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INTENTIONALLY CREATING HEALTHY ORGANIZATIONAL
CULTURE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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APPROVAL SHEET

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To my bride, Jenny. You're my favorite.

To Jeremiah. I love you more than you love me.

Soli deo Gloria.

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PREFACE

This study has been quite the task. At the start, it seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle. To be honest, I didn't very much enjoy it at first. I remember my supervising professor stating that we should be passionate about our work. Learning research theory and reading thousands of pages seemed to squash that passion. However, as I dove deeper and deeper into this work, my passion for it grew stronger and stronger. All the reading and theory prepared me for the heart of my work. At the end, I'm not only glad that I completed this work, but I am happy to say I was excited to do it.

This thesis would not be complete without the supervision of Dr. Michael Wilder. Dr. Wilder has been patient, informative, and helpful. I am very thankful for him and his leadership. I would also like to thank all of my professors and those involved in the process. I am so glad to have been a part of the great group of men in my cohort. I feel blessed to know each of them. Thank you all. Southern Seminary truly is the greatest seminary in the world.

I am blessed to be a part of a church that loves God, loves the gospel, and loves the local church. They have also shown tremendous love to my family and me. Our staff is incredible. Thank you to Dr. Todd Linn for your guidance and support (and proof reading). Thank you to Alan Chamness for your support and encouragement. Thank you to the Norris family for your generosity and love. Thank you to Besty Kloke for help transcribing. Thanks to Jan Powell for your proofreading skills. What a joy it is to serve Henderson's First Baptist Church.

Additionally, I am thankful for the blessings of my former church family, Highview Baptist Church. I am still encouraged by that community of believers. Thank

you especially to David and Lori Melton and your gracious care for me while I was in Louisville.

I am further indebted to Sojourn Network, its leadership, and its member churches. Thank you to Dave Owens for helping me get this research off the ground. Pleasant Valley Community Church, Veritas Community Church, and Renaissance Church are three phenomenal churches. They love Jesus, they love people, and they love the local church. It was fantastic working with them and their leadership. They were generous, patient, and helpful.

Finally, thank you to my family. I am grateful to my mom for her support and prayers. I am thankful to my son, Jeremiah, for his patience when Daddy had to “work on school.” I cannot begin to express how wonderful my wife, Jennifer, has been through this process. She has been a cheerleader, a coach, an editor, and a consoler all at the same time. She is one of a kind, and she is mine.

My prayer is that this work will be an encouragement for those who are fighting for healthy culture in churches and a catalyst for change for those who are wondering how to develop a healthy culture. Above all, I pray this work will be used for the glory of God. He alone is worthy of the glory and the honor and the praise.

Matt McCraw

Henderson, Kentucky
December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Should churches be concerned with their health? Apparently many people think that they should. A multitude of resources are available to assist churches with their health.¹ When thinking about the health of a church, one cannot help but venture into a related field of study: organizational culture.

Healthy churches inherently possess healthy cultures. Understanding how organizational culture is relevant to the ethos of a local church is essential. Aubrey Malphurs states, “To effectively minister to people in a culture, whether it’s a church or parachurch organization, we must understand culture in general and organizational culture in particular.”² Malphurs suggests that every church has a unique culture that has implications for ministry effectiveness.³ Although every church has a culture that is uniquely theirs, not every church understands how to create a culture that leads to healthy or effective ministry.

Organizational culture is a topic that has received much attention in the last several decades.⁴ Numerous research projects, books, and seminars have been

¹Some of these sources will be mentioned later in this chapter and discussed in greater detail in chap. 2 of this work.

²Aubrey Malphurs, *Look before You Lead: How to Discern & Shape Your Church Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 13.

³Ibid., 20.

⁴A thorough examination of the pertinent literature on organizational culture appears in chap. 2 of this work.

completed in order to help organizations develop healthy organizational culture.⁵

Institutions from many spheres are seeking to discover how the right leadership, administration, and organizational culture can propel them to the next level. Churches are no exception.

Having a healthy church is a central aim for church leaders today.⁶ Pastors, staff, and lay leaders all try to contribute to the vitality of the ministry in which they are involved. The intentional development of a healthy culture is integral to the success of a local church. Many churches understand this and are seeking to develop a vital culture to effectively carry out the ministry entrusted to them by God. The secular research available may be helpful, but it is not sufficiently specific to the context of local churches. Additional studies have grazed the surface of the field of organizational culture in ministry contexts.⁷ Still, before this study, no comprehensive study existed that examined the purposeful implementation of a healthy organizational culture in the world of local church ministry.

Research Problem

The Bible paints a picture of the church that is of tremendous worth. Paul communicates the seriousness of a husband's commitment to his wife by comparing it to

⁵For just a few works, see Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010); Peter J. Frost et al., *Reframing Organizational Culture* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991); Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: Harper Business, 2011); and John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

⁶Church health is a leading topic of interest among church leaders. Entire websites are devoted to church health (see <http://www.churchhealthcenter.org> and <http://www.9marks.org>). Additionally, multiple books concerning church health have sold millions of copies over the last two decades, including Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Mark Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000); and Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006).

⁷For a few examples, see Angela Joan Ward, "Church Organizational Culture: Construct Definition and Instrument Development" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011); and Kevin Jamie Peck, "Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication: A Multiple Case Study" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013). More literature will be examined in chap. 2 of this work.

that of Christ's commitment to the church. That commitment is ultimate. Paul writes, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).⁸ Clearly, Jesus' regard for the church is sacred and precious. Since the Scriptures hold the church in such high regard, church leaders must be intentional about developing the health of local congregations.

The New Testament does not provide an exact prescription for how to have a healthy church. Examples of local churches are given in the New Testament epistles and the book of Acts. Acts 2:42-47 describes the early church in Jerusalem as being active in the teaching and work of the apostles:

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

Time and again churches that are commended in the Bible are those that are faithful and obedient to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.⁹ So then, a picture of a healthy church can be seen in the New Testament. However, what does a healthy culture look like in a church? Further, how can church leaders intentionally create a healthy culture in local congregations?

It is clear that the health of a church matters, but does the culture of a church matter? Perhaps looking at organizational culture on a larger scale can answer that question. In his work *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Edgar Schein states,

As leaders who are trying to get our organizations to become more effective in the

⁸All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

⁹For a few examples see Acts 17:11, 1 Thess 1:8, Jas 2:20-24, and Rev 3:8.

face of severe environmental pressures, we are sometimes amazed at the degree to which individuals and groups in the organization will continue to behave in obviously ineffective ways, often threatening the very survival of the organization.¹⁰

Schein's observation serves as just one example that the very survival of an organization is dependent upon establishing a healthy culture. Given the importance of the mission of the church and the precious place it holds in the heart of God, church leaders must be concerned with creating a vital culture in their churches.

The study of ecclesiology (the theological study of the church) reveals that there are several foundational theological elements that make a church a church.¹¹ In addition to these nonnegotiable elements, there is also that cultural element that is specific to each individual congregation, which uniquely empowers that congregation to be effective. Pastor and author Mark Dever describes this culture in a church as “. . . the more subtle, changeable, variable, and enveloping culture of a church . . . constituted by the combination of peculiar expectations and practices that do not make the church a church but that do in fact typify a particular congregation.”¹² This cultural element is sometimes the x-factor that is missing in church effectiveness. Timothy Keller, in his highly influential book, *Center Church*, asserts, “Churches can meet doctrinal standards and still lack effectiveness in propagating the faith in their society.”¹³

These existing studies concerning organizational culture in the ministry context have addressed ministry culture from a broad point of view. This literature has proved helpful in two ways. First, by exploring the literature, one can discover the value of a healthy culture in ministry contexts. Second, the literature reveals which factors are

¹⁰Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 272.

¹¹These elements will be discussed in chap. 2 of this work.

¹²Mark Dever, *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 851.

¹³Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 344.

common among organizations (both secular and Christian) that display healthy culture. While these gains were useful, they did not solve the frustration of pastors and church leaders who were looking for a way to establish healthy culture in their churches.

Work was needed to determine which factors are common in churches that intentionally created a healthy culture in their respective ministries. Pastors and leaders need to know what actually works. The question is, could a collection of best practices be established that would better serve those church leaders who were seeking to create a healthy culture in their churches? That question is the central problem of the research: to determine what factors were common among organizations that intentionally created healthy organizational culture in local churches.

Current Status of the Problem

Much work has been completed in the arena in which this research problem lies. The existing literature concerning church health and organizational culture is vast. Secular authors have contributed much to the discussion of how to establish effectiveness in organizations, build effective teams, and achieve organizational goals. Additionally, Christian authors have penned works that look at church vitality from many different levels.

Mark Dever is a well-known author and leader in the church health movement. Dever's 9Marks ministry is committed to building healthy churches.¹⁴ The ministry of Dever through 9Marks consists of blog articles, books, literature, videos, audio recordings, conferences, and more. Many other works have emerged that address church health by authors such as Thom Rainer, Ed Stetzer, Greg Gilbert, and Kevin DeYoung.¹⁵

¹⁴Dever's ministry can be explored more fully at <http://www.9marks.org>.

¹⁵These authors and their works will be explored in detail in chap. 2 of this work.

A major movement in the last twenty years has been the authorship of major works that have addressed establishing visions, creating purpose, and achieving higher levels of effectiveness in the church. A pioneer in this movement is Rick Warren, whose book *The Purpose Driven Church* was a foundational work for pastors in the 1990s who were seeking to be intentional about creating a culture of success in their churches.¹⁶ Warren states, “The key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth.”¹⁷ These prophetic words have rung true with many church leaders today. Church leaders are seeking to find a way to bring about a healthy culture in their church that will help them accomplish the vision that God has given to them.

Others have followed Warren’s work with similar works that provide church leaders with road maps for success. Another major figure in this field has been Thom Rainer. Rainer has written many books on church health. Two of Rainer’s most famous books are *Simple Church* and *Breakout Churches*.¹⁸ *Breakout Churches* was not directed merely by the experience of a seasoned practitioner, but by empirical research conducted by Rainer and his team. Rainer sought to demonstrate why certain churches excelled to high levels of achievement while other churches did not.¹⁹ Rainer’s contribution is crucial in demonstrating that high levels of achievement in churches are reachable.

Numerous secular authors have addressed organizational culture as well. Perhaps the most influential work on organizational culture in contemporary study is Edgar Schein’s *Organizational Culture and Leadership*.²⁰ Other works that address

¹⁶Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*.

¹⁷Ibid., 17.

¹⁸Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*; and Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

¹⁹Rainer’s process in *Breakout Churches* was modeled after *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins. Collin’s work is mentioned in this chapter and will be discussed in detail in chap. 2 of this work.

²⁰Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*.

culture, change, and leadership dominate the business and leadership world. For over a decade, Jim Collin's *Good to Great* has served as the standard for understanding how organizations move from leaders in their industry to launching into the highest level of achievement.²¹ *Good to Great* has offered insights that can be used by leaders in multiple arenas. Additionally, the work of John Kotter in the realm of change has proved monumental in the business world and beyond. Kotter's book *The Heart of Change*²² is the go-to source for discussing change in organizations.

One author who made significant advancement in the realm of organizational culture and leadership in church life is Aubrey Malphurs. Two of Malphurs' contributions that address this field are *Advanced Strategic Planning*²³ and *Look Before You Lead*.²⁴ Malphurs' work in these two books provides church leaders with strategies to intentionally discern the culture of their church and bring about a strategy to cause needed change. The contribution of Malphurs has been tremendous to church leaders who are seeking to shape the culture of their churches.

In addition to the aforementioned studies, a wide variety of scholarly studies address leadership, culture, and change from a theological position.²⁵ These studies have

²¹Collins, *Good to Great*.

²²Kotter and Cohen, *The Heart of Change*.

²³Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005).

²⁴Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*.

²⁵For just a few, see Jesse Thomas Adkinson, "An Analysis of Pastoral Perceptions of Organizational Conditions That Promote Ministry Team Effectiveness in Multi-Staff Churches" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006); Brian Anthony Flahardy, "Essential Leadership Competencies of Professional Ministerial Staff As Identified by Senior Pastors, Staff Members, and Church Lay Leaders" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007); Nicholas Alfred Natale, "Relationship between Senior Pastors' Attitudes Toward Organizational Change and Church Growth Factors" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007); and Ward, "Church Organizational Culture." A more thorough examination of these studies will take place in chap. 2 of this work.

provided gains in the arena of church leadership. They have exhaustively considered how church leaders can build better teams, institute change more effectively, and have laser focused missions. Despite the gains in church leadership studies, a void in the literature still existed. A comprehensive study that determined how church leaders purposefully create healthy culture in their churches was necessary.

Purpose of the Study

As stated previously, there is a significant amount of literature present on the topics of leadership, change, and culture in the secular business world and in the church leadership world. The need for church leaders to understand culture has been established. Church leaders must be able to harness an effective method to intentionally create healthy cultures in their ministries. This study helped to determine how select churches did that, and what could be learned from the process that they utilized.

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify what, if any, factors led to the intentional creation of healthy organizational culture within select ministry organizations. This multiple case study attempted to identify any common factors among multiple model ministries that have intentionally created a vital organizational culture. This study also compared any factors that were common in churches that created healthy culture with factors that were present in secular organizations that created healthy culture.²⁶

Research Questions

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, several guiding questions were considered. The first question was “What factors determine if the organizational

²⁶The factors present in secular organizations will emerge from a study of the pertinent literature.

culture of a local church is healthy?” This question was answered primarily through the careful study of the present literature concerning church health and culture. A second question that directed this study was “Of those local churches that possess a healthy organizational culture, what steps were taken to intentionally create that culture?” An attempt was made to answer this question through the case studies conducted at multiple local churches. The third major question was, “Among those churches that intentionally created healthy organizational culture, are there common factors that contributed to the creation of that culture that can be organized into a system of best practices?” This final question was the crux of the research. The answer to this question may prove instrumental for church leaders who are seeking to change the culture of their ministries.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a clear problem for those concerned with leadership and culture in the local church. A comprehensive study on the best practices for intentionally creating healthy culture in the local church was non-existent. This study was an attempt to address that problem. This study included a review of the existing literature and consultation with experts in the field. Further, this study sought to determine what, if any, practices were common among, and most vital to, churches that intentionally created a healthy organizational culture.

Chapter 2 of this work is a review of the existing literature that addresses, or has implications for, the proposed research problem. The literature related to organizational culture in general, organizational culture in the ministry context, and works that may have relevant parallels to organizational culture in the ministry context were all considered. Chapter 2 will offer definitions and the research hypothesis. In chapter 3 of this work, there is a detailed explanation of the methodology used for the research. Contained therein is an explanation of why a multiple case study approach was used. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling will be justified. Chapter 4 is devoted

to reporting and analyzing the results of the multiple case study. It was determined if there were any factors among churches that led to the intentional creation of healthy church culture among those churches. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses any conclusions that can be drawn from the research. This final chapter also determines if the research results show any consistent factors that were present among multiple local churches that can be organized into a set of best practices. Additionally, chapter 5 interacts with the results in light of the Bible and implications for Christian ministry.

The role of the local church is a crucial part of God's plan for the world. John Piper asserts, "Churches are dying today because they are not doing anything which the world should look at and say: 'There is evidence that God is real and that he is glorious.'"²⁷ Church leaders must be concerned with the culture of the churches that they lead because there is so much at stake. It is vital that local churches learn how to successfully create healthy organizational culture. This research project sought to determine the best practices to carry out such a task. The existence of these best practices allows churches to benefit from careful consideration of them as they seek to build churches that glorify God and accomplish His purposes.

²⁷See John Piper's sermon, "The Local Church: Minimum Vs. Maximum" (sermon, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, March 29, 1981), accessed August 17, 2014, <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/the-local-church-minimum-vs-maximum>.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF PRECENT LITERATURE

Introduction

Healthy culture can make or break a church. The research has indicated this fact. It has been well documented that the culture of an organization has an effect on its success. Researchers and authors have discussed this for several decades. Out of this discussion emerges the field of organizational culture. Organizational culture has been around for quite some time, developing as a legitimate research topic in the 1970s. More recently, however, church culture has emerged as a distinct arena of research and scholarship.

Books, dissertations, and projects have been devoted to understanding leadership in both the secular world and in ministry contexts. Church culture in particular has piqued the interests of researches in the last few years. Leaders of churches are seeking to understand how they can better create and shape the right kind of culture in their church. An examination of the literature, however, did not yield a set of best practices for constructing a healthy culture in a local church.¹

This thesis determined that there are common factors involved in the process of creating healthy organizational culture in select model ministries. Before these model ministry cases were studied, a thorough examination of what has been said concerning the research problem occurred. Despite the work that has been done in the field of

¹For the purpose of this research, “best practices” is defined as those practices that are most effective.

organizational culture in both the secular and church worlds, there was still a void in the literature concerning the successful creation of healthy organizational culture in local churches.

In order to communicate best the situation, a broad view of organizational culture will be presented, followed by a more narrow focus that reveals what has already been said about organizational culture in the context of Christian ministry. In addition, this paper addresses the markers of a healthy culture in the local church, as well as what others have said regarding the creation of organizational culture. After the literature review, select terms are defined in order to bring clarity to the research. Finally, the research hypothesis is provided. This review interacts with contemporary authors in the area of leadership, church growth, church health, and organizational health. Additionally, the literature review considers the findings of empirical research and peer-reviewed journals.

Literature Review

The bulk of this chapter focuses on a review of the literature. This review begins with organizational culture in general and progresses to a more precise focus on the specific research problem.

Organizational Culture

Understanding organizational culture is essential to understanding the need for a set of best practices for the intentional creation of healthy culture in the local church. By reviewing the literature concerning organizational culture as a whole, this section answers the questions: What is organizational culture? How does organizational culture relate to leadership? Why is organizational culture an important topic of research?

What is organizational culture? Organizational culture is a relatively new phenomenon. The topic did not emerge as a major field of study until the 1980s.² Since then it has grown enormously popular, and has been established as a legitimate, yet diverse, field of study. Its influence has been wide and often overlaps with the fields of leadership and change. Though a popular field of study, it is also a field of ambiguity.³

Not everyone views organizational culture the same way. Matthew Dull notes the complexity of the issue. He states, “It’s complicated, literally. The term ‘culture’ means different things across such a range of disciplines and ways of thinking that it is among the most complicated words to define in the English language.”⁴ The term continues to evolve over time. One definition that has stood the test of time originates with Edgar Schein. He describes organizational culture as, “A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”⁵ This definition is constructed in such a way that it can be easily understood and broken down into specific elements of study.⁶

²Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), locs. 506-7, Kindle. A leading expert in organizational culture is Edgar Schein. Schein began writing on the topic in the 1970s, breaking through as a leading thinker in organizational culture in the 1980s. His work *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (originally published in 1985 and now in its 4th ed.) is a standard in the field (Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010]). *The Organizational Culture Perspective* by J. Steven Ott is another work that developed in the 1980s (J. Steven Ott, *The Organizational Culture Perspective* [Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1989]).

