

___ Female

___ Male

*Ethnicity

___ Caucasian

___ African American

___ Hispanic

___ Asian

___ American Indian

___ Other

*Which Planting Model best describes the church you planted (skip if you did not plant a

church)

___ Home Church

___ Dinner Church

___ Fresh Expressions

___ Traditional Weekend Service

*Which best describes the type of church you planted (skip if you did not plant a church)

___ Sovereign church

___ Campus

___ Multi-site location of parent church (PAC: Parent Affiliated Church)

*Role in church plant (skip if you didn't plant a church)

___Lead pastor

___Other

*Primary Source of Funding (skip if you didn't plant a church)

___ Parent church

___ District/Network

___ US Missions

___ Fund-raising with strategic partners (skip if you didn't plant a church)

Geographic focus of church plant (skip if you didn't plant a church)

___Suburban

___Urban

___Rural

After attending Launch, I planted a church, campus, or site.

___YES

___NO

The *primary* reason I did not plant a church is:

____Realization it was not my calling

____Understanding I did not have the skills required for the task

____Lack of support from my district/network

____Inadequate support following Launch training

____Lack of adequate funding

____Not applicable because I did plant a church

The primary reason I was able to plant a church was influenced greatest by:

____Support from Church Multiplication Network

____Support from district/network

____Support from a parent church.

____Not applicable because I did not plant a church

At the time of attending Launch I was:

___ exploring the option of planting a church

___committed to planting a church

Section II: Survey Questions

1. The topics addressed at Launch training were essential in preparing me for launching a new church.

    5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

2. A variety of strategies for addressing the obstacles church planters may face were presented to a satisfactory degree.

    5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

3. I received adequate support from my district/network after attending the Launch training.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

4. Post-training support received from a parent church was satisfactory.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

5. I pursued post-training support from consultants, coaches or other church planters.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

6. Coaching was offered to me after completing the Launch training.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

7. I worked directly with a coach after completing the Launch training.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

8. The importance of ongoing coaching was addressed satisfactorily in the Launch training.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

9. Resources available for church planting were provided to a satisfactory degree during the Launch training.

   5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

10. Various fundraising models were presented at the Launch training.

5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree

11. I applied fund-raising strategies to raise necessary finances to plant a church.

5- Strongly Agree   4- Agree   3- Uncertain   2- Disagree   1- Strongly Disagree