³This ambiguous nature of organizational culture is something that will be discussed in the section “What is organizational culture?” below.

⁴Matthew Dull, “Leadership and Organizational Culture: Sustaining Dialogue between Practitioners and Scholars,” *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 6 (2010): 858.

⁵Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 18.

⁶These elements will be noted later in this section.

Others have offered varied meanings for the term *organizational culture*. J. Steven Ott describes it as, “a social force that controls patterns of organizational behavior by shaping members’ cognitions and perceptions of meanings and realities, providing effective energy for mobilization, and identifying who belongs and who does not.”⁷ Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn stated in 2011 that it was widely recognized that organizational culture refers to “taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, and definitions that characterize organizations and their members.”⁸ Cameron and Quinn further characterize organizational culture as the extent to which activity is tolerated in an organization, or to put it simply, “just the way things are around here.”⁹ Schein adds, “Culture is to a group what personality or character is to an individual.”¹⁰

Depending on whom one asks, organizational culture is comprised of several different elements. Ott characterizes the elements of organizational culture as symbols, artifacts, patterns of behavior, beliefs and values, and basic assumptions.¹¹ The Kilmann-Saxton cultural gap survey proposes eight questions that describe the make-up of an organization’s culture: (1) What makes sense; what can be talked about? (2) Who am I; where do I belong? (3) Who rules; how, why, and by what means? (4) What are the unwritten rules of the game for what really counts; how do I stay out of trouble? (5) Why are we here, and for what purposes? (6) What are our history, geography, and the structure we build? (7) What are the stories about ourselves and others? (8) What are our

⁷Ott, *The Organizational Culture Perspective*, 69.

⁸Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, locs. 501-3.

⁹Ibid., locs. 531-34.

¹⁰Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 14.

¹¹Ott, *The Organizational Culture Perspective*, 21-42.

morality and ethics? Are people basically good or evil?¹² Schein describes the elements of organizational culture by breaking down culture into three levels: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.¹³

A common thread exists among these definitions. Each refers in some way to things that are assumed, expected, valued, and taught. These definitions and designated elements of culture serve as the initial piece in researching how culture is created and shaped. Schein's definition is the bedrock definition for this study. This introductory analysis of organizational culture is foundational in demonstrating the need for additional research in this arena.

How is organizational culture related to leadership? Closely linked to organizational culture is the field of leadership. An organization's culture emerges from the leadership it follows.¹⁴ Bernard Bass states, "One is likely to see a constant interplay between culture and leadership. Leaders create the mechanisms for cultural embedding and cultural reinforcement. Cultural norms arise and change because of what leaders attend to, their reactions to crises, their role modeling, and their recruitment strategies."¹⁵

Leadership is so instrumental to the culture of an organization because of the tremendous influence of its leaders.¹⁶ When seeking to determine how healthy culture is created, it would be irresponsible to ignore the role of the leader. The very nature of

¹²Bernard Bass and Ruth Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Application* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 747-48.

¹³Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 24.

¹⁴Ibid., 749.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Leadership is not only instrumental. Some would say that it is the most vital aspect of an organization. Bernard Bass states, "In industrial, educational, and military settings, and in social movements, leadership plays a critical, if not the most critical, role, and is therefore an important subject for study and research." Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 25.

being a leader calls for one to be influential. Leaders are called to influence others in such a way that individuals achieve greater effectiveness in the organization.¹⁷

A style of leadership discussed over the last several decades is *transformational leadership*. James MacGregor Burns was the first to present this style of leadership.¹⁸ Burns speaks of transforming leadership as bringing change in nature, not just in degree. These leaders do not demand change by power, they “champion and inspire followers.”¹⁹ In the work *Management of Organizational Behavior*, Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, and Dewey E. Johnson discuss the concept of transformational leadership. They conclude from their research that leaders who possess transformational leadership lead those organizations that succeed. This leadership is characterized by,

1. Personal commitment to the transformation by the leadership.
2. Firm, relentless, and indisputable communication of the impossibility of maintaining the status quo.
3. Clear and enthusiastic communication of an inspiring vision of what the organization could become.
4. Timely establishment of a critical mass of support for the transformation.
5. Acknowledging, honoring, and dealing with resistance to the transformation.
6. Defining and setting up an organization that can implement the vision.
7. Regular communication of information about progress and giving recognition and reward for achievements.²⁰

¹⁷Joseph Grenny et al., *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), 6.

¹⁸Burns referred to this style as “transforming leadership.” First mentioned in James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978). Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio later followed up Burns’ work in *Transformational Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

¹⁹James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 24-25.

²⁰Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, and Dewey E. Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Leading Human Resources* (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 521-24.

This type of transformational leader is one who can shape or create the culture of that organization.

Similarly, Tom Endersbe, Jay Therrien, and Jon Wortmann state that leaders must have three commitments when leading. Those commitments are clarity, stability, and rhythm. Clarity refers to understanding what it is that the organization is supposed to be doing. Stability means making sure that those who make up the organization are equipped to do their parts. Rhythm is the establishment of a healthy pattern that produces the kinds of results that the organization is seeking to achieve.²¹ These commitments characterize the type of leader that is necessary to lead a church or organization to create a healthy culture.

In his highly influential book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins explains factors that led to companies making a leap from good to great.²² One of the factors that Collins and his research team identified was what he called *Level 5 Leadership*.²³ Collins described these leaders as a “study in duality,” stating that they were “modest and willful, humble and fearless.”²⁴ Level 5 leaders are also known for being more concerned about the health and progress of the organization than their own success.²⁵ Level 5 leaders are not weak or timid. These leaders possess a certain “fierce factor” and stoic determination to

²¹Tom Endersbe, Jay Therrien, and Jon Wortmann, *Three Commitments of Leadership: How Clarity, Stability, and Rhythm Create Great Leaders* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 9-11.

²²Collins identified these companies as companies that made a move from good results to great results and sustained those results for at least fifteen years (Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't* [New York: HarperBusiness, 2011], 3).

²³Collins and his research team did not seek to research leadership as a factor in the companies becoming great. In fact, Collins sought to downplay the role of top executives. However, the data overwhelmingly demonstrated that leadership plays a critical role in the success of the companies (Collins, *Good to Great*, 21-22).

²⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 25-26.

bring about needed change for the betterment of the organization.²⁶ Collins' research established that one of the factors necessary for bringing health to an organization is vital leadership.

Effective leadership is essential to organizational health. Consider the similarities between the leadership revealed by the aforementioned authors (see table 1). Leadership and organizational culture are inseparable. Schein agrees with this emphasis on leadership. He reveals that leaders create the conditions necessary for bringing cultural change and the establishment of a new culture. He states: "These dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make you realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin."²⁷ Much has been said about leadership. Its value is enormous. Yet, understanding the value of a leader is not all there is to understanding organizational culture. In addition, leadership alone is not sufficient for creating a healthy organizational culture.

Why is organizational culture important? Organizational culture is not just an idea that theorists wrestle with in the halls of scholarly institutions. Success in organizations depends upon understanding organizational culture. Cameron and Quinn assert, "It is difficult to name even a single highly successful company, one that is a recognized leader in its industry, that does not have a distinctive, readily identifiable organizational culture."²⁸ They further note that empirical research has produced a convincing amount of evidence that culture is important to the overall performance of an organization.²⁹ They add,

²⁶Collins, *Good to Great*, 30.

²⁷Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3.

²⁸Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, locs. 295-96.

²⁹Ibid., locs. 308-10.

The key ingredient in each case [of successful companies] is something less tangible, less blatant, but more powerful than the market factors . . . The major distinguishing feature in these companies—their most important competitive advantage, the most powerful factor they all highlight as a key ingredient in their success—is their organizational culture.³⁰

Table 1. Common ingredients of effective leaders

<i>Common ingredient</i>	<i>Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson</i>	<i>Endersbe, Therrien, and Wortmann</i>	<i>Collins</i>
Commitment to the organization	Commitment	--	Concerned about the health and progress of the organization
Effective and inspiring communication and behavior	Communication of the impossibility of maintaining the status quo	Clarity	Modest and willful, humble and fearless
	Communication of an inspiring vision		
Establishing stability and support	Establishment of a critical mass of support	Stability	Fierce factor and stoic determination
	Acknowledging, honoring, and dealing with resistance		
Sustaining efforts for the future	Defining and setting up an organization	Rhythm	--
	Regular communication of information about progress		--

The intention of this section of the literature review is to provide a synthesis of

³⁰Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, locs. 290-93.

organizational culture, its elements, its relationship to leadership, and its importance.³¹ It is crucial that leaders understand culture, not just because of the link between culture and organizational success, but also because of its intangible nature. Culture has multiple dimensions that cannot be easily seen or understood on the surface.³² Schein notes, “Cultural forces are powerful because they operate outside of our awareness.”³³ Further, he emphatically claims that if leaders do not become aware of the culture they lead, they will end up being led, rather than leading.³⁴

Organizational Culture in the Ministry Context

Since every organization has a culture, and churches are organizations, churches necessarily have unique cultures of their own. Aubrey Malphurs states, “The typical church in North America is like a sailboat without a rudder, drifting aimlessly in the ocean.”³⁵ This sense of aimlessness is often due to a lack of intentional crystallization of culture. Churches desperately need to understand culture and how it affects them. Malphurs adds, “Culture affects all churches. There are no exceptions. The question, therefore, isn’t, [does] culture affect what we do as a church? Rather the question is, which culture affects what we do as a church?”³⁶

³¹For a further review of the relationship between understanding culture and organizational success, see K. S. Cameron and D. R. Ettington, “The Conceptual Foundations of Organizational Culture,” in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, by J. C. Smart (New York: Agathon, 1988) 356-96; D. R. Denison, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Effectiveness* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990), 267; Harrison Miller Trice and Janice M. Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993); and Ronda F. Reigle, “Organizational Culture Assessment: Development of a Descriptive Test Instrument” (PhD diss., University of Alabama in Huntsville, 2003).

³²Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 91.

³³*Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

³⁵Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 9.

³⁶Aubrey Malphurs, *Look before You Lead: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture*

The emergence of church organizational culture. Although the formal study of organizational culture emerged largely in the 1980s, the focus on church organizational culture came along much later. Several figures are considered authorities in the field of research related to the church.³⁷ Yet, no figure emerges as a leader in the field of organizational culture in the church until Aubrey Malphurs. Malphurs' two works *Advanced Strategic Planning* and *Look before You Lead* are monumental contributors to the study of culture in the church. Empirical research has emerged in recent years that studies church organizational culture in specific and detailed manner.³⁸

In her research, Angela Ward sought to advance the concept of church organizational culture and create an instrument to measure it.³⁹ Ward points out that although churches are uniquely called to a specific biblical purpose, they are, nonetheless, formal organizations made up of teams, leaders, and people. As such, it is crucial that church leaders understand the concept of organizational culture. Ward claimed that organizational culture affects the church in multiple ways, including leadership, strategy, and purpose.⁴⁰ Ward's research contributed to the furthering of church organizational culture as a field of study in its own right, not simply as an offshoot from the world of secular leadership and business.⁴¹ The emergence of church

(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 74.

³⁷These figures include Thom Rainer, Ed Stetzer, and George Barna.

³⁸Angela Joan Ward, "Church Organizational Culture: Construct Definition and Instrument Development" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011); Kevin Jamie Peck, "Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication: A Multiple Case Study" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013); and Andrew Clayton Hebert, "Shaping Church Culture: Table Fellowship and Teaching in Luke-Acts" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

³⁹Ward, "Church Organizational Culture," 4.

⁴⁰Ibid., 3-4.

⁴¹Ibid., 112. Ward was unable to develop a Church Organizational Culture Survey, although she did develop a "Church Leadership Culture Survey." Still, her research proves helpful to the discussion of church organizational culture.

culture brought about a distinction, which led to the genesis of a new field of study in organizational culture.

What distinguishes church organizational culture? Churches are organizations; though distinct from most. It has been argued that the church should not use the same theories or methods intended for secular organizations.⁴² Those who argue this assert that the church is not an organization in the general sense of the term. Timothy Keller addresses this concern when he says, “From the beginning, the church was both an institution and a movement. This dual nature of the church is grounded in the work of the Spirit, and it is the Spirit who makes the church simultaneously a vital organism and a structured organization.”⁴³ He adds, “It is necessary for churches to intentionally cultivate the dynamics that characterize a healthy movement.”⁴⁴ His point, of course, is that while churches are not the same as every other organization, they are nonetheless organizations.

Indeed, churches are unique organizations. The question is how are they unique? Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish the culture of churches from the culture of other organizations is to consider the definitions experts and researchers have given to church organizational culture. Malphurs uses the term *congregational culture* to mean: “The unique expression of the interaction of the church’s shared beliefs and its values, which explain its behavior in general and displays its unique identity in particular. . . . In

⁴²Angela Ward addresses this concern in the previously cited work (Ward, “Church Organizational Culture,” 3). See Brian Dodd, *Empowered Church Leadership: Ministry in the Spirit According to Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); James Houston, *Joyful Exiles: Life in Christ on the Dangerous Edge of Things* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008); and John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2002).

⁴³Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 344.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 351.

short, a church's congregational culture is its unique expression of its shared values and beliefs."⁴⁵

Ward defines the term *church organizational culture* as "the system of basic assumptions, values, and reinforced behavioral expectations that are shared by the people within a local church and tangibly reflected in their symbolic expressions and collective practices."⁴⁶ Kevin Peck, in his research on church culture and multiplication defined *church culture* as

a set of tacit assumptions (both biblical and unbiblical) shared by a local congregation as it attempts to flourish according to God's will, addressing both external interaction and internal cooperation, that is considered to be true, and therefore is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to God's design and purpose for the individual, the local church, and the world.⁴⁷

Gene Mims adds, "The culture is the local context of a church's life that shapes the way it views itself and leads to its unique style and identity."⁴⁸

All of these definitions share a common thread concerning the nature of the church. Malphurs uses the word, "unique"; Ward says, "shared by the people"; Peck describes it as "shared by a local congregation"; and Mims says, "unique identity." All of these descriptions point to the fact that there is a particular distinction concerning the culture of local congregations.

Christian scholars commonly accept that there are inimitable purposes for

⁴⁵Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 20.

⁴⁶Ward, "Church Organizational Culture," 79.

⁴⁷Peck, "Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication," 1. Peck studied three churches: the Austin Stone Community Church (Austin, TX; approximately 8,000 in Sunday attendance); the Village Church (Flower Mound, TX; approximately 10,000 in Sunday attendance); and the Summit Church (Durham, NC; approximately 6,800 in Sunday attendance). (Peck, 47-49).

⁴⁸Gene Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church: A Compelling Image of an Achievable Future for Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 108.

Christian churches marking identity.⁴⁹ Mark Dever is one pastor and theologian who has expressed these markers of identity for Christian churches, through what he calls the nine marks of a healthy church: (1) expositional preaching, (2) biblical theology, (3) a biblical understanding of the good news, (4) a biblical understanding of conversion, (5) a biblical understanding of evangelism, (6) a biblical understanding of church membership, (7) biblical church discipline, (8) a concern for promoting Christian discipleship and growth, and (9) biblical church leadership.⁵⁰

Rick Warren, an influential pastor since the early 1990s, lists the five purposes of the church as (1) love the Lord with all your heart, (2) love your neighbor as yourself, (3) go and make disciples, (4) baptizing them, and (5) teaching them to obey. He later defines these simply as: worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship.⁵¹

Similarly, Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cospser offer five “gospel-formed” aspects to the new identity of Christians. They describe this identity by asserting, “The gospel doesn’t give us a new set of obligations and duties—it gives us a new identity. What we do flows from who we are—a gospel-formed people who are radically transformed.”⁵² These aspects are (1) worshipers, (2) family, (3) servants, (4) disciples, and (5) witnesses.⁵³

Both Dever’s and Warren’s principles are based on the commands and teachings of the Bible. In fact, the two are very similar to one another.⁵⁴ Clearly, the

⁴⁹For more information on these purposes, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 853-73; and Milliard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 949-87.

⁵⁰Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 11-53.

⁵¹Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 103-6.

⁵²Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cospser, *Faithmapping: A Gospel Atlas for Your Spiritual Journey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 23.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Dever and Warren have both served as instrumental leaders in the area of church health and

primary uniqueness of the culture of the church is that it should be driven and shaped primarily by the Bible. While Peck notes the similarities between churches and other institutions, he implicitly agrees with the sentiments of Dever and Warren, as well as Montgomery and Cosper, by pointing out the unique power and purpose of the church. He states,

Culture is indeed a critical component in the success of any human institution, including the church. Though the church of Jesus is led by God, it is comprised of humans and, therefore, subject to the strengths and weaknesses of those who are made in the image of God and yet fallen. Thus any local church's culture has the power to significantly impact its capacity and effectiveness to obey the Great Commission.⁵⁵

Malphurs compares the elements of church culture to three layers of an apple: the skin, the flesh, and the core.⁵⁶ The skin of the apple is the church's outward behavior. This layer is what outsiders would see as they encounter the church. The second layer, the flesh, represents the church's values. The values of a church come from within, and explain the outward behavior of the church. The inside layer, the core, is the church's beliefs. These beliefs are what drive the church and are taken for granted by the majority of the congregation.⁵⁷ Similarly, Mims characterizes the culture of churches as the interaction of four forces: (1) the leadership styles of the pastor, key staff, and lay leaders, (2) the demographic characteristics of the people and the community, (3) the current life cycle of the church (growing, stable, or declining), and (4) the current life cycle of the

growth and share many similarities in their recommended elements of biblical church health. Notice the general similarities between Dever's marks (expositional preaching, biblical theology, a biblical understanding of the good news, a biblical understanding of conversion, a biblical understanding of evangelism, a biblical understanding of church membership, biblical church discipline, a concern for promoting Christian discipleship and growth, and biblical church leadership) and Warren's purposes (worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship).

⁵⁵Peck, "Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication," 6.

⁵⁶Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 21.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 21-22.

community (growing, stable, or declining).⁵⁸

By processing what the literature has revealed, it is apparent that churches are similar to other organizations in terms of culture, yet distinct in their own right.

Malphurs and Ward provide definitions of church culture that maintain some of the same elements of general organizational culture. At the same time, Warren, Dever, and Peck note that churches have a particular biblical nature that necessitates a particular cultural element. Churches are not merely organizations; they are unique. This synthesis of church culture exposes that uniqueness and provides parameters for narrowing the study in a way that addresses the research void.

Markers of Healthy Organizational Culture

One of the primary purposes of this study was to observe cases with a healthy organizational culture. No culture is inherently superior to another.⁵⁹ However, some organizations possess a culture that leads to greater health for the organization. In order to choose cases that had a healthy culture, it was determined what a healthy culture looks like in a local church.⁶⁰ The study of the pertinent literature did not yield a universal list of markers of health in church organizational culture. However, the literature did yield some markers of health in organizations and churches that served as guideposts for determining markers of health for church culture.

Markers of a healthy organizational culture. In seeking to determine

⁵⁸Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church*, 108.

⁵⁹Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 78.

⁶⁰Ward sought to develop a list of “dimensions of church organizational culture.” Her list went through four revisions, in addition to revisions of the survey items and the survey itself. Eventually, Ward shifted her instrument design to measure church leadership culture rather than church organizational culture. See Ward, “Church Organizational Culture,” 79-101.

markers of health in organizational culture, one can look at markers of effectiveness, success, and longevity in organizations. These markers, such as those revealed by Collins' research, can provide insight into the possible markers of health in the culture of those organizations.

One trait present in healthy organizations is consensus. Schein notes, "The group's ultimate mission, goals, means used to achieve goals, measurement of its performance, and remedial strategies all require consensus if the group is to perform effectively."⁶¹ In the journal article, "The Role of Culture Strength in Shaping Sales Force Outcomes," Barnes et al., reveal that two vital traits of a strong organizational culture are the ability to influence members to behave in a way that is endorsed by the organization and a pervasive level of agreement on the part of the members regarding what is valuable to the organization.⁶² Significantly, the writers note, "Strong cultures promote the internalization of organizational values."⁶³ Internalization of values, or building of consensus, is a marker that serves to identify those organizations that are healthy.

Collins' work in *Good to Great* also reveals some factors that led to long-term effectiveness in organizations. The markers of success emerging from his research are the right personnel (first who . . . then what), honesty in the organization (confront the brutal facts), understanding the mission (the hedgehog concept), commitment to the work (a culture of discipline), and innovation (technology accelerators).⁶⁴

⁶¹Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 91.

⁶²John W. Barnes et al., "The Role of Culture Strength in Shaping Sales Force Outcomes," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 257.

⁶³Ibid, 265.

⁶⁴Collins, *Good to Great*, 41, 64, 90, 120, and 144.

Markers of a healthy church culture. Markers of health in church culture can be discerned, as in other organizations. Going back to the distinguishing purposes of the church as revealed by Dever and Warren, one may note common traits. Most of Dever's and Warren's principles stem from a commitment to the Bible and the mission that God gives the church. Clearly then, one marker of health in the culture of a church is a commitment to the mission of God.

Similarly, Malphurs speaks of the importance of the core values of a church. The core values for a Christian church arise from God's given mission to that church.⁶⁵ Malphurs states, "Core values are the constant, passionate shared core beliefs that drive and guide the culture."⁶⁶ A church that has a healthy culture is a church that understands its core values. In *Leading Congregational Change*, Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr highlight the fact that when one looks at the first church, the church in the book of Acts, a true sense of power can be seen as they committed to the mission God gave them.⁶⁷

Additionally, in his book *Breakout Churches*, Thom Rainer and his research team reveal how several churches went from plateaued or relative success, to a period of sustained growth.⁶⁸ Rainer lists several factors that contributed to the cultivation of health in these churches. These factors are godly and visionary leadership (Acts 6/7 leadership),

⁶⁵This concept is discussed further in the section below concerning changing and creating culture in the church.

⁶⁶Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 40.

⁶⁷Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 16. This work is an adaptation of John Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012).

⁶⁸Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), was modeled after the book by Jim Collins, *Good to Great*. Rainer notes, "This book was inspired by *Good to Great*, and we borrowed the research process, the structure and outline of the book, and the architecture of its ideas as the blueprint for this work." (16).

an awareness of the current situation (ABC moment), a proper understanding of supporting leaders (Who/What simultrack), an understanding of the essential mission (VIP factor), a culture of excellence, and innovation (Innovation acceleration).⁶⁹

In his work *Natural Church Development*, Christian A. Schwarz asks, “Are there distinctive quality characteristics which are more developed in growing churches than in those which are not growing?”⁷⁰ His research sought to determine what principles from model churches were relevant to other churches as well.⁷¹ Schwarz’s goal was to measure qualitative growth rather than quantitative growth.⁷² His research led him to conclude that there were eight quality characteristics in the model churches: (1) “empowering leadership,” (2) “gift-oriented ministry,” (3) “passionate spirituality,” (4) “functional structures,” (5) “inspiring worship services,” (6) “holistic small groups,” (7) “need-oriented evangelism,” and (8) “loving relationships.”⁷³

Charles Frazier’s research on team ministry in churches also offers some helpful insights into what markers of health in church culture may look like. Frazier says that a team must understand team goals, initiate shared responsibility, maintain good communication, and have a leader.⁷⁴ These four attributes, are applicable to church culture because churches are often led by teams, and because these four attributes

⁶⁹Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 26. Rainer defines the “ABC Moment”: “An ABC (awareness/belief/crisis) moment is a wake-up call, a realization that something is not right and that business as usual is no longer an option” (72). He describes the “VIP Factor” as the “Vision Intersection Profile.” The VIP profile is when the three areas of leadership passion, community needs, and passion/gifts of congregation intersect so that a church knows its vision (113-14).

⁷⁰Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: Churchsmart Resources, 1996), 15.

⁷¹Ibid., 16.

⁷²Ibid., 20.

⁷³Ibid., 22-36.

⁷⁴Charles Wayne Frazier, “Developing a Leadership Team for the Purchase Area Baptist Association, Benton, Kentucky” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 31-48.

confirm what has already been revealed in the aforementioned literature.

Peck's research on culture and multiplication in churches serves as a final source for discovering markers of healthy church culture. Peck notes six theme families that emerged as the most significant elements of multiplying church culture: (1) "purposed for the glory of God," (2) "the priority of the Great Commission," (3) "explicitly gospel-centered," (4) "authority of the Word of God," (5) "priesthood of all believers," and (6) "committed community."⁷⁵

Upon a thorough examination of the literature, one may identify the potential markers that could help determine a healthy culture in a local church.⁷⁶ For the purposes of this research, the following markers of a healthy church culture were utilized.

A culture that is led by a courageous leader (see table 2 for evidence of this marker in the literature).⁷⁷ As previously noted, both Collins' and Rainer's research pointed to the leader as an essential ingredient in the acceleration and sustainment of an organization's success. Courageous leaders are not necessarily domineering leaders or leaders with machismo. They are instead those leaders absolutely committed to the success of the church.⁷⁸ Previously, this literature review discussed the inseparable nature of leadership and organizational culture. Indeed, a courageous leader is the catalyst for an effective culture in a church. Rainer notes, "Our research demonstrates repeatedly that one of the key reasons that leaders of the comparison churches failed to

⁷⁵Peck, "Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication," 77-85.

⁷⁶These markers of health may contain areas of overlap. Additionally, there are many other aspects of a church organizational culture; such as ministry teams, strategy, and longevity; that would fall under the larger umbrella of these four markers of health in church culture.

⁷⁷"Courageous" in this context refers to a quality that comprises several virtues of leadership; including dedication, perseverance, fearlessness, and stalwartness. For more on courageous leadership see Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

⁷⁸This is the leader that Collins (*Good to Great*) calls the *Level 5 Leader* and Rainer (*Breakout Churches*) calls the *Acts 6/7 Leader*.

move their churches to greatness was their unwillingness or inability to pay the costs necessary to do so.”⁷⁹

Table 2. A culture that is led by a courageous leader

<i>Literature</i>	<i>Evidential element</i>
Collins	Level 5 Leader
Rainer	Acts 6/7 Leader
Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson	Transformational leadership
Endersbe, Therrien, and Wortmann	Three commitments of a leader
Dever	Biblical church leadership

A culture that values the role of people (see table 3 for evidence of this marker in the literature). The value of people to the success of the organization is a factor that emerges in the research of both Collins and Rainer.⁸⁰ The idea of having the right people in the church is vital to the health of a church’s culture. It is not just the leader who affects the culture; it is also those whom he leads. Schwarz concludes from his research, “Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry.”⁸¹

A culture that shares a common vision (see table 4 for evidence of this marker in the literature). A culture that leads to shared vision is a culture that leads to success. Malphurs exclaims, “A shared organizational vision promotes a standard of excellence.”⁸² Churches have a much greater opportunity for success when the people

⁷⁹Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 192.

⁸⁰Collins (*Good to Great*) called this *First who...then what* and Rainer (*Breakout Churches*) called it the *Who/What Simultrack*.

⁸¹Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 22.

⁸²Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 137.

are operating on the basis of the shared vision.⁸³

Table 3. A culture that values the role of people

<i>Literature</i>	<i>Evidential element</i>
Collins	First who...then what
Rainer	Who/What Simultrack
Dever	Biblical church membership
Warren	Fellowship/Ministry
Schwarz	Empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry
Frazier	Initiate shared responsibility

Table 4. A culture that shares a common vision

<i>Literature</i>	<i>Evidential element.</i>
Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson	Clear and enthusiastic communication of an inspiring vision of what the organization could become
Schein	Consensus
Collins	The hedgehog concept
Malphurs	Core values
Herrington et al.	Commitment from the church in Acts
Rainer	VIP factor
Frazier	Understand team goals

A culture that is committed to the biblical mission (see table 5 for evidence of this marker in the literature). The mission of the church is dictated by the mandate of God as revealed in the Bible. This is a marker of health that is particularly unique to Christian churches. Because God designed the local church, it follows that the mission

⁸³Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2008), 65.

would be discerned from God’s Word. This is a reality seen in both Dever’s “marks” and Warren’s “purposes.”

Table 5. A culture that is committed to the biblical mission

<i>Literature</i>	<i>Evidential element.</i>
Dever	Nine marks
Warren	Five purposes of the church
Malphurs	Core values
Herrington et al.	Commitment from the church in Acts
Peck	Six theme families of a multiplying church

In their book *What is the Mission of the Church?*, Greg Gilbert and Kevin DeYoung state that the mission for each local church is revealed in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Book of Acts in the Bible.⁸⁴ Peck adds, “This mission is not simply to grow, or even worse, merely to survive until the world passes away. The mission of the church is to make and multiply disciples, leaders, and congregations until every person whom God has purchased has been saved.”⁸⁵

These markers as revealed by the literature review provide a standard by which to measure a healthy church. This standard was essential to the research that sought to identify a set of best practices for intentionally creating healthy organizational culture.

Creating and Changing Culture

The final section of this literature review analyzes what has been said concerning the creation of culture. This thesis sought to determine if a set of best

⁸⁴Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 26.

⁸⁵Peck, “Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication,” 87.

practices for intentionally creating a healthy culture in a local church could be determined. Understanding how culture is created in the first place helps understand how one can create a healthy culture. The creation of culture is much more than simply a system of steps. However, there is a process that can be helpful. Culture develops as a collective effort of sense-making and action over a long period of time. There is often an unpredictable element to the process.⁸⁶ Concerning organizational culture, Ott points out that it is developed slowly, sometimes subconsciously.⁸⁷

Although there is a certain unknown aspect to the formulation of organizational culture, few cultures form by accident.⁸⁸ Generally speaking, Schein states, “All groups start with some kind of ‘originating event.’”⁸⁹ Schein adds that this event could be “an environmental accident, a decision by an ‘originator’ to bring a group of people together for some purpose, or an advertised event or common experience that attracts a number of individuals.”⁹⁰

Ott determined that organizational culture has three general sources, or determinants: the broader societal culture in which an organization resides; the nature of an organization’s business environment; and the beliefs, values, and basic assumptions held by the founder(s) or other early dominant leader(s).⁹¹ Ott’s organizational sources give church leaders a starting point when considering how to intentionally create a healthy culture.

⁸⁶Christiane Demers, *Organizational Change Theories: A Synthesis* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), locs. 1092-93, Kindle.

⁸⁷J. Steven Ott, *The Organizational Culture Perspective* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 10989), vii.

⁸⁸Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 219.

⁸⁹Ibid., 198.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ott, *The Organizational Culture Perspective*, 75.

Schein goes further, offering a more detailed blueprint for creating culture. In *Reframing Organizational Culture*, he contributes a chapter in which he discusses the formulation of culture. He states, “Organizations do not form accidentally or spontaneously. They are ‘created’ because one or more individuals perceive that the coordinated and concerted action of a number of people can accomplish something that individual action cannot.”⁹²

The leader has enormous influence in creating the culture as pointed out by both Schein and Ott. Schein asserts that the founder drives what is learned by the culture through his explicit teaching to those within the organization.⁹³ In fact, Schein says that organizations must understand the role of both the leader and the group if the culture of the organization is going to develop successfully.⁹⁴ The role of the leader in creating culture must not be undervalued. The attitudes, values, and actions of the members of an organization begin with and are shaped by the leadership. This happens through both modeling and communicating by the leader.⁹⁵

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson speak to the specific role of the leader in creating a culture. Their work reveals three general skills required of influential leaders: diagnosing—understanding the situation one is trying to influence, adapting—altering one’s behavior and the other resources one has available to meet the contingencies of the situation, and communicating—interacting with others in a way that people can easily understand and accept.⁹⁶

⁹²Edgar H. Schein, “The Role of the Founder in the Creation of Organizational Culture,” in *Reframing Organizational Culture*, ed. Peter J. Frost et al. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991), 14.

⁹³Ibid., 25.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Christine Kane-Urrabazo, “Management’s Role in Shaping Organizational Culture,” *Journal of Nursing Management* 14, no. 3 (April 2006): 193.

⁹⁶Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 9.

Further, their work notes several leadership actions that are required to bring about transformation:

1. Personal commitment to the transformation by the leadership.
2. Firm, relentless, and indisputable communication of the impossibility of maintaining the status quo.
3. Clear and enthusiastic communication of an inspiring vision of what the organization could become.
4. Timely establishment of a critical mass of support for the transformation.
5. Acknowledging, honoring, and dealing with resistance to the transformation.
6. Defining and setting up an organization that can implement the vision.
7. Regular communication of information about progress and giving recognition and reward for achievements.⁹⁷

Change theory literature is another genre pertinent to the discussion of the creation of culture. One instrumental contributor to the field of change is John Kotter. In his work *The Heart of Change*, Kotter reveals eight steps for successful large-scale change: (1) increase urgency, (2) build the guiding team, (3) get the vision right, (4) communicate for buy-in, (5) empower action, (6) create short-term wins, (7) don't let up, and (8) make change stick.⁹⁸

Some of these same themes mentioned are seen in Collins' research in *Good to Great*. For example, consider Collins' principle of *First Who...Then What*. This principle of Collins is similar to Kotter and Cohen's *Build the Guiding Team*. Again, Collins' *Confront the Brutal Facts* corresponds with Kotter and Cohen's *Increase Urgency* and Hersey's, Blanchard's, and Johnson's *Firm, relentless, and indisputable*

⁹⁷Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 521-24.

⁹⁸Kotter and Cohen, *The Heart of Change*, 7. See also John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012).

communication of the impossibility of maintaining the status quo. Indeed, all of Collins' marks of Good to Great companies, as well as Rainer's work with Breakout Churches serve as beacons directing churches in the creation and adaptation of culture.

The cultures of churches are, by nature, distinct from that of other organizations. Although there may be similarities between creating organizational culture in general and creating culture in churches, there are also differences. When studying the literature, Malphurs again appears as the authority on this topic.

In *Look before You Lead*, Malphurs provides a process for creating culture in a church. It is important to point out that church culture can be shaped from an existing culture, or created as an entirely new culture (in the case of church planting). When deciding to change an existing culture, Malphurs states that the church leader must first exegete the culture. The process takes place through observing the culture, interpreting the culture, and making application to the culture.⁹⁹

In order to observe the culture, the leader must ask questions about what is going on in the culture. The leader must also look at observable behavior and outward manifestations of the culture. In other words, the pastor needs to ask, "What is the church doing?"¹⁰⁰ In the second step, the leader should move beyond asking what the church is doing to discovering why the church is doing what it is doing. This involves looking at the values and beliefs of the congregation.¹⁰¹ Finally, Malphurs suggests that the leader must find out what is unique about the culture. In this stage the leader should look at the culture's weaknesses and strengths, similarities to other cultures, and how leaders can be effective in that culture.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 84.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 86-89.

¹⁰²Ibid., 91-93.

After reading and understanding the culture, the leader must next understand what is necessary to create the culture. Malphurs suggests asking, (1) “Who creates the culture?” (2) “What kind of culture will be created?” and (3) “How will the culture be implemented?”¹⁰³ Upon answering these questions, the architect of the new culture must implement the culture. Malphurs lays out five stages for creating new culture:

1. *The conception stage.* In this stage, the leader lays out the foundation on which the superstructure of the church will be built.¹⁰⁴
2. *The development stage.* This stage involves the development of a staff and a group of core members who share the vision for the church and its culture.¹⁰⁵
3. *The birth stage.* This is the point where the culture goes public.¹⁰⁶
4. *The growth stage.* At this point, the church grows and begins to share a common history and culture.¹⁰⁷
5. *The reproduction stage.* During this stage, the church focuses on using what God has done in its unique culture to reproduce other churches that can effectively minister to others.¹⁰⁸

Malphurs goes beyond the creation of new culture by suggesting three factors that make up what a pastor must go through to shape existing culture. These three parts are preparation, personnel, and process.¹⁰⁹ In the preparation stage, Malphurs suggests that church leaders consider what lies in the journey ahead. He prescribes completing a church analysis, considering why people may be resistant to change, and preparing all

¹⁰³Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 113.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 122.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 123.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 126.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 129, 154, and 175.

levels of leadership.¹¹⁰

The second part, personnel, is concerned with having the right people in place to bring about the change of the culture. The key person in this process is the pastor, who is the “culture sculptor.” The pastor must have the proper character qualifications, spiritual qualifications, spiritual gifts, passion, temperament, and natural abilities to sculpt the culture.¹¹¹ While there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to leadership and creating a culture, it is vital that the leader responsible for changing the culture examines whether or not he is fit to take on the task.¹¹²

The final part of changing a culture, according to Malphurs, is the process. Malphurs lays out a four-part process.¹¹³ The four steps of the process are: read the current culture, unfreeze it, transition the culture to a new level, and finally refreeze it.¹¹⁴ The first step, reading the culture, is done through observation, interpretation, and application.¹¹⁵ Once the culture has been read, a determination can be made about how much change and what kind of change is needed.¹¹⁶ Thawing out the culture is setting up the culture so that change can take place. This may happen by showing that the status

¹¹⁰Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 143.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 155-65.

¹¹²For more on leadership competencies, see James David Coggins, “A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Competencies and Characteristics for Vocational Ministry Leaders as Identified by Ministry Professionals” (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004); and Brian Anthony Flahardy, “Essential Leadership Competencies of Professional Ministerial Staff as Identified by Senior Pastors, Staff Members, and Church Lay Leaders” (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007).

¹¹³Malphurs’ process is based on Kurt Lewin’s three-step process of unfreezing the culture, changing the culture, and refreezing the culture. Lewin was a German-American psychologist in the 1950s.

¹¹⁴Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 175-76.

¹¹⁵This process, discussed earlier in the literature review, Malphurs calls, “exegeting the culture.”

¹¹⁶Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 177.

quo is no longer acceptable or showing opportunities for greater future success through change.¹¹⁷ The third step, transitioning the culture to a new level, answers the questions, “What kind of culture should be shaped?” and “How will the culture be implemented?”¹¹⁸ This step includes the important tasks of developing a leadership team, a mission statement, a vision statement, core values, and a strategy.¹¹⁹ The final step is reforming the new culture at the new level. It is imperative at this level that the change process moves beyond the first three steps and does not get stuck in this step.¹²⁰ The culture must continue to develop so that lasting adoption will take place.

The work of Andrew Hebert provided a biblical examination of how organizational culture can be created. Hebert sought to determine the means through which Jesus and the early church leaders intentionally shaped culture in the early church.¹²¹ Hebert determined that the efforts of Jesus and the early church shaped the behaviors, values, and beliefs of the early church.¹²² As a result of his study of the biblical books of Luke and Acts in particular, Hebert discovered that two of the primary ways that culture was shaped by Jesus and the early church leaders was through table fellowships and teaching.¹²³ Through this helpful study, Hebert provided a biblical model for intentional culture creation from which church leaders can learn today.

In *Leading Congregational Change*, Herrington et al. lay out the stages

¹¹⁷Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 179-80.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 188.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 190-92.

¹²⁰Ibid., 193.

¹²¹Hebert, “Shaping Church Culture,” 110.

¹²²Ibid., 111.

¹²³Ibid., 111-113. Hebert revealed that Jesus used table fellowships in the gospel of Luke and the apostles used teaching through sermons in the book of Acts.

necessary for introducing change to a church. The stages to bring change to a congregation are (1) making personal preparation, (2) creating urgency, (3) establishing the vision community, (4) discerning the vision and determining the vision path, (5) communicating the vision, (6) empowering change leaders, (7) implementing the vision, and (8) reinforcing momentum through alignment.¹²⁴

Herrington et al.'s recommended change process bears striking similarities to the culture shaping process presented by Malphurs. A common thread appears from their research and others. For instance, Warren speaks to the issue of focusing the efforts of a church. He states, "A focused life and a focused church will have far greater impact than unfocused ones. Like a laser beam, the more focused your church becomes the more impact it will have on society."¹²⁵ Warren says to become focused by answering four questions: (1) Why does the church exist? (2) What are we to be as a church? (3) What are we to do as a church? (4) How are we to do it?¹²⁶

In like manner, in *The Minister's MBA*, George S. Babbes and Michael Zigarelli assert, "Your congregation is perfectly designed to produce the results it's producing."¹²⁷ In order to shape the architecture of the church to achieve the desired results of the leader(s), Babbes and Zigarelli recommend focusing on strategy, structure, systems, skills, staff, and style of leadership.¹²⁸ The work of these experts gives birth to a collaboration of themes by which one discerns an intentional strategy that churches can use when planning to create or change culture in a church. Consider the similarities of

¹²⁴Herrington et al., *Leading Congregational Change*, 29, 34, 41, 49, 61, 70, 78, and 85.

¹²⁵Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 89.

¹²⁶Ibid., 98.

¹²⁷Michael Zigarelli and George Babbes, *The Minister's MBA: Essential Business Tools for Maximum Ministry Success* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 22.

¹²⁸Ibid., 24-28.

themes identified in table 6 (see table 6).

Table 6. Common processes of creating change in culture

<i>Common process</i>	<i>Malphurs</i>	<i>Herrington et al.</i>	<i>Warren</i>	<i>Babbes and Zigarelli</i>
Discerning the correct path	Preparation	Making personal preparation	Why does the church exist?	Strategy
		Creating urgency	What are we to be as a church?	Structure
		Discerning the vision and determining the vision path	What are we to do as a church?	Systems
Developing the right people	Personnel	Establishing the vision community	What are we to be as a church?	Skills
		Empowering change leaders		Staff
				Style of leadership
Figuring out how it will be done	Process	Communicating the vision	How are we to do it?	Structure
		Implementing the vision		
		Reinforcing momentum through alignment		Systems

This literature review has provided crucial insights in determining what organizational culture is and why is it important, how organizational culture relates to ministry, what the markers are that indicate a healthy organizational culture, and in providing churches with a possible avenue for creating culture. The pertinent resources and studies have created the foundation for this thesis.

A reality that has come to light after a thorough review of the literature is that a gap exists in the literature. Despite the overwhelming numbers of resources concerning leadership, culture, and even creating culture, there was still not a set of best practices for creating healthy organizational culture in the context of Christian ministry. This thesis identified the factors that led to the successful implementation of healthy organizational cultures in local churches.

Definitions

In order to bring clarity of usage and intent, key terms used in the research are defined. The following terms are used:

Healthy organizational culture. Healthy organizational culture is organizational culture that leads to effectiveness in that particular organization. Edgar Schein describes this type of culture as one that will “. . . encourage the evolution of common goals, common language, and common procedures for solving problems.”¹²⁹

Local church. A local church is an individual gathering of Christians. Sometimes referred to as, the body of Christ.¹³⁰ *Local church* also refers to “Christians living together in local congregations [that] make the gospel visible.”¹³¹

¹²⁹Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 272.

¹³⁰Mark Dever describes the body of Christ as “the dwelling place of his Spirit, and the chief instrument for bringing both the gospel to the nations and a great host of redeemed humanity to himself.” (Mark Dever, “The Doctrine of the Church,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007], 767.)

¹³¹Dever, “The Doctrine of the Church,” 767.

Ministry. Ministry is the work of Christians doing the work of the church. This includes Christians within the church taking time to minister to certain needs of others in the church.¹³² *Ministry* also includes meeting the needs of those who are outside of the church.

Ministry context. Ministry context is the subject matter concerning ministry organizations.¹³³ The ministry context could encompass topics including but not limited to: ministry organizations, ministry staff, literature related to ministry, ministry concepts and theories, ministry facilities, ministry training and development, and ministry conflict.

Ministry organizations. Ministry organizations are entities that practice Christian ministry.¹³⁴ These entities could include local churches, missionary agencies, campus ministries, associational and denominational offices, and para-church organizations. This study will discuss ministry organizations in general, but will focus intentionally on local churches.

Organizational culture. According to Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture* is, “A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”¹³⁵

Research Hypothesis

This thesis operated with three primary research questions. The first was “What factors determine if the organizational culture of a local church is healthy?” The

¹³²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 959.

¹³³See definition for *ministry organizations* for clarity on this term.

¹³⁴See Wayne Grudem’s definition of *ministry* above for clarity on the usage of this term.

¹³⁵Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 18.

research tested the hypothesis that many of these factors are similar to those factors of health in the culture of secular organizations. The second question from this study was “Of those local churches that possess a healthy organizational culture, what steps were taken to intentionally create that culture?” In regard to this question, it was hypothesized that the steps taken to create a specific type of culture are closely related to the steps demonstrated in the creation of other types of organizational culture. The final question was “Among those churches that intentionally created healthy organizational culture, are there common factors contributing to the creation of that culture that can be organized into a system of best practices?” Again, the hypothesis that there are common factors was tested, not only among the model churches, but also among churches and other types of organizations that created a healthy culture. Further, the hypothesis that the primary differences between the elements that led to the successful creation of organizational culture in churches and other organizations is related to the specific mission of the church was tested.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Local churches need to understand what has worked in creating healthy church culture.¹ The literature has revealed that there is insufficient research to meet this need. This research design proposed a method for understanding what practices are most helpful to churches that create healthy culture.

Research Design Overview

The methodological design for this research project was a qualitative design that utilized the case study method.² The goal of this research was to determine what works, for real churches, to create culture that thrives. In other words, how does a church get from Point A (a new culture or an unhealthy culture) to Point B (a healthy culture)? Case study research served as the best research method to accomplish this task.³ The design utilized multiple cases in order to determine possible similarities among several cases. The cases were select local churches that arose out of the research population.

¹In chap. 2 of this work the markers of healthy church culture are revealed. These markers arose out of the review of the literature. The markers are a culture that is led by a courageous leader, a culture that values the role of people, a culture that shares a common vision, and a culture that is committed to the biblical mission.

²In his book *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, John W. Creswell describes case study research as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes.” (John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* [Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013], 97.)

³Robert K. Yin says a case study research design is “a logical plan for getting from here to there” (Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, 5th ed. [Los Angeles: Sage, 2014], 28). This design was intended to find out how local churches arrived at the point of having a healthy culture.

The cases were determined using a two-phase approach.⁴ The population was first determined, and then the local church samples were chosen using purposive sampling. The factors that helped select the samples were the markers of health in church culture that were identified in chapter 2. The presence of the markers of health in the sample ministries was recognized. A body of experts also served in selecting the samples by verifying the presence of the markers and healthy cultures in the sample cases. The experts consisted of a scholar in the field of church culture, a local church practitioner, and the president of Sojourn Network.

The design identified if there were common elements among the sample ministries that led to intentional development of healthy organizational culture. In order to yield the most pertinent data, the data collecting procedures included multiple data sources.⁵ This multiple case study also utilized content analysis.⁶

The research exposed the elements that led to the intentional development of a healthy organizational culture within the sample churches. An effort was also made to discover which factors were common in multiple respondents. Additionally, the it was investigated how the factors that led to the creation of a healthy culture compared with factors for creating organizational culture, that were revealed in the literature.

⁴This two-phase approach is described by Yin as, first, collecting relevant data about an entire pool (or population) and then forming some relevant criteria for reducing the number of candidates. The goal is to reduce the pool to twelve or fewer cases and then move to phase two, which is screening the cases with a defined set of operational criteria whereby candidates will be deemed worthy cases and the pool of candidates is reduced (Yin, *Case Study Research*, 95).

⁵See detailed proposed instrumentation in the section entitled, “Instrumentation” below (51).

⁶Klaus H. Krippendorff describes content analysis as “an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in nature” (*Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* [Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012], loc. 356, Kindle). He continues, “Content analysts examine data, printed matter, images, or sounds—texts—in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does” (loc. 367).

Research Population

As described above, the sample churches were selected using a two-phase approach. The first phase involved determining the population and the second phase served in selecting the sample. First, the research population included local churches with healthy cultures that are part of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁷ Further, due to the large number of Southern Baptist churches with healthy cultures, the population focused specifically on local Southern Baptist churches, with healthy culture, that are members of Sojourn Network.⁸ Sojourn Network was particularly relevant to the study of healthy culture as part of their mission is to “play our part in helping . . . pastors plant, grow, and multiply healthy churches.”⁹

The first step in defining the research population was to consider those churches that are both Southern Baptist Churches and part of Sojourn Network. Next, the presence of the markers of healthy organizational culture in the local churches was identified. Finally, the body of experts acknowledged that the markers were present in those local churches selected.

Research Sample

The research sample was three select local churches that were chosen from the greater research population. A case history was written for each local church after they were selected for the study. In order to adhere to the nature of the multiple case study method, these ministries were selected using purposive sampling.¹⁰ In short, purposive

⁷For more information about the Southern Baptist Convention see <http://www.sbc.net>.

⁸For more information about Sojourn Network see <http://www.sojournnetwork.com>.

⁹Sojourn Network website states “2000 years later, God is still multiplying his Gospel in and through his church, and the Good Shepherd is still using pastors to lead and shepherd God’s people. In Sojourn Network, we desire to play our part in helping these pastors plant, grow, and multiply healthy churches” “Our Mission,” Sojourn Network, website, accessed July 9, 2015, <http://www.sojournnetwork.com/mission/>.

¹⁰See the section entitled “Research Design Overview” above (p. 46) for more information about the case study method.

sampling is choosing people, or units, for a particular purpose.¹¹ The sampling was purposive in that it sought to choose non-random ministries based on objective factors, which will already be identified through the literature and verified by the body of experts. This sampling method focused on the research and allowed for a concentration on the local churches that were most relevant to the research.¹²

Although the sampling was purposive, it was also objective by requiring the chosen ministries to meet the two minimal criteria already mentioned. The criteria were, first, that the sample cases displayed the identified factors of healthy organizational culture in the local church context; and, second, that the experts confirmed that those churches that were chosen displayed the factors of health in their organizational culture. The markers for healthy church culture that were used as selection criteria were (1) a culture that is led by a courageous leader, (2) a culture that values the role of people, (3) a culture that shares a common vision, and (4) a culture that is committed to the biblical mission.¹³

This sample selection methodology allows for the study of “information rich” samples that can serve as “key informants” in the research.¹⁴ Because the research was a qualitative multiple case study design, using purposive sampling, several delimitations were proposed in the general research design. Therefore, additional delimitations were not present in the proposed sample.

¹¹Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 2010), 212. Purposive sampling is sometimes referred to as *purposeful sampling*.

¹²Joyce P. Gall, M. D. Gall, and Walter R. Borg, *Applying Educational Research* (New York: Longman, 1999) describe the goal of purposeful sampling by stating, “The goal of purposeful sampling is to select individuals for case study who are likely to be ‘information-rich’ with respect to the researchers’ purposes. Thus, instead of trying to spend time with every individual in the field setting, case study researchers usually search for key informants” (294). This goal describes precisely why purposive sampling was used in this research design.

¹³See chap. 2 for details on these markers.

¹⁴Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 294.

Delimitations of the Research

The research had three delimitations. First, the research did not attempt a comprehensive study on organizational culture. Instead, the research focused primarily on discovering what factors led to the intentional creation of healthy organizational culture in select ministries through the use of qualitative multiple case studies. The research sought to define what healthy organizational culture is, how it is created, and if there are similarities between the creation of healthy organizational culture in multiple local churches.

Second, not all ministry organizations that fit the criteria that warrant inclusion in the population were sampled. Further, random samples were not selected from the population. Instead, purposive sampling was used in order to conduct a multiple case study. This sampling technique allowed for the collection of the most pertinent data for the research project.¹⁵

Third, the primary purpose of the research was not to define what healthy organizational culture looks like in the local church.¹⁶ Instead, this study discovered the markers of healthy organizational culture revealed from the literature review. These markers then served as parameters for the population and sample. A multiple case study was conducted with the sample cases in order to explore common factors that led to intentional creation of healthy organizational culture in the local church.

Limitations of Generalizations of Research Findings

Due to the stated population and sample, the data gathered from this study generalizes to those cases that were studied, and it may also be transferable to

¹⁵Further explanation is given in the section entitled, “Research Sample” above (p. 48) as to why purposive sampling will be used and the criterion for selection in the sample.

¹⁶This is not a primary purpose, although it is a secondary purpose that is accomplished in the literature review section of chap. 2.

1. Churches that are both Southern Baptist and part of Sojourn Network.
2. Churches that are part of a church planting network, whose aim is to create healthy churches.
3. Churches that share similar theology, polity, and/or size as that of the sample cases.

Instrumentation

This case study design was guided by content analysis. The content analysis was used to examine the available content (or “texts”), in order to yield data that would answer the research questions.¹⁷ The instrumentation was comprised of three main phases: data preparation, data collection, and data analysis (see figure 1).

Phase 1: Preparation

The data preparation stage began with the selection of the sample cases. Again, this took place through purposive sampling. Next, the content analysis examined the cases through review of documentation, audio material, video material, and digital media; purposeful observation; examination of the physical space of the church; and interviews with organizational leaders.¹⁸

The preparation phase utilized the following protocol:

1. Selecting the cases for the multiple case study using purposive sampling.
2. Creating a list of the organizational elements of each case that were intended for observation.
3. Gaining access to and permission to observe the necessary documentation, audio material, video material, and digital media.

¹⁷“Texts” in this form does not refer just to written documents. Krippendorff describes texts as “meaningful matter.” Texts can include works of art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, and even numerical records (Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, loc. 861).

¹⁸Leedy and Ormrod describe observation as “intentionally unstructured and free-flowing: the researcher shifts focus from one thing to another as new and potentially significant objects and events present themselves. The primary advantage of conducting observations in this manner is flexibility: The researcher can take advantage of unforeseen data sources as they surface” (Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 145).

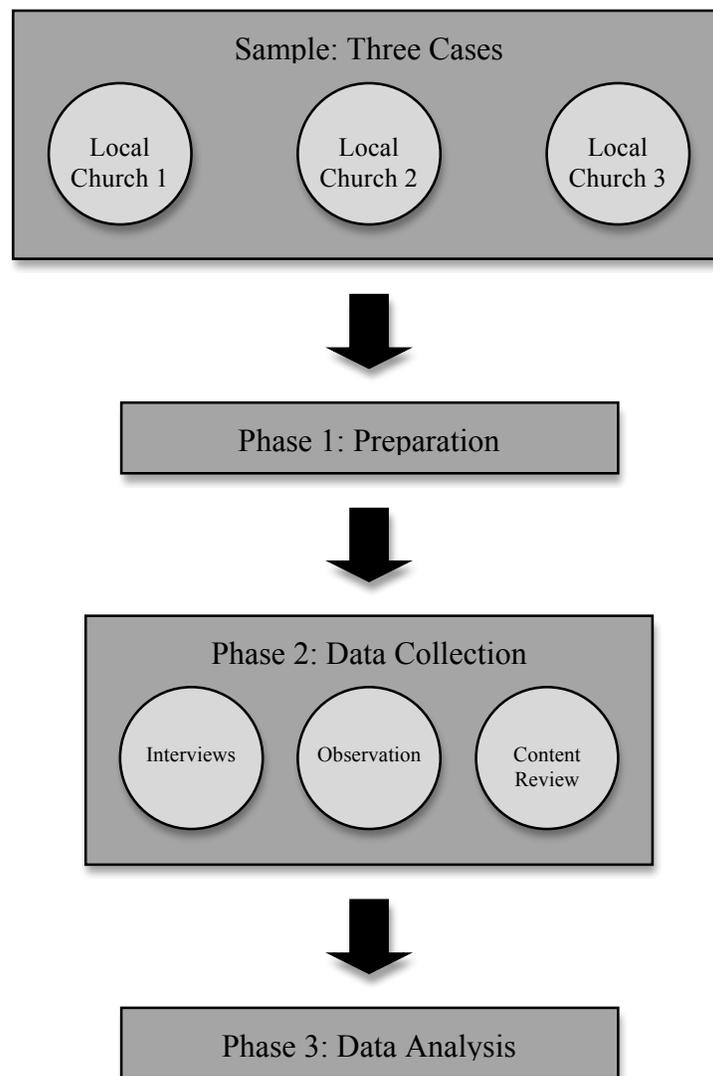


Figure 1: Instrumentation flow

4. Gaining permission to investigate the physical aspects of the church, including facilities, signage, physical location, and worship space.
5. Contacting the local church case and arranging the conduction of the interview portion of the case study.
6. Providing the respondent or respondents from the local church with the interview protocol, including the research questions, prior to the interview portion of the case study.¹⁹

¹⁹See appendix 1 for interview protocol. Initially this protocol stated that the interviews would remain anonymous. However, it was later determined that the names of the respondents would prove

Phase 2: Data Collection

The data collection included a review of the sources of content identified in the previous section, examining a wide variety of content from each sample case. A coding system was developed in order to record the data that addressed the research questions and problem.²⁰ The data collection process was continually evaluated in order to adapt as necessary to gather the most helpful data.²¹ Field notes were also kept during the collecting of data.²² The field notes were then used to create a contact summary sheet in order to reflect on what was gathered during that portion of data collecting.²³

Coding was an important step in deciphering all of the information that appears during the data collection phase. The coding was determined primarily by the data that emerged from the content.²⁴ Codes were developed based on noted patterns and themes, clustering similar data, and making contrasts and comparisons.²⁵ Additionally, the markers of healthy church culture that emerged in the literature review shaped the coding. As the data collection process evolved, codes were necessarily created as the content analysis revealed new pertinent data. The two primary coding criteria that were used were frequency and level of emphasis of the elements in the text that addressed the

beneficial to the research. After each respondent was contacted and permission to use their names was gained, the names of the respondents were included in the study.

²⁰Krippendorff describes coding units as “units that are distinguished for separate description, transcription, recording, or coding (loc. 2534). Offering further clarity he states, “Coding is the process of mapping a given set of descriptively unknown but distinct phenomena into descriptive categories, scaling, measuring, or assigning the mutually exclusive values of a variable pertaining to a research question to any kind of observations (Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, loc. 6288).

²¹Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman note, “Data collection is inescapably a selective process, that you cannot and do not ‘get it all’ even though you might think you can and are” (*Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. [Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994], 55-56).

²²Miles and Huberman state, “Field notes are handwritten or typed notes, notes dictated after a field contact, or tape recordings of interview or other events in the field setting” (ibid., 51).

²³Ibid.

²⁴Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, loc. 3135.

²⁵Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 246-54.

research questions.

The data collection in this research design was intentionally extensive.²⁶ The intent of using multiple sources of data collection was to create triangulation in the research results.²⁷ Triangulation allowed for the addition of clarity in the data analysis and validity to the findings. To gather enough data for effective triangulation, a process was followed including asking thorough questions, listening attentively, staying adaptive, having a firm grasp of church organizational culture, avoiding bias, and being prepared to conduct the study on the sample cases.²⁸

The data collection phase utilized the following protocol for the review, observation, and examination of the organizational elements:

1. Observing all organizational elements of the church with an interest in any potential data that may arise.
2. Searching the organizational elements for any and all data that could have contributed to the intentional creation of a healthy culture in the church.
3. Keeping a detailed set of field notes for each research contact with the local church case.
4. Synthesizing the field notes into a contact summary sheet.²⁹
5. Determining what further data collection was needed as a result of what has been revealed in the initial data collection. This further clarified and strengthened the coding process in the data analysis phase.

The following protocol was followed for the interviews with organizational leaders:

²⁶John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 100. Yin adds, “More than with other research methods . . . case study research requires an inquiring mind during the data collection, not just before or after the activity” (Yin, *Case Study Research*, 73).

²⁷Gall, Gall, and Borg describe triangulation as “testing the soundness of a case study finding by drawing on corroborative evidence” (Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 305).

²⁸Yin, *Case Study Research*, 73-77.

²⁹See appendix 2 for contact summary sheet.

1. Completing the interviews in person or by videoconference.
2. Seeking to conduct a minimum of three interviews; preferably with two church staff members and one lay leader.
3. Recording the interviews in order to have an accurate record of the responses.
4. Asking the questions that were provided to the respondent or respondents prior to the interview portion.
5. Including questions that seek to address the research problem and the research questions.
6. Posing the question in a semi-structured nature, allowing the respondent to determine the direction of the answer.
7. Transcribing the interviews into a word processing document.
8. Reviewing the recordings of the interview and creating a detailed set of field notes from the interview of the local church case, to be used to guide any additional data collection.
9. Synthesizing the field notes into a contact summary sheet.
10. Determining what further data collection is needed as a result of what has been revealed in the initial data collection. This further clarified and strengthened the coding process in the data analysis phase.

In addition to the protocol, the following data collection questions helped guide the overall data collection process:³⁰

1. What data emerged from the interviews with the organizational leaders?
2. What data emerged from the review and observation of the cultural elements?
3. Does anything significant stand out in the interviews or observation that may prompt further data collection?
4. Are there patterns that are developing in the data collection process that need to be further researched through additional interviews or observation?

Phase 3: Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the completion of the data collection. The method of

³⁰Yin states, “The main purpose of the protocol’s questions is to keep [the researcher] on track as data collection proceeds” (Yin, *Case Study Research*, 90).

analysis that was used was interpretational analysis.³¹ The collected data was interpreted to determine the answer to the research questions. The following protocol was utilized in analyzing the data:³²

1. Recording key insights from the observation of the organizational elements that corresponded with the intentional effort of the church to create healthy organizational culture and with the elements that emerged from the literature review.
2. Consolidating and categorizing the data gained from the observation of the organizational elements that could be entered into a database.
3. Entering the data from each sample into the database.
4. Utilizing an electronic research analysis application.³³
5. Identifying patterns and similarities between the collected data in the multiple cases.
6. Noting single-instance occurrences in the multiple cases.
7. Developing a coding system to communicate the findings in a comprehensible format.
8. Creating a synthesis of the findings and note any generalizations.

This protocol guided the process of analyzing the data, which proved vital in this case study design. While utilizing the triangulation achieved through multiple sources of data collection, the data analysis yielded a reliable “chain of evidence.”³⁴ This evidence was processed through the coding system to help determine if a set of best practices could be revealed for effectively creating a healthy culture in local churches.

³¹Gall, Gall, and Borg describe interpretational analysis as “a systematic set of procedures to code and classify qualitative data to ensure that the important constructs, themes, and patterns emerge.” (Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 298).

³²The procedures were determined using Leedy and Ormrod (*Practical Research*, 138) and Gall, Gall, and Borg (*Applying Educational Research*, 300).

³³The application used for analysis was Dedoose. For more information about Dedoose, see <http://www.dedoose.com>.

³⁴Yin, *Case Study Research*, 127.

Procedures

The previously mentioned research design, its protocols, and procedures were subject to reevaluation and improvement, pending the approval of the research process. The instrumentation was not implemented until approval was gained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.³⁵ The interviews and observations took place after the churches were contacted and a review of the questions, preliminary documents, and applicable protocols took place with the respondent or respondents.

Reliability

Reliability was necessary to ground this research empirically.³⁶ Typically, the reliability of empirical research is determined by performing reliability tests, such as having multiple researchers complete the same research, using the same design. The level of consistency in the duplicated research projects then determines the reliability of the original research design.³⁷ The nature of this design, using one researcher for a multiple case study, created a scenario where reliability tests could not be instituted using multiple researchers. Instead, the reliability of this design was built upon the strict adherence to its methods, protocols, and procedures. The reliability of the design and its results was also supported by the triangulation of the data sources in the content analysis portion of the design.

³⁵The following forms were completed for this research: Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide, the Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research, the Approvals for Using Human Subjects in Research, the Office of Doctoral Studies Academic Integrity Policy, and Permission to Use Human Subjects in Research. All forms available at <http://www.sbts.edu/phd/current-students/dissertation-graduation/doctor-of-education-thesis-process/>.

³⁶Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, loc. 6114.

³⁷*Ibid.*, loc. 6129.

Validity

Validity concerns whether or not the results of the research are true.³⁸ Validity is demonstrated by comparing the claims of a research project against independent evidence.³⁹ This research design proved valid in four primary ways: (1) conducting member checking with the interviewees from each case,⁴⁰ (2) seeking to reveal answers to the research questions that were common (at least to some degree) in all of the cases that were researched, (3) demonstrating the validity of the research results by the agreement of the expert panel, and (4) comparing the results of the research with the data that is available in the literature review section of chapter 2.

Conclusion

Upon the approval of the research design, sampling technique, and instrumentation, the sample cases were selected. After the research was completed on the sample cases, the data was thoroughly analyzed. Chapter 4 of this work is devoted to the analysis of the research findings. In chapter 5, conclusions will be drawn from the completed research.

³⁸Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, loc. 6133.

³⁹Ibid., loc. 6134.

⁴⁰Gall, Gall, and Borg state, “Researchers can check their reconstruction of individuals’ emic perspective by member checking, which is the process of having individuals review statements in the researchers’ report for accuracy and completeness” (Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 306). This process also included the ranking of the identified practices by each lead pastor of the sample churches. The practices were ranked in order of importance in order to validate and clarify the accuracy of the identified practices.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This chapter is an analysis of the data that was gathered through the research pertaining to the creation of healthy church culture. The data gathered through the case studies were analyzed to see if any were relevant to answering the research questions and addressing the research problem. Through the observation, interviewing, and content analysis of three local churches the research revealed a set of best practices that are common among the sample churches. The following pages will review the protocols for data collection and analysis, present a summary of the research findings, and evaluate the overall research design.

Compilation Protocols

This research instrumentation involved a three phase process. The first phase was data preparation. Select cases were determined using purposive sampling.¹ After the cases were determined, each case went through a content analysis process. This included a review of documentation, audio material, video material, and digital media as well as purposeful observation, examination of physical space, and interviews with church leaders.

The preparation phase utilized the following protocol:

¹Joyce P. Gall, M. D. Gall, and Walter R. Borg, *Applying Educational Research* (New York: Longman, 1999) describe the goal of purposeful sampling by stating, “The goal of purposeful sampling is to select individuals for case study who are likely to be ‘information-rich’ with respect to the researchers’ purposes. Thus, instead of trying to spend time with every individual in the field setting, case study researchers usually search for key informants” (294).

1. Selecting the cases for the multiple case study using purposive sampling.
2. Creating a list of the organizational elements of each case that were intended for observation.
3. Gaining access to and permission to observe the necessary documentation, audio material, video material, and digital media.
4. Gaining permission to investigate the physical aspects of the church, including facilities, signage, physical location, and worship space.
5. Contacting the local church case and arranging the conduction of the interview portion of the case study.
6. Providing the respondent or respondents from the local church with the interview protocol, including the research questions, prior to the interview portion of the case study.²

The second phase was data collection. Three cases were researched with three interview respondents from each case, totaling nine respondents. The content from each case was collected and coded in order to record the data that addressed the research questions and problem. Field notes and contact summary sheets were also utilized to help keep the research process on target.³ The observation portion of the data collection was guided by the following protocol:

1. Observing all organizational elements of the church with an interest in any potential data that may arise.
2. Searching the organizational elements for any and all data that could have contributed to the intentional creation of a healthy culture in the church.
3. Keeping a detailed set of field notes for each research contact with the local church case.
4. Synthesizing the field notes into a contact summary sheet.⁴
5. Determining what further data collection was needed as a result of what has been revealed in the initial data collection. This further clarified and strengthened the coding process in the data analysis phase.

²See appendix 1 for interview protocol.

³See appendix 4 for a collection of pictures from the sample cases.

⁴See appendix 2 for contact summary sheet.

The protocol that guided the interview portion of the data collection is as follows:

1. Completing the interviews in person or by videoconference.
2. Seeking to conduct a minimum of three interviews, preferably with two church staff members and one lay leader.
3. Recording the interviews in order to have an accurate record of the responses.
4. Asking the questions that were provided to the respondent or respondents prior to the interview portion.
5. Including questions that seek to address the research problem and the research questions.
6. Posing the question in a semi-structured nature, allowing the respondent to determine the direction of the answer.
7. Transcribing the interviews into a word processing document.
8. Reviewing the recordings of the interview and creating a detailed set of field notes from the interview of the local church case, to be used to guide any additional data collection.
9. Synthesizing the field notes into a contact summary sheet.
10. Determining what further data collection is needed as a result of what has been revealed in the initial data collection. This further clarified and strengthened the coding process in the data analysis phase.

The final stage of the research was the data analysis phase. The analysis was completed using interpretational analysis. The protocol used during the analysis stage were,

1. Recording key insights from the observation of the organizational elements that corresponded with the intentional effort of the church to create healthy organizational culture and with the elements that emerged from the literature review.
2. Consolidating and categorizing the data gained from the observation of the organizational elements that could be entered into a database.
3. Entering the data from each sample into the database.
4. Utilizing an electronic research analysis application.⁵

⁵The application used for analysis was Dedoose. For more information about Dedoose, see <http://www.dedoose.com>.

5. Identifying patterns and similarities between the collected data in the multiple cases.
6. Noting single-instance occurrences in the multiple cases.
7. Developing a coding system to communicate the findings in a comprehensible format.
8. Creating a synthesis of the findings and noting any generalizations.

The purpose of this three-stage process was to determine if there are best practices for creating healthy culture among the three sample churches. The results of this research were proven reliable by both the strict adherence to the protocol and the triangulation of the data sources. Further, the validity of this research was demonstrated by conducting member checking with the respondents, showing common answers to the questions asked in the interview portion of the research, demonstrating agreement by the expert panel, and comparing the results of the research with the available content in the literature review.

Research Sample

The population for the research was all those churches that were affiliated with both Sojourn Network⁶ and the Southern Baptist Convention.⁷ Three case churches were selected using purposive sampling. Those three churches were Pleasant Valley Community Church, Renaissance Church, and Veritas Community Church. Three leaders from each church were interviewed. The breakdown of the total respondents included three lead pastors, three pastoral staff members, and three lay leaders (see table 7).

⁶For more information about Sojourn Network, see <http://www.sojournnetwork.com>.

⁷For more information about the Southern Baptist Convention, see <http://www.sbc.net>.

Table 7. Demographics of respondents

Site	ID	Position	Years of Service
PVCC	JE	Pastor of Vision and Preaching	8.5
PVCC	BS	Pastor of Worship and Media	8
PVCC	GW	Lay Leader	7
VCC	NN	Lead Pastor	7.5
VCC	DN	Communications and Creative Director	6
VCC	GG	Lead Pastor's Ministry Assistant	3
RC	RM	Lead Pastor	2.5
RC	JJ	Lay Leader/Elder in Training	2.5
RC	DE	Lay Leader/Worship Team Leader	1

Pleasant Valley Community Church

Pleasant Valley Community Church is located in Owensboro, Kentucky, a city with a metropolitan population of over 100,000.⁸ Pleasant Valley is a church that was started from a remnant of a former established church. The church was replanted as Pleasant Valley Community Church in 2006. The founding pastor is Jamus Edwards. Edwards now serves as the Pastor of Preaching and Vision at the church. In addition to Edwards, four other pastors serve the church. The church has a total staff of nine people. The church has been a part of the Sojourn Network since 2012.⁹

⁸For more information about Owensboro visit the City of Owensboro website, accessed September 5, 2015, <https://www.owensboro.org/page/about-owensboro>.

⁹See the section entitled "Pastors and Staff," Pleasant Valley Community Church, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://pleasantvalley.cc/about/pastorselders-staff/>.

Pleasant Valley has an average Sunday worship attendance between 700-750 people. Their worship style is contemporary and liturgical. The congregation has diversity in race, financial background, education, and vocation. Pleasant Valley has been experiencing steady rapid growth over the last few years, growing by approximately 100 people each year since its existence. The meeting space of Pleasant Valley is a former warehouse that has been converted for their use. In addition to their two Sunday morning worship gatherings, they have mission community groups in homes throughout the week.

The mission of Pleasant Valley Community Church reads, “Pleasant Valley Community Church exists to glorify God through growing in Christ and with one another and by going into the community and world meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ Further, the church identifies themselves as, worshippers, learners, servants, family, and missionaries (see figure 2).¹¹ Pleasant Valley Community Church is aligned with the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and Sojourn Network.

Veritas Community Church

Located in Columbus, Ohio, Veritas Community Church was planted in 2008. The founding pastor is Nick Nye, who currently serves as the lead pastor of Veritas. The church is comprised of four congregations, each led by a lead pastor. The congregations include Short North, Tri-village, East, and West. These four congregations average 965 in attendance. Veritas meets at several different physical locations around the Columbus area. Veritas Community Church has a body of eleven pastors that shepherd the four

¹⁰See the section entitled “Our Mission,” the Pleasant Valley Community Church, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://pleasantvalley.cc/about/our-mission-2/>.

¹¹Ibid.

congregations, seven who serve on staff.¹²

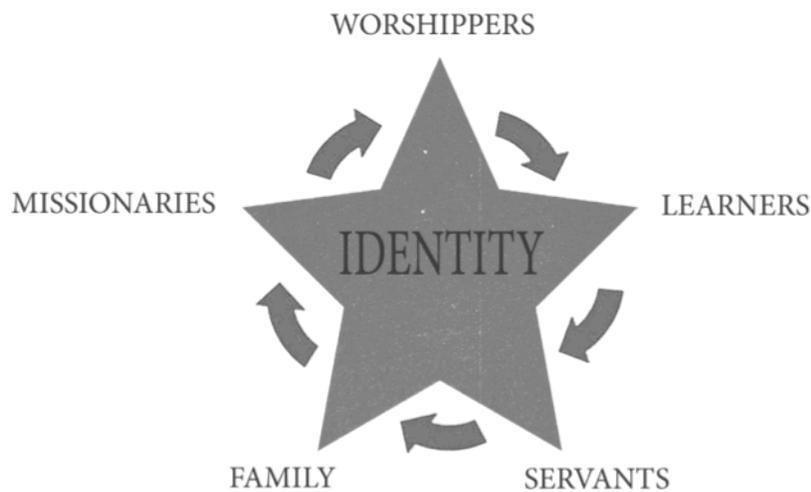


Figure 2. Identities of Pleasant Valley Community Church

The worship of Veritas varies in style. They have what they call a “neo-liturgical” style, which they also refer to as “story formed worship.” The musical style is a mix of hymns, gospel music, rhythm and blues, and indie rock. Veritas experienced sudden growth in their early days and has seen slow and gradual growth in the last two years. Besides the Sunday worship service, the church also has community groups that meet throughout the week in different homes across the city. Additionally, there are prayer meetings and classes at the Veritas School of Theology.

The mission of Veritas Community Church says, “We are transformed by the gospel to transform the city with the gospel.”¹³ Veritas has clarified their identity through what they refer to as “how we live”. How they live is comprised of five areas:

¹²See the section entitled “Leadership,” Veritas Community Church, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://veritascolumbus.com/leadership/>.

¹³See Veritas Community Church website, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://veritascolumbus.com>.

worship, community, serve, learn, and missions.¹⁴

Renaissance Church

Renaissance Church was planted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2013. The founding pastor is Rob Maine. Maine currently leads the church by providing the “theological and practical vision to carry out the church’s mission.”¹⁵ At this time, Renaissance Church does not have any paid pastoral staff beyond Maine. However, the church currently has three elders in training.

Renaissance averages between sixty to eighty adults along with thirty or more children. The church’s style of worship is liturgical. The music is a mixture of contemporary Christian music, classic hymns, and modern hymns. Since their inception in 2013, Renaissance has experienced slow and gradual growth. They currently meet at a rented facility in Pittsburgh called the Neighborhood Academy. In addition to their Sunday morning worship service Renaissance has missional community group meetings, elder-in-training meetings, and various training and vision meetings.

The mission of Renaissance Church is “for the fame of God to fill the whole earth through the formation of people into the likeness of Jesus as they live out Jesus’ Great Commission.”¹⁶ The identities of Renaissance Church are worshippers, witnesses, servants, disciples, and family.¹⁷

¹⁴<http://veritascolumbus.com>.

¹⁵See the section entitled “Our Leaders,” Renaissance Church, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://renaissancepgh.com/our-leaders/>.

¹⁶See the section entitled “Our Mission,” Renaissance Church, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://renaissancepgh.com/our-mission/>.

¹⁷See the section entitled “Our Identities,” Renaissance Church, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://renaissancepgh.com/our-identities/>.

Sojourn Network

All three sample churches are members of the Sojourn Network. The mission of Sojourn Network is “Helping pastors plant, grow and multiply healthy churches.”¹⁸ The network, based in Louisville, Kentucky, has twenty-nine member churches that are spread throughout the United States.¹⁹

Sojourn Network offers eight components for church plants, which are vision, assessment/recruiting, funding, coaching, training, renewal, multiplication, and resourcing.²⁰ The population for this research was limited to churches that were part of Sojourn Network. The network is purposed to multiply healthy churches, making it a natural fit for determining how churches intentionally created healthy organizational culture. Figure 3 lays out a complete strategic plan for Sojourn Network (see figure 3). Sojourn Network has a specific process that churches must go through to become part of the network. This is done either as a church plant (see figure 4 in appendix 3) or as an established church (see figure 5 in appendix 3).

Review of Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify what, if any, factors led to the intentional creation of healthy organizational culture within select ministry organizations. The research was intended to identify the common factors for creating a healthy church culture through a study of multiple cases.

There were three research questions that guided this study. The first question

¹⁸See the Sojourn Network website, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.sojournnetwork.com>.

¹⁹See the section entitled “Churches,” Sojourn Network, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.sojournnetwork.com/churches/>.

²⁰See the section entitled “What We Offer,” Sojourn Network, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.sojournnetwork.com/what-we-offer/>.

<p>Mission</p> <p>Sojourn Network exists to help pastors plant, grow, and multiply gospel-centered churches.</p> <p>When we deliver on our mission, we hope to see:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Healthy, thriving pastors as evidenced by an above average score (85-100) on “Annual Network Scorecard.” 2. Healthy churches as evidenced by an above average score (85-100) on “Annual Church Health Report Card.” 3. A dynamic and effective network as evidenced by an above average score (85-100) on “Annual Network Scorecard.” 	<p>Vision</p> <p>By 2020 Sojourn Network will be a healthy, multiplying network of 75-100 gospel-centered churches led by healthy pastors.</p>
<p>Values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shared beliefs and vision for local church ministry. 2. Soul care emphasized before growth and multiplication. 3. Generous, relational partnership among churches. 4. Deliberate, compatible growth and multiplication. 	<p>Strategy</p> <p>SN will see 75-100 vibrant and healthy churches.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. by providing avenues of care and support to its pastors. 2. by sharing ministry expertise and best practices, and 3. by providing various forms of financial assistance to its churches. <p>SN will grow to 75-100 gospel-centered churches by 2020</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. by growing and multiplying from within current network churches. 2. by partnering with other like-minded churches and organizations.

Figure 3. Sojourn Network strategic plan

was “What factors determine if the organizational culture of a local church is healthy?”

The second question that directed this study was “Of those local churches that possess a healthy organizational culture, what steps were taken to intentionally create that culture?”

The final question was, “Among those churches that intentionally created healthy organizational culture, are there common factors that contributed to the creation of that culture that can be organized into a system of best practices?” These questions were instrumental in discovering the practices that were used to create healthy culture in the local churches sampled.

Summary of Research Findings

As a result of the study several practices emerged in each sample church that led to the creation of healthy church culture. Further, there were common factors among the three samples cases that may serve as a set of best practices for churches who are trying to create a healthy church culture. The following summary of findings will present a general overview of the collected data from each sample church. It will also identify practices for creating a healthy church culture that emerged from each case.²¹ The final part of this section will present a set of best practices from the research findings.

No two churches are identical. As such, each of the sample cases had unique cultures, leaders, and congregations. Different geographical locations, ecclesiastical structures, and church life spans have given each church their own distinct DNA. During the data collection process the personalities and individual aspects of all three churches came to light. Following are overviews of the general findings of each sample case.

Pleasant Valley Community Church

Pleasant Valley Community Church is a church that is committed to the Bible and the gospel. Repeatedly, the responses of the interviewees centered on the Bible. Simply stated, the Bible shapes everything that they do, including the culture of the

²¹Unless otherwise noted, the quotations contained in this chapter derived from the cases that were researched. This research included interviews, content analysis, and purposeful observation.

church.

Pleasant Valley embraces the idea that they are a church of imperfect people. The terms “transparency” and “humility” came up multiple times. Much of the data that was collected from Pleasant Valley was immersed with the idea of community. Their idea of community focuses on who they are as a church family.

Identified practices. The following are the identified practices from the study of Pleasant Valley Community Church. These practices are listed according to their frequency in the collected data. The data coding system was used to identify those practices that had at least ten occurrences in the data. The following practices contributed to the healthy culture of Pleasant Valley Community Church (see table 8).

Table 8. Identified practices from PVCC

	PVCC
Community	25
Gospel	25
Humility	19
Bible	18
Transparency	15
Empower	14
Model/Example	12
Training/Education	9
Membership	7
Theology	3
Leaders	1
Prayer	1
Shared Leadership	1

Community. The concept of PVCC as a community was one of the top two most frequent factors for the creation of a healthy culture that emerged from the research.

Community came up again and again. Brandon Swanner, Pastor of Media and Worship, stated, “we began to value community in order to change the culture.” Swanner said that difficulties arose when moving to the idea of community because the church had such a strong pattern of Bible teaching in large groups beyond the Sunday worship service. However, that sense of community would also serve later as a helpful factor in overcoming challenges. He went on to say, “The way we overcame [challenges] was community.”

Building a community of Christians is foundational for Pleasant Valley Community Church. Their bylaws state, “We desire to be a worshipping community of faith.” They promote their missional communities on their website.²² They are described as “. . . smaller gatherings of people where shepherding, fellowship, and mission collide.” Jamus Edwards, Pastor of Vision and Teaching, stated in their welcome video, “You can expect to become part of a family; a family where everybody is welcome.” Community was a fundamental piece in Pleasant Valley developing the healthy culture that they have today.

Gospel. A second factor that helped develop a healthy culture at Pleasant Valley Community Church is the gospel. Lay leader Gordon Wilkerson described this emphasis on the gospel as “gospel-fluency.” He said, “I’m continually reminded of the gospel at our church.” Wilkerson continued, “We don’t need the gospel just to save us, we need the gospel to sustain us . . . for grace for today, for tomorrow.” The gospel affects everything at Pleasant Valley.

Even the music is shaped by this commitment to the gospel. The website for Pleasant Valley states, “Above all, we seek to glorify God through our singing and let the

²²“Missional communities” are the small group structure where Pleasant Valley Community Church intentionally develops community in their people.

truth of the Gospel shape our worship.” Edwards described this intentional effort of instilling the gospel in their people by saying, “. . . we are just trying to point people to the gospel and the finished work of Christ.”

Humility. Swanner spoke of the culture of Pleasant Valley using the following description, “I think that our culture has a humble posture. It sounds weird to say that because . . . even saying that sounds prideful. You don’t want to say how humble we are.” Humility is tantamount to the kind of culture that Pleasant Valley is trying to develop. This was seen most vividly in the responses of Jamus Edwards. Edwards was even uncomfortable referring to himself as a courageous leader because he did not want to be boastful of himself.

Edwards described a healthy culture as “One in which personal preferences are deferred for the sake of the greater church and its mission.” Edwards described their culture also as “One that is characterized by selflessness and generosity.” Edwards spoke of the difficulty of this in church leadership. He said, “It’s hard to have a healthy culture of leadership in particular . . . it requires a lot of humility, it requires a lot of deferring, all of that hurts, but it is sanctifying.”

Bible. The Bible was also an instrumental factor in creating the culture of Pleasant Valley. In the welcome video, Edwards communicates to guests, “You can expect to hear the faithful preaching of God’s Word. At Pleasant Valley our authority is the Bible. We love the Bible. We’re going to preach from, we’re going to teach from the Bible.” Their bylaws reveal their stance on the Bible, stating “The Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are . . . the final authority for all matters about which it speaks.”

It would be difficult to overstate how much weight the Bible factored into the development of a healthy culture at Pleasant Valley. Swanner exclaimed, “we had the Bible on our side . . . we just preached the Bible . . . And our people were coming because they loved the way we preached the Bible and we . . . did what it said.” The Pleasant Valley website simply stated, “At the end of the day it always comes back to the

Bible.”

Transparency. Transparency is a factor that was uniquely emphasized at Pleasant Valley Community Church. Transparency matters to the leaders of Pleasant Valley. Swanner said, “There genuinely is a kind of DNA built in [our] church to be transparent.” Edwards asserted that not only is transparency important to them but they are continuing to foster its growth. He said, “We are working on creating a culture of transparency, vulnerability, and a safe place to be broken.”

According to Pleasant Valley, transparency is at the heart of what it means to have a healthy church culture. Edwards described a healthy church culture as “One that is characterized by transparency and vulnerability and by that I mean one in which no one feels the pressure to wear a mask or have it all together.” As a church, they believe that transparency is crucial to developing a healthy culture.

Empower. “I think we empower people as often as we can.” Those words from Jamus Edward described how much he believed in empowerment. Edwards continued, “We just try to empower people. Everyday ordinary people.” Empowerment was a vital part of Pleasant Valley evolving into the church they are. This step toward empowerment was intentional. Edwards described this intentionality. He said, “There are times when we look to defer even if we don’t have to, just because we want to show honor to the other and we want every elder, every leader, including our deacons and other key lay people, we want them to feel valued, we want them to feel empowered.”

Model/Example. The final element that factored heavily into Pleasant Valley developing the culture that they have is modeling. Edwards said, “Most of the things we see in our culture, we just try to lead by example.” Swanner added, “We’re really trying to communicate our vision for the mission in the city right now . . . the way we’re doing that is modeling it.” Setting an example and modeling what the culture is supposed to look like is a big deal to the leaders at Pleasant Valley.

Veritas Community Church

Veritas Community Church is preeminently committed to two themes: the gospel and community. Similar to Pleasant Valley, community refers to their local body of Christians. The gospel determines their culture more than anything else. Community and gospel were frequently mentioned and powerful in the creation of the culture of Veritas. In addition to these two factors, following are the practices that came to light from the study of Veritas Community Church.

Identified practices. The following are the identified practices from Veritas Community Church. These practices are listed according to their frequency of appearance in the collected data. The data coding system was used to identify those practices or factors that had at least ten occurrences in the data. The following practices contributed to the healthy culture of Veritas Community Church (see table 9).

Table 9. Identified practices from VCC

	VCC
Community	37
Gospel	29
Humility	16
Training/Education	13
Bible	12
Model/Example	10
Theology	7
Empower	6
Membership	5
Leaders	5
Shared Leadership	3
Celebrate	2
Curious	1

Community. The theme of community was overwhelmingly the most frequent factor that emerged from Veritas Community Church when it comes to creating a healthy church culture. The interviews and observation revealed at least thirty-seven different references to community. Veritas makes it clear from the very beginning that they desire community. Their website states, “Though we value our gatherings, community comes when we see that as Christians we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we are part of a new family that we hope to grow and build In light of this we live every day as people in community – like a family.”

The avenue that Veritas uses to create this sense of community is their community groups. They describe a community group as “a community of Christ followers on mission with God that demonstrates tangibly and declares creatively the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a specific pocket of people.” Staff member Derek Nicol commented “we don’t do church on our own . . . there’s no such thing.” The membership application and covenant of Veritas reads “My journey in Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship gatherings and involvement in a Community Group.” Community is essential to who Veritas is and to the culture that they possess.

Gospel. The website of Veritas Community Church aptly summarizes their view of the gospel. The website declares, “Our Gospel identity is our full identity.” The gospel truly is a core component of the people and culture of Veritas. Garrison Green, assistant to the lead pastor, stated, “We have a people at Veritas that are very fluent in the gospel and know how the gospel applies to everyday life.” Lead Pastor Nick Nye added “. . . one of the things that I really love about the culture of Veritas is that there is a gospel fluency.” Establishing an identity in the gospel was fundamental to developing the culture that Veritas has today.

Humility. Another factor that helped shape the culture of Veritas Community Church is humility. The leadership of the church is very intentional about trying to

develop a sense of humility. When asked which elements he was trying to instill in the culture at that time, Nye responded, “The biggest one I’m constantly trying to develop is a sense of humility.” When asked what were the biggest factors in creating the culture that the church had, Nicol responded “. . . maybe this is too broad, but I would say humility.”

The staff also spoke of *doctrinal humility*. The website describes this spirit of humility. The website states, “We are called to clothe ourselves in humility and as we hold our doctrinal convictions firmly, we do so out of humility.” The membership covenant calls members more explicitly to humility by stating, “I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others, not gossiping, and seeking spiritual friendships.”

Training/Education. The theme of training and educating the people of the church was an additional practice that emerged from the data. Speaking about changing a particular aspect of their culture, Nye stated, “About two years ago we just really started emphasizing that [and] preaching on it.” Greene echoed this commitment to teaching. He said “I think a lot of help in overcoming challenges . . . comes from the pulpit in communicating the vision of the church . . . I think that’s the key.” The church believed so heavily in the idea of teaching their people that they have instituted a training called “Veritas Foundations.” This class seeks to teach the basic identity and culture of the church. Their website states, “Veritas Foundations is a class that talks about everything that makes us what we are as a church and who we are as believers, laying out the vision and values of Veritas.”

Bible. At Veritas, the Bible is clearly the catalyst in forming and continually clarifying the culture. Nye said, “We want to constantly put the biblical mission in front of everybody all of the time.” Nicol added that they are “constant[ly] putting forth the Bible as an authoritative document.” The membership covenant of the church supports this commitment as well. It reads “I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with

the Lord through regular, personal Bible reading.” The covenant continues, “I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter of all issues.” Throughout the fiber of the identity of the church and its culture, you see a commitment to the Bible.

Model/Example. The last practice that emerged from the study of Veritas Community Church was the leaders being exemplars for the church. In response to a question that inquired about developing a culture that is committed to the biblical mission, Nye spoke of the example he tried to set for others. He stated, “Leadership sometimes requires you doing things that are painful . . . you’ve just got to go and say ‘I don’t care if you’re coming or not,’ and that’s when people say, ‘Alright this guy is willing to go all in.’ That’s inspiring to people.” Nicol shared of how he helped in overcoming a challenge to create a healthy culture. Nicol said, “We would try to example to the disgruntled crowd [the needed change].” The example of the leaders proved to be a helpful factor in creating the culture of Veritas.

Renaissance Church

Renaissance Church, although fairly young, has a clear sense of culture; and like the previously mentioned cases, it revolves largely around community. Additionally, the Bible is a primary aspect of the culture of Renaissance. Many practices came to the forefront from the case study, with community and the Bible being the most prominent themes.

Identified practices. The following are the identified practices from the study of Renaissance Church. These practices are listed according to their frequency of appearance in the collected data. The data coding system was used to identify those practices or factors that had at least ten occurrences in the data. The following practices contributed to the healthy culture of Renaissance Church (see table 10).

Community. The dominant factor that emerged from the study of Renaissance

Church in their creation of a healthy culture was their commitment to establishing community. Jesse Josephic, a church member and elder in training, described the beginning days of the church, saying, “We met once a week for our community group . . . it was genius. We feel like a core group. We feel like family. We’re all on board with the same vision for the church and man it really shows!” Daniel Emmons, another church member and leader agreed. Emmons said, “I think Rob [Maine] is very intentional, our elders in training are very intentional, to make community a top priority for Renaissance.”

Table 10. Identified practices from RC

	RC
Community	45
Training/Education	33
Bible	26
Gospel	26
Empower	24
Membership	17
Leaders	10
Shared Leadership	10
Model/Example	9
Humility	6
Theology	6
Transparency	4
Celebrate	2

The observation of material from Renaissance also made it clear that community is important to the church. The website states, “In Acts and elsewhere in Scripture it is clear that baptism welcomes new believers into a worshipping community with deep familial relationships and commitment.” An informative video entitled “What

is Missional Community?” stated, “Being in community is important because we’re called to that because Scripture commands us to be together.” The bylaws of Renaissance further elaborate on this important factor when they say that the church is intended to “create a community of believers that intentionally pursue Christ through the Gospel and create disciples.”

Training/Education. A second major factor in creating a healthy culture at Renaissance is their commitment to training and education. In describing the birthing of Renaissance as a new body of Christians, Maine said, “I had to do a lot of training and developing.” He described this further by saying “. . . as we started to grow I started seeing a need to specifically train the believers.” Maine said, “Leadership development is huge in a healthy church.”

Josephic recounted the early days of Renaissance by sharing how Maine’s teaching trickled down to the church. Josephic said, “Rob would teach us these identities and teach us what a healthy church culture is and sort of instill it in us and I think it’s just engrained in these core members who teach it to other people.” Emmons added, “Rob has cast a very clear vision for Renaissance and that vision has been communicated and continues to be communicated thoroughly.”

Bible. The emphasis on the Bible is an additional practice that arose out of the research at Renaissance. The church’s website states, “The Bible is to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises.” The leaders of Renaissance echoed this reliance upon the Bible. Maine shared his process for seeking a vision for the church with the people. He recalled, “I asked them key questions then I said ‘Go to the Bible and show me what God’s vision is for the church.’” He continued, “We let the Bible speak when it came to answering the question, ‘What is our mission?’” Josephic added, “In our core group meetings we would be centered on the Bible . . . there’s probably not a time that we meet that’s not saturated in the Bible.”

Gospel. Another practice that the data revealed is Renaissance’s attention to the gospel.²³ The church’s membership booklet states, “At the heart of everything that we do is God’s whole gospel.” Emmons said, “. . . everyone has a very clear idea of what our main goal is, what the end goal is, and that’s to preach the gospel and to get the gospel out here in Pittsburgh.” The website further states, “As a church plant in the city of Pittsburgh, our vision and mission is to see the Gospel renew everything—our lives, our church, our community, and the nations.”

Empower. The culture of Renaissance is foundationally built by empowering the individuals in the church. Emmons described this idea of empowerment. In speaking of the culture he said, “building [the] community up and empowering our people to be servants of the city of Pittsburgh is a very huge piece of that culture . . . the members of Renaissance know that they are much needed to further the work that Jesus started here.” Maine agreed, stating, “We rely a lot on the members to do a lot of the work.” Josephic added, “You know, if Rob died today, I think we would survive as a church.” This confidence in the people of Renaissance is driven by their commitment to empowering their church.

Membership. The case study at Renaissance also revealed a devotion to church membership. Maine was particularly focused on membership. He stated, “Every member has an active role in one another and each other.” He continued, “We put a heavy weight on the responsibility of being a member here; that you are an actual participatory member and you are not just coming to observe what’s going on; you are all in.” The church also takes seriously their membership classes. Speaking about membership classes for foundational members of the church, Maine said, “The purpose

²³The term “gospel” refers to the instrumental element of the Christian church based on the changing work of Jesus Christ in persons’ lives. The gospel was foundational to the sample churches and their identity. This practice is clarified further in chap. 5.

of the membership classes is to equip [members] to talk to people about what membership looks like.”

Leaders. It is evident that Renaissance Church relies on their leaders to create a healthy culture, particularly their pastor. Emmons said, “I think the biggest factor was Rob Maine, the pastor. He’s been a faithful leader . . . a strong Bible following leader is important in creating that culture.” Emmons added, “Rob is able to see leadership qualities in others and build those leaders up.” Josephic agreed, stating, “From day one we’ve sensed [Rob] as a courageous leader.” Maine has set the precedent of strong leadership that has touched the rest of the church as well. Josephic exclaimed, “We have a lot of good leaders . . . we have a lot!”

Shared Leadership. A similar factor to the previous was the notion of shared leadership at Renaissance. Maine was focused on this idea of sharing leadership in the church. He said, “I feel like I can totally lean on so many leaders that aren’t on staff . . . I love equipping and developing leaders.” Maine continued, “I’m not waiting for enough money to go hire a staff elder. I am looking at the men that we have.” Emmons stated of the men that were elders in training, “They’re very much a united front when trying to create that culture and really sustaining that culture.”

Best Practices

The identified practices from the studied cases revealed both distinct and shared data from each local church. Upon further analysis, a set of best practices for creating healthy culture in a local church was discernable (see table 11). An occurrence score of thirty or higher was needed for a factor to be considered as a best practice.²⁴ Seven factors or practices totaled at least thirty occurrences. The following list is a set of

²⁴Thirty occurrences indicate an average of ten occurrences for each sample church.

best practices for intentionally creating a healthy church culture.²⁵

Table 11. Identified practices from all cases

	Church: PVCC	Church: VCC	Church: RC	TOTAL
Community	25	37	45	107
Gospel	25	29	26	80
Bible	18	12	26	56
Training/Education	9	13	33	55
Empower	14	6	24	44
Humility	19	16	6	41
Model/Example	12	10	9	31

Note: Although there are some practices that occurred a relatively few number of times with some cases, the average occurrence of each case had to be at least ten occurrences. Further, the importance of the identified practices was clarified by the lead pastors in chapter 5.

Best practice 1: Community. The practice of intentionally creating a sense of community among the people of the church was overwhelmingly the most frequently occurring factor from the study. The data spoke to community time and again. Each case studied had community as its most frequently occurring practice.²⁶ Community was instrumental in the process of creating a healthy culture in the three churches studied.

Best practice 2: Gospel. The cultivation of the gospel into the culture of the church was the second most frequently occurring practice that came from the study. The very identity of the three cases is formed in the gospel. Repeatedly the gospel came to

²⁵Conclusions and implications for each of these best practices is discussed in greater detail in chap. 5.

²⁶Pleasant Valley Community Church had twenty-five occurrences for both community and gospel, making those two equal as the most occurring practices.

light.

Best practice 3: Bible. The Bible shaped the vision, leadership, and mission of each of the churches studied. As a result, it was vital in creating the culture of the congregations. The data continually pointed to the Bible as a key element in the evolution of each culture.

Best practice 4: Training/Education. Each case noted the importance of training and teaching in the life of their church. The leaders referred to the necessity of teaching the people where they desire to steer the culture. Training and educating the church bodies was a useful practice in creating healthy cultures.

Best practice 5: Empower. Empowering was a concept that was mentioned numerous times by the respondents of each case. The leaders of the chosen cases believe it is important to empower the people to serve in ministry. The churches that were studied believed in empowering above solitary leadership.

Best practice 6: Humility. Every church had at least one respondent that emphasized the need for humility in creating the culture that they have. Although not the most frequent factor mentioned, it was consistent with every case, garnering forty-one total occurrences from all three churches. Creating a culture while being driven by humility is a practice to which each church ascribes.

Best practice 7: Model/Example. The final practice that fit the criteria for consideration as a best practice was the habit of modeling for the church what type of culture is desired. The leaders of the three cases not only attempt to model a shift in the culture themselves, but they also celebrate those members that model the change that is needed.

These seven practices are the conscious steps that the three local churches that

were studied chose to take to create a healthy culture. These were not only helpful to the local churches studied, but they may also be used as a set of best practices for other churches. Chapter 5 will be devoted to explaining these practices more, drawing conclusions from them, and recommending practical application for local church practitioners.

Evaluation of Research Design

All in all, the research design for this study proved to be efficient. The nature of qualitative research allows for variance in the data. Respondents can sometimes provide imprecise answers or information. However, the purpose of the research was to determine if a set of best practices for creating healthy organizational culture in the local church could be achieved. That purpose was accomplished.

Two minor deficiencies came to light at the completion of the research. The first was the ambiguity between the data that emerged from the respondents and the data that arose out of the literature review in chapter 2. The terminology found in the literature review was more precise and technical than that which arose out of the case studies at the three churches. The second deficiency is that the results of this study will not necessarily generalize to any other churches, except these specific cases. Each of these local churches is a member of Sojourn Network. As a result, they are uniquely similar. This similarity surely speaks to the similar practices that emerged from the study of them. Nevertheless, this design was appropriate and effective in answering the research question.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

“Everyone lives in and thus has a culture, and none of us can separate ourselves from that culture. We are part of it, and it is part of us. So how does it affect us and we it?”¹ It is necessary that church leaders understand and shape their culture. What practical steps can local churches take to create a healthy culture? This research exposed that the pertinent literature was unable to answer this question in full. However, an answer is now more apparent. Through an in-depth study of three sample churches, seven practices for creating healthy church culture emerged. These practices, which are common to all three churches, were formed into a set of best practices.²

Although these best practices do not necessarily guarantee success for every local church, they are practices that any local church can apply in some way. It is noteworthy that these churches take less of a technical approach, and more of a biblical approach to creating a healthy church culture. The leaders of these churches are not so much interested in artifacts, values, and beliefs; they are more interested in the gospel, the Bible, and building a godly community. Healthy culture is possible for local churches, and it may be simpler than some church leaders imagine.

¹Aubrey Malphurs, *Look Before You Lead: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 13.

²For the purpose of this research, “best practices” is defined as those practices that are most effective.

Research Conclusions

Three research questions guided this study. The first was, “What factors determine if the organizational culture of a local church is healthy?” The literature review in chapter 2 answered this question. The markers of a healthy church culture are a culture that is led by a courageous leader, a culture that values the role of people, a culture that shares a common vision, and a culture that is committed to the biblical mission.³

The second question that guided the research was, “Of those local churches that possess a healthy organizational culture, what steps were taken to intentionally create that culture?” The case studies of Pleasant Valley Community Church, Veritas Community Church, and Renaissance Church revealed the steps that each took to create a healthy culture in their congregation.⁴

The chief purpose of this research was to determine if a set of best practices for creating healthy culture in local churches could be discerned. Addressing that purpose, the third research question asked, “Among those churches that intentionally created healthy organizational culture, are there common factors that contributed to the creation of that culture that can be organized into a system of best practices?” This purpose was accomplished.⁵ Not only were the best practices discerned, but further conclusions were also drawn from the data. Based upon the research, the following conclusions were determined.

³See chap. 2 for the explanation of each of these markers (pp. 30-33).

⁴See chap. 4 for an analysis of each case and the steps they took to create their culture (pp. 69-81).

⁵See chap. 4 for an analysis of the best practices from all three cases (pp. 81-84).

Creating Culture Can Be a Byproduct of a Biblical Vision and Mission

Rather than focusing on the theoretical aspects of organizational culture, the local churches from this study are more focused on the biblical picture of a church. Generally speaking, the church leaders that were interviewed did not reference theorists or contemporary authors. By and large when a source of guidance or inspiration was mentioned, it was a biblical reference.

The focus upon the Bible was glaring throughout the research of the three local churches. They were first and foremost concentrated on what the Bible spoke into their church culture. Nick Nye, lead pastor of Veritas Community Church said, “We want to constantly put biblical mission in front of everybody all of the time.”⁶ Jesse Josephic of Renaissance Church stated, “When everything is Bible saturated in our meetings, it really feels like we’re building the church on a solid ground rather than on sinking sand.”⁷ The mission for the church, as revealed in the Bible, is of the utmost importance to the sample churches.

As was revealed in chapter 2 of this work, biblical mission played heavily into the health of a local church. The literature review determined that one of the markers of a healthy church culture is “committed to the biblical mission.”⁸ Local churches are distinct from other organizations in that they have a unique commitment to the Bible and its mission. Kevin Peck has noted from his research on multiplying churches what he called six “theme families” of multiplying churches. Three of the key traits of multiplying churches centered on the biblical mission of God. These themes were “purposed for the glory of God,” “the priority of the Great Commission,” and “authority

⁶Taken from the interviews with church leaders from the sample local churches.

⁷Ibid.

⁸See the section entitled “Markers of a healthy church culture” in chap. 2 (pp. 28-33).

of the Word of God.”⁹

As with Peck’s multiplying churches, these churches that possess healthy culture are also committed to the Bible and its mission for the church. The primacy of the Bible in these churches shape how their culture is formed. The fact that biblical mission is so instrumental to the very health of the culture demonstrates that a healthy culture in the sample churches proceeded from their focus on the mission of the Bible.

Churches with Common Ecclesiology have Common Culture

All three sample churches have similar ecclesiological structures. All are elder-led, all have a pronounced focus upon the idea of community, and all are church plants.¹⁰ Additionally, each sample case is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and Sojourn Network.

Because the churches are members of the Southern Baptist Convention, the way they operate as churches is defined within a certain set of parameters. Views on the Bible, God, mankind, the means of salvation, God’s grace, the Church, the ordinances of the Church, the kingdom of God, and much more are spelled out in the “Baptist Faith and Message” of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹¹ Further, as members of Sojourn Network the ecclesiology of the churches is even more narrowly defined. In addition to some of the beliefs stated in the “Baptist Faith and Message,” Sojourn Network adds

⁹Kevin Jamie Peck, “Examining a Church Culture of Multiplication: A Multiple Case Study” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 77-85.

¹⁰Pleasant Valley Community Church is technically a replanted church, rather than a church plant.

¹¹The “Baptist Faith and Message” is the statement of beliefs for the Southern Baptist Convention. See the section entitled “The Baptist Faith and Message,” Southern Baptist Convention, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

“Elder-led churches” and “Reformed churches” to their beliefs.¹² These commonalities, inherent to who these churches are, brought about a similar culture in the churches.

Pleasant Valley Community Church, Veritas Community Church, and Renaissance Church have further similarities. Elements such as empowerment, humility, and shared-leadership are common to each church. Another shared trait of each church is that they are church plants. As such, this allowed the churches to shape their culture from the beginning with a sense of newness. Church plants start with a freshness that allows the leaders and core team to mold the culture in a distinct way.

The most striking similarity that the cases share is their commitment to the church as a community. Community is far and away the most frequently occurring factor in the creation of the culture of these three churches. Because each church is committed to viewing their people as part of a community, it affects the way that each creates their culture.

One can see from the similar findings that arose from each church from the study that a church’s ecclesiological view can have a direct affect on the culture of that church.¹³ Beliefs about the nature of the church shape the way that culture evolves for that church. As such, churches that share common ecclesiological beliefs will have common cultures.

Creating and Sustaining a Healthy Culture Happens Through Intentional Effort

A healthy organizational culture does not develop by accident. Edgar Schein notes, “Organizations do not form accidentally or spontaneously. They are ‘created’

¹²See the section entitled “Our Core Beliefs,” Sojourn Network, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.sojournnetwork.com/beliefs/>.

¹³The ensuing section entitled “Recommendations for Practice” will elaborate on how these elements affected the culture of the churches that were studied.

because one or more individuals perceive that the coordinated and concerted action of a number of people can accomplish something that individual action cannot.”¹⁴ The leaders of these sample churches realized that their churches needed to foster a healthy culture, and they would do it on purpose, together as a church.

The leaders of the three studied churches put intentional effort in shaping the culture of their churches. In a sermon on the concept of community, Nick Nye of Veritas told the congregation, “It takes intentionality, true intentionality, to have true community.”¹⁵ Daniel Emmons of Renaissance Church said of their pastor, “Rob was very intentional with how he set up the culture of this church.”¹⁶ The local churches from this study put hard fought effort into creating the cultures that they have. The formation of culture requires thoughtfulness and intentionality from the shapers of the culture.

Furthermore, it took purposeful action to sustain the culture of each church. Even though a culture is formed, it will not be kept intact unless a continual effort is given to sustain it. Emmons stated, “[The] vision for Renaissance has been communicated and continues to be communicated thoroughly.”¹⁷ Gordon Wilkerson at Pleasant Valley Community Church stated that the church continues to make changes in the culture “little by little,” while making sure the people have time to understand why changes are being made.¹⁸

¹⁴Edgar H. Schein, “The Role of the Founder in the Creation of Organizational Culture,” in *Reframing Organizational Culture*, ed. Peter J. Frost et al. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991), 14.

¹⁵See Nick Nye’s sermon on community from the Blueprints series from Veritas’ Vimeo page, accessed August 29, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/31050297>.

¹⁶Interviews.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

Contribution to the Precedent Literature

Before this research was completed there was a void in the literature concerning the creation of organizational culture in local churches. Much of the work done by Aubrey Malphurs, Thom Rainer, and Mark Dever addressed church health and church culture; however, an empirically researched set of steps that demonstrated success for churches that created healthy culture was not fully available.

The set of best practices that emerged from this study can serve as proven steps that church leaders may be able to implement in order to create healthy, gospel-centered culture. This research moves beyond the scholarly perspective alone. The major benefit of this study is that it offers a practitioner point of view for those seeking to shape church culture.

Additionally, a large portion of what came to light during the literature review was confirmed through this study. For example, many of the common ingredients of effective leaders identified in chapter 2 are seen in the leaders of these congregations.¹⁹ Furthermore, all the marks of a healthy church culture that were identified in the literature review are apparent in the sample churches. The research conducted on these three local churches confirmed much of what has already been written, while also addressing what was missing.

Recommendations for Practice

The best practices that emerged shed light on what actually works for the process of intentionally creating healthy local church culture. For the sake of precision, the lead pastor of each sample case ranked the common factors in order of importance and effectiveness in creating a healthy church culture. Because the lead pastors of each sample church ranked the identified practices in order of importance, the recommended

¹⁹See common ingredients of effective leaders in table 1 in chap. 2 (p. 19).

practices that follow were able to be listed in order of foundational importance. This step helped add clarity and validity to the research results (see table 12).

Table 12. Lead pastors’ ranking of factors by importance and/or effectiveness

Common Factors:	Church			Average
	PVCC	RC	VCC	
Gospel	2	1	1	1.33
Bible	1	2	3	2
Community	5	3	4	4
Humility	3	7	2	4
Model/Example	4	5	5	4.67
Training/Education	7	4	6	5.67
Empower	6	6	7	6.33

Note: This table reveals the difference between the frequency of the occurrences of the practices in chapter 4 and the importance of the identified practices to the lead pastors of each sample church. A practice that occurred the most times at a sample church was not necessarily the most important practice to that local church. This step was intentionally taken to ensure that other church leaders could rely on the accuracy of the recommended practices for creating healthy church culture.

As a result of the research, the following seven practices are recommended for churches seeking to create a healthy culture. These practices are discussed in order of importance as ranked by the lead pastor of each of the sample churches. Following the seven recommended practices, an eighth practice is provided as a general step for church leaders to take when creating culture.

Recommended Practices for Creating a Healthy Church Culture

Create a gospel identity in the church. Creating a gospel identity in the church is tantamount to the culture of the sample churches. An identification in the gospel serves as the framework for the culture of a church. The elements of

organizational culture that Schein provides are artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.²⁰ In these churches, the gospel is so instrumental to the culture that it shapes each of these cultural elements. It shapes everything about their cultures.

A culture that is shaped by the gospel is one that is on task for ministry. The churches from this study realize that fact. Veritas Community Church states on their website, “We are transformed by the gospel to transform the city with the gospel.”²¹ Nye, added, “There’s a conviction of the gospel and all of its implications, not just intellectually . . . but how does the gospel apply to all areas of life?”²² Renaissance Church shares this mission driven by the gospel. Emmons stated, “Everyone has a very clear idea of what our main goal is, what the end goal is, and that’s to preach the gospel, and to get the gospel out here in Pittsburgh.”²³

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul states, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). The gospel is essential for what it means to be a Christian. It is preeminent in the New Testament and foundational for New Testament churches.

The sample churches recognize the biblical mandate of gospel identity and their cultures are molded by that identity. They preach the gospel in their churches. They communicate how the gospel has implications for everyday life for their church members. They provide opportunities for their people to live out the gospel. Church

²⁰Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 24.

²¹See Veritas Community Church, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://veritascolumbus.com>.

²²Interviews.

²³*Ibid.*

leaders who want to instill a healthy culture in their church ought to be determined to make the gospel a prominent imprint on their church's identity.

Rely on the Bible to shape the church and the culture. Letting the Bible shape the culture is monumental for the three churches that were studied. Several of the factors that emerged could be traced back to a biblical principle or command. When asked to rank the practices in order of importance or effectiveness, each lead pastor ranked this practice as either first or second.²⁴

The Bible is instrumental in shaping the healthy cultures of the sample churches. Emmons said, "One big part [of our creating culture] is our constant putting forth the Bible as an authoritative document."²⁵ In speaking of casting a vision for the church during its birth stage, Josephic said, "We would go to the Scriptures together and see what it has to say about whatever we were talking about that day and [our pastor] would cast a vision."²⁶

In his book *Center Church*, Timothy Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, explained that the process of Christian ministry begins with the Bible. He articulated the process as starting with "doctrinal foundation," then moving to "theological vision," and finally to "ministry expressions."²⁷ This doctrinal foundation is described as, "Timeless truths from the Bible about God, our relationship to Him, and His purposes in the world."²⁸ The Bible must be the shaper of church culture.

²⁴For rankings, refer back to table 12 (p. 92).

²⁵Interviews.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 20.

²⁸Ibid.

The Bible is foundational for the churches that were studied. They believe in the value of the Bible to their people and to their culture. They communicate the vital nature of the Bible again and again, in written documents, on their websites, and in their sermons. When they gather in community groups, they discuss the Bible and its implications for who they are as individuals and as a community. Just as with the churches studied, the Bible must be a foundational piece for any local church seeking to build a healthy culture.

Instill a sense of community in the church. Pleasant Valley Community Church, Veritas Community Church, and Renaissance Church place priority upon instilling a sense of community in their churches. Creating the sense of community has several benefits for a local church. The first benefit is that the people of the church will feel more united to one another. Professing this type of community, Veritas Community Church's website states, "Community comes when we see that as Christians we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we are part of a new family that we hope to grow and build as we learn the truth of the gospel together."²⁹ Brandon Swanner of Pleasant Valley Community Church added, "We began to change the culture to . . . going to church *and* [living] in one another's lives."³⁰

A second benefit of creating community is that the people will have buy-in with the vision and mission. Josephic at Renaissance said, "We met once a week for our community group. . . . We feel like a family; we're all on board with the same vision for the church, and it really shows."³¹ Wilkerson said that community groups at Pleasant

²⁹See the page entitled "Community," Veritas Community Church, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://veritascolumbus.com/community/>.

³⁰Interviews.

³¹Ibid.

Valley are “the primary means that our church is embracing . . . the growth of the church towards this healthy church culture.”³² The people of these churches felt connected to each other and to the church, increasing the likelihood of them embracing the mission and the development of a healthy culture.

Finally, creating a sense of community will benefit the church by connecting the church body to the biblical picture of the church. The sample churches believed that community was important in creating culture because they discovered the picture of community in the Bible. The website of Renaissance Church states, “In Acts and elsewhere in Scripture it is clear that baptism welcomes new believers into a worshipping community with deep familial relationships and commitments.”³³

Dustin Willis, a leader with the North American Mission Board, expounds on the notion that community originates from God’s plan for His people.³⁴ Willis states, “God Himself placed within us this yearning for community—a God-given appetite for honest connection with others.”³⁵ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop add, “Scripture teaches that the community that matters is community built by God.”³⁶ The Bible says, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near,” (Heb 10:24-25).

³²Interviews.

³³Ibid.

³⁴The North American Mission Board is the missions entity of the Southern Baptist Convention that carries out missions in North America. For more information see the North American Mission Board website, Accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.namb.net>.

³⁵Dustin Willis, *Life in Community: Joining Together to Display the Gospel* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 24.

³⁶Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 14. In this work, Dever and Dunlop focus on helping churches understand community properly and how it fits in God’s grand plan for the believer and the church.

The churches from this study make community a priority. They communicate the importance of community into the very DNA of their church, incorporating it into governing documents and training. They reinforce the theme of community from the pulpit and in training. They purposefully develop fellowships that will help foster community. Community is important to the sample churches, and it should be important for other churches seeking to establish a healthy culture. Church leaders must be intentional about instilling a sense of community into the culture of their churches.

Be driven by a sense of humility. A theme that came up recurrently in the research was humility. C. J. Mahaney said, “The proper application of Scripture will always emphasize the weakening of pride (your greatest enemy) and the cultivation of humility (your greatest friend).”³⁷ The leaders of the three sample churches were stalwart in their commitment to cultivating humility in themselves and in their church. Edwards said of himself and the leadership at Pleasant Valley, “It’s hard to have a healthy culture of leadership in particular. It requires a lot of humility, it requires a lot of deferring . . . but it’s sanctifying.”³⁸ Two of Veritas’ leaders said humility was key for them. Nye said, “[We are] constantly trying to develop a sense of humility.”³⁹ Nicol stated that the most helpful factor in developing their culture was humility.”⁴⁰

The apostle Paul wrote,

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than

³⁷C. J. Mahaney, “Cultivate Humility,” in *Dear Timothy: Letters on Pastoral Ministry*, ed. Thomas K. Ascol (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2004), 120.

³⁸Interviews.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. (Phil 2:1-5).

This admonition from Scripture calls every Christian, particularly church leaders, to lead with humility.

The church leaders from this study want the type of humility that the Bible describes, in themselves and their people. First, they seek to cultivate personal humility. They know that if they are not humble, their church will not be humble. They live and model this humility to others. Second, they are determined to teach the biblical view of humility to their people. Like the leaders of these churches, other church leaders who wish to create a healthy culture must be pioneers of humility in their churches.

As a leader, model the desired cultural change to the people. The role of the leader is instrumental in creating healthy culture. The literature base revealed that a healthy church culture is led by a courageous leader. As has been stated, the leaders contributed to the development of the culture by teaching and training the people. A further way the sample leaders impact the molding of a vital church culture is through the model they set for the people of the church. In reference to creating buy-in for change, John Kotter and Dan Cohen state, “Deeds speak volumes.”⁴¹ Kotter also warns leaders not to declare victory too soon. Instead, they must remain persistent in their pursuit of their goals and modeling for the people whom they lead.⁴² Edwards said that the leaders at Pleasant Valley “. . . try to lead by example.”⁴³ Nye said in order to develop a culture that is committed to the biblical mission that the leaders must first serve as models. Nye

⁴¹John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 92.

⁴²John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 13.

⁴³Interviews.

said, “The first part of that . . . is to lead by example.”⁴⁴

The Bible speaks of this theme of leaders serving as examples. Timothy was a young pastor under the mentorship of the apostle Paul. Paul encouraged Timothy as he led his church by charging him to, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity,” (1 Tim 4:12). Paul further said that a church leader must be “above reproach” (1 Tim 3:2).⁴⁵

The leaders of Pleasant Valley, Veritas, and Renaissance understand how vital it is to model to their people. They seek to be living examples of the type of culture they are trying to create in their churches. Church leaders must be living prototypes of the change they hope to see in the people that they lead. This approach of modeling the desired change for the culture is crucial to establishing a healthy culture in a local church.

Train and educate the people of the church as to how the leaders would like to shape the culture. Training and educating the people of the church is a very practical step that aids the sample churches in forming healthy cultures. Rob Maine, pastor of Renaissance Church, said, “I had to do a lot of training and developing.”⁴⁶ Garrison Greene at Veritas said, “I think one of the key things has just been communicating the vision a lot from the pulpit.”⁴⁷

Church leaders must grasp the necessity of this step. Getting the people to understand the “why” helps accomplish the “how”. The Bible speaks to the idea of training the people of the church. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is breathed

⁴⁴Interviews.

⁴⁵The church leader that Paul is speaking about specifically is an “overseer,” sometimes referred to as an “elder,” “bishop,” or “pastor.”

⁴⁶Interviews.

⁴⁷Ibid.

out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Although the Bible’s picture of teaching often refers to the public preaching of the Word of God, the admonition to teach God’s people also applies to the minds and hearts of those shaping the culture.

Pleasant Valley, Veritas, and Renaissance understand that clearly communicating their identity, the biblical mission, and where the culture should be going is crucial to developing a healthy culture. The churches have clear written documents. Their websites reveal who they are and what they believe. They have specific training for members, new and established, that teach what is valuable to their churches. Church leaders must embrace the value of teaching and educating their people. By teaching the people of a local church how the Bible speaks to the shaping of their culture, church leaders will see healthy cultures begin to develop in their churches.

Empower the people to create and sustain the culture. Part of getting the people to join in the process of creating and sustaining healthy culture is giving them the power to play a vital role in the process. The sample churches believe that the people of the church are instrumental in the creation of the culture. Swanner said of Pleasant Valley, “We let people step into things, pretty freely, because they’re the church.”⁴⁸ Pastor Jamus Edwards added, “We want every elder, every leader, including our deacons and other key lay people . . . we want them to feel valued, we want them to feel empowered.”⁴⁹ Maine of Renaissance Church said, “From the get go our core team members understood the importance of their role within the church.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸Interviews.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

The Bible teaches that spiritual leaders of churches are particularly called to empower God's people. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Empowering the people of the church is not only biblical, it is also helpful in creating a healthy church culture.

The churches that intentionally created healthy cultures did so in part by empowering their people. They give the people of the church opportunities to serve and lead their church. They do not fear failure, but relish potential. They teach the people how to lead and provide a venue to do so. If church leaders want to develop a healthy culture in their church, they must empower their people.

Local churches should chiefly focus on the biblical model for a church.

"At the end of the day it always comes back to the Bible."⁵¹ That statement, found on Pleasant Valley's website sums up the focus of these three churches. The most important recommendation that resulted from this research is that local churches should focus primarily on the biblical mission of the church. None of the respondents from the three sample churches mentioned anything about organizational cultural theory. None referenced Aubrey Malphurs, Edgar Schein, or John Kotter. However, all focused intensely on the gospel and the Bible.

In their book, *The Deliberate Church*, Mark Dever and Paul Alexander state, "In whatever we do, we want to be careful about allowing God's Word to set our

⁵¹See "Ministries," Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, accessed August 29, 2015, <http://pleasantvalley.cc/connect/ministries/>.

trajectory, power our progress, and govern our methods.”⁵² God’s Word is foremost in the sample churches. It is their starting point for creating culture. It is imperative that local churches seeking to build healthy culture start with the Bible, allowing it to permeate and influence every aspect of the culture.

Recommendations for Further Research

Upon completion and review of this research and its findings, three recommendations for further research are suggested. One proposal would be an in-depth text-based study into the biblical prescription for each of the stated best practices. This would allow church practitioners to gain a thorough biblical knowledge of what the Bible has to say about each of these. This proposed research could take place with one study for each practice, or one study that examines all of the practices.

A second recommended study is a practical research project that determines how local churches can practically implement these best practices. Whereas the current study was focused on determining which practices led to the creation of a healthy church culture, another study could focus on how those practices were each intentionally implemented. This kind of study could take place as case studies and/or through large-scale surveys. A study with that aim would be practical in nature, providing further insight to church practitioners who wish to implement the ingredients necessary to create a healthy culture.

A final research proposal is for a study to be completed that examines churches with an older history. The current study looked at churches from Sojourn Network that are each less than ten years old. A different study could research churches with a life over ten years, perhaps up to 100 years old. This work could compare the practices from

⁵²Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton: IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 21.

the current study with any practices that emerge from older churches. Perhaps there are similarities or correlations that could further aid church leaders of older churches in establishing healthy culture.

Concluding Thoughts

“The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.”⁵³ The local church is an essential part of Christianity and of God’s mission. Since the dawn of Christianity, local gatherings of Christians have been the heart of Christianity on earth. Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck state, “The New Testament knows nothing of churchless Christianity.”⁵⁴ Making sure the local church is present and healthy is crucial for church leaders. Pastors must know how they can lead their churches to develop a healthy culture. Healthy cultures do not emerge by accident; they are developed on purpose.

This research uncovered how three local churches successfully created healthy cultures in their contexts. Ministry leaders today can learn from the set of best practices that resulted from this study. Jesus said that even the gates of hell would not stop the church (Matt 16:18). Still, ministry leaders must be fierce in their effort to keep the church healthy. They are called to shepherd and lead the flock of God (1 Pet 5:2). May all church leaders be inspired to pursue healthy church culture for the glory of God.

⁵³Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 62.

⁵⁴Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 226.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Research Overview

Your local church has been chosen as a case that displays healthy church culture. The purpose of this research is to identify if a set of best-practices can be established for intentionally creating healthy culture in local churches.

After a literature review, it was determined that the four markers of a healthy church culture are:

1. A culture that is led by a courageous leader
2. A culture that values the role of people
3. A culture that shares a common vision
4. A culture that is committed to the biblical mission

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to learn how your local church intentionally created a healthy culture. This research is being conducted by Matthew C. McCraw for purposes of thesis research. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions related to the creation of culture in your local church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this interview, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Consent to Audio and/or Video Recording

This interview is open-ended in nature. The researcher desires for you to share openly and honestly. Additionally, the researcher may ask follow-up questions, as he deems necessary. The estimated time for the interview will be one hour. If the interview is not

complete in one hour you will have the option of continuing the interview or rescheduling a follow-up interview. An audio or video recording will assist the researcher in the data collection process. The interview will then be transcribed, summarized, and analyzed. A review of the findings of this interview will be presented to you for validation and agreement. The recordings will be kept private and destroyed upon completion of the research project.

I consent to audio/video recording of this interview.

I do not consent to audio/video recording of this interview.

Interviewee Biographical Information

What is your name?

What is your role at the church?

How long have you been at the church?

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe a healthy church culture?
2. How would you describe the culture of your church? Why?
3. Can you describe a point in your church history when you tried to create a new culture or change the current culture?
4. What steps did you take to intentionally create this culture in your church?
5. What are the particular elements that you are trying to instill into the culture of your church today?
6. What were the most helpful factors in creating the culture that you have today?
7. What were some of the biggest challenges that you encountered when trying to develop a healthy church culture?
8. How did you overcome those challenges?
9. Were there particular people/roles in the church that were helpful to the process of creating new culture? How did you utilize them?
10. In reference to the four markers of health identified by the researcher (stated in the research overview), how did you...
 - 10A. ...develop a culture that is led by a courageous leader?
 - 10B. ...develop a culture that values the role of people?

10C. ...develop a culture that shares a common vision?

10D. ...develop a culture that is committed to the biblical mission?

APPENDIX 2

CONTACT SUMMARY SHEET

Case # _____

Name of Local Church: _____

Content Analysis Portion (Observation, document analysis, interview, etc.): _____

Research Questions (for review):

1. What factors determine if the organizational culture of a local church is healthy?
2. Of those local churches that possess a healthy organizational culture, what steps were taken to intentionally create that culture?
3. Among those churches that intentionally created healthy organizational culture, are there common factors that contributed to the creation of that culture that can be organized into a system of best practices?

Questions to summarize the research contact:

1. What are the main concepts, themes, issues, and questions that arose from this contact?
2. What data emerges from the research that indicates a healthy culture in the church?
3. Did the emerging data address the research questions explicitly or implicitly? Explain.
4. Is there any evidence of intentional steps that were taken by the local church or its leaders to create a healthy church culture?
5. How frequently did this evidence appear?
6. What is the level of emphasis on the particular step that was taken to create healthy church culture?
7. How does the emergent data directly answer the research questions?
8. Can the emergent data be summed up in one helpful word or phrase?

9. Does the emergent data from this research contact seem similar to any data that has emerged in the research completed thus far?
10. Does anything significant stand out in the interviews or observation that may prompt further data collection?
11. Are there patterns that are developing in the data collection process that need to be further researched through additional interviews or observation?

APPENDIX 3

ADDITIONAL FIGURES

HOW TO BECOME A SOJOURN NETWORK CHURCH PLANTER

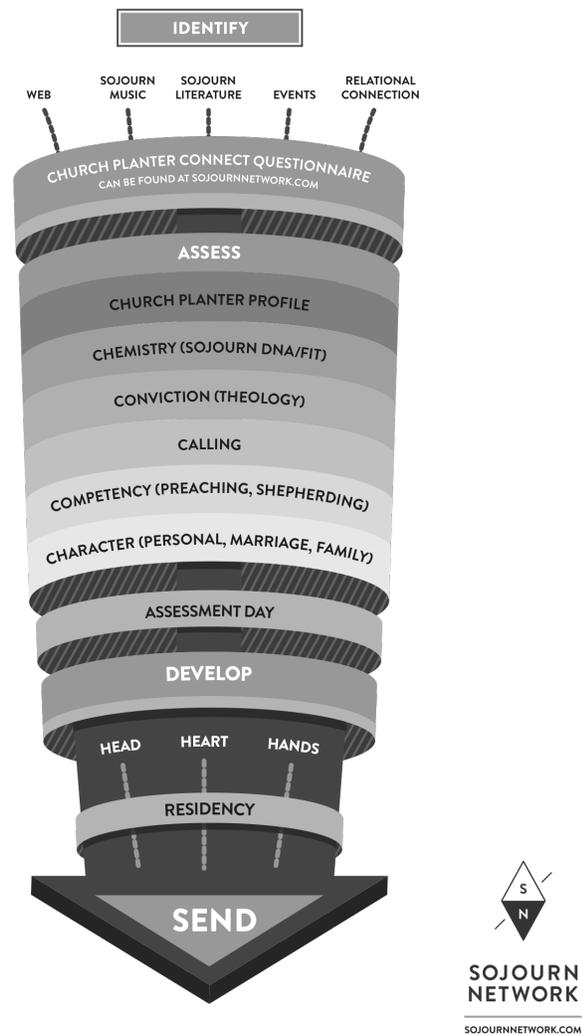


Figure 4. How to become a Sojourn Network planter

HOW TO BECOME A SOJOURN NETWORK
PARTNER CHURCH



Figure 5. How to become a Sojourn Network partner church

APPENDIX 4

PICTURES FROM SAMPLE CASES



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ABSTRACT

INTENTIONALLY CREATING HEALTHY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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Church leaders must know how to create healthy culture in their churches. Organizational culture has been a trending topic over the last three decades. In more recent years, church culture has developed out of the greater organizational culture discussion. Much research exists that addresses both organizational and church culture. Despite the prevalence of this research, there was still a lack of empirical research that addressed the creation of healthy culture in local churches.

This study addressed the need that was present for churches and church leaders. This research was qualitative in nature, utilizing case study and content analysis as the two primary components of the instrumentation. Through this study of three local church cases seven practices emerged that can help church leaders intentionally create healthy culture in the churches where they serve.

